



Muskwa-Kechika



The 2006 Muskwa-Kechika
Environmental Youth Camp



Treaty 8 Tribal Association
Muskwa-Kechika
Environmental Youth Camp
August 21-25, 2006



MUSKWA-KECHIKA
MANAGEMENT AREA

Introduction

The Treaty 8 Tribal Association (T8TA) submitted a proposal to the MKA Board to host the 2006 Environmental Youth Camp. The T8TA would like to thank Mr. Don Roberts and the MK Advisory Board for all their assistance and support in making this year's camp a reality. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the camp as originally planned and proposed was not able to run at the Mile 171 site from August 7th-18th.

A modified camp was hosted and undertaken by the Elders and the Halfway River First Nation at Cypress from August 21-25th to meet our commitment to youth, environmental stewardship, and the appreciation of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area.

As always, wisdom, guidance and leadership come from our Elders and we at T8TA would like to thank the Elders and leadership of the Halfway River First Nation for their commitment to this camp. We were also fortunate to have participation from Chief Liza Wolf from Prophet River First Nation who attended the camp each and everyday to teach youth and model environmental stewardship.

Project Sponsors

This year's camp was generously sponsored by the following companies and organizations:

- Talisman Energy
- CNRL
- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Prophet River Management
- Halfway River First Nation
- Conoco-Phillips
- Treaty 8 Tribal Association
- Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board

Without the generous support of all the sponsors we would not have been to successfully deliver this initiative.

Project Goals

The overall goal of the 2006 Muskwa-Kechika Environmental Youth Camp was to offer youth a two-week wilderness experience where they would be afforded the opportunity to develop their skills and gain knowledge in traditional and contemporary land use in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area. This year's camp did meet these project goals although it was over a one-week period instead.

Project Objectives

The objectives met by the 2006 Environmental Youth Camp were the following:

- To provide an experiential learning opportunity in environmental stewardship for a minimum of twenty youth residing in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area;
- To promote an understanding amongst youth on the values, biodiversity and environmental uniqueness and history of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area;
- To offer opportunities for youth to connect or re-connect with Elders and learn the culture, stories, traditional knowledge and skills from the First Peoples who lived on the land;
- To assist in further developing the life skills, self-esteem and confidence in youth; and,

To provide experiences in land and resource use planning so that youth may develop an interest in the environment as a potential career option.

Project Activities

Skill development activities for youth at the camp included forest awareness, wilderness survival skills, mapping, hikes, plants and traditional foods. Additionally youth received traditional lessons and participated in group discussions on the importance of protecting and respecting the environment

One important aspect of this camp was the opportunities provided for youth to connect or re-connect with Elders and learn the culture, stories, traditional knowledge and skills from the Treaty 8 people who lived on the land. Youth were able to participate in the following activities:

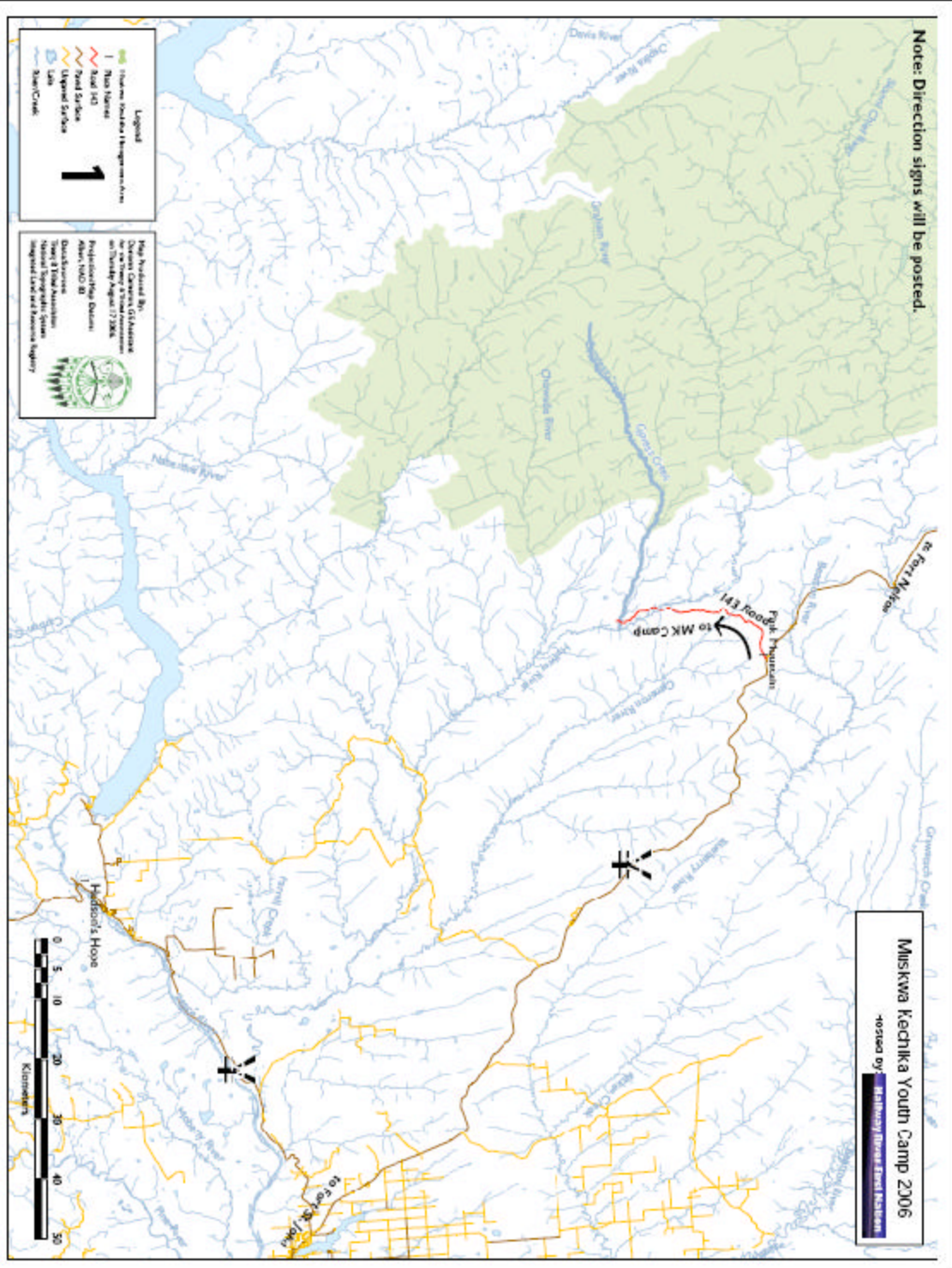
- Traditional teachings with the Elders
- Tracking and stalking
- Hunting
- Plant identification and use
- Traditional games
- Crafts, beading, and sewing
- Singing

Youth were also able to develop life skills, self-esteem and confidence through the mentorship of Elders and leadership by participating in activities such as council fire, hunting, skinning, dry meat making and cooking.

The following is a journal and photographs of some of the day to day observations and activities by Fort Nelson First Nation youth and Treaty 8 member, Sarah Behn. The map was created by Donovan Cameron of T8TA a youth participant and member of Saulteau First Nations.

Note: Direction signs will be posted.

Miskwa Kechika Youth Camp 2006
-osuaa by  Miskwa Kechika



Legend

- Reserve Boundary (Municipal/Provincial)
- Main Highway
- Road 400
- Road Service
- Water Service
- Lake
- River/Creek

Map Produced By:
Cherise Chagnon, GIS Analyst
for the Ministry of Natural Resources
on Thursday, August 17, 2006.
Projection/Map Datum:
Albers, NAD 83
Scale:
1:50,000
Map Symbols:
Municipal/Provincial Reserve
Municipal/Provincial Highway





Introduction

The Muskwa-Kechika Youth Camp for the Treaty 8 region ran from August 21st to August 25th 2006. The camp was held at Mile 143 of the Alaska Hwy, kilometer 26. There were youth participants from the surrounding First Nations that include: Saulteau, Fort Nelson, Prophet River, and Halfway River.

The camp was hosted by Halfway River First Nation whose Elders and Chief and Council all attended the camp. The Elders that were present stayed and camped in their tents. There was also a strong presence from Prophet River First Nation with their own Elder Chief Liza Wolf staying at the camp as well and bringing many of her members.

DAY 1 Muskwa-Kechika

The Elders instruct all the youth on where the best places to camp by the river are and oversee the set-up of the camp. Everybody pitches in to get everything set-up before nightfall. By the end of the first day everyone is tired and goes to bed early under the expansive starry sky with the glimmerings of the aurora borealis starting to shine in the sky.



Brian Wolf (PRFN) takes a moment of rest after a hard day of setting up camp.

Day2 Muskwa-Kechika



Dion Metecheah fishes using only a line while standing on a half-submerged log.

On day 2 of the camp some of the Elders leave to attend a funeral. The participants have engaged in traditional activities such as fishing off of a log in the Halfway River. A number of fish were caught this way and the youth enjoyed their catches over the fire later that night.

During the evening the northern lights (aurora borealis) came out to dance and delight the youth. Chief Gerry Hunter and Elder John Wokeley regaled the youth with legends and stories well into the night in front of the campfire. These traditional stories are often parables to teach the youth the necessary life skills to thrive in their culture. Other stories are explanations such as why the wolverine so hard to trap. Both kinds of stories enthrall the youth until late into the night

Day3 Muskwa-Kechika



On day 3 of the camp the sweltering heat got the best of some of our youngest participants. With strict admonishments from the Elders to be careful with the young children near the river everyone decides to participate in a mud fight instead. After this brief frolic in the mud the girls try and wash off on a very muddy river bank.





Elders from Halfway River First Nation work on setting-up the moccasin making workshop in the middle of the bush. A tarp and a sheet provide the necessary place to sit and sew. Bella Fox gives the instructions to the Youth while Winnie Field and Maisie Metecheah will watch the amateur sewers to make sure that their technique is correct.

The hide that is being used is beautiful, velvety smooth. The Elders from Halfway River First Nation are artists. Their moccasins are amazing and they manage with all of their skill to help total amateurs to make a pair of moccasins each.



E vangeline tries her hand at sewing on a simple decoration of ribbon.
Below—E vangeline and Brianna receive instruction at the beginning of the lesson.





A half-finished pair of moccasins decorated with ribbon are a triumph for someone with very little experience at moccasin making. This pair was made by Sarah Behn with extensive help from the elders.



Our Elders have been asking where their meat is for days now. There have been hunting trips every morning and evening but so far no one has been successful. Chief Hunter, Maisie Metecheah and Richard Wokeley take a few youth with them to go hunting at night. The rest of the camp sits by the campfire and waits for the hunters to return. As we sit by the fire shots ring out clearly here in the quiet. Everyone is in a jovial mood waiting for the hunters to return with their kill. We wait until almost midnight before they return with the news that they have killed a young moose about 25 km away, but they did the preliminary butchering and we are to return early in the morning to retrieve the rest of the meat and to finish the butchering.

Chief Hunter, Masie Metecheah and Richard Wokeley gather some youth to come and help haul meat. It has to be partially butchered where it was killed and then taken back to camp to be cut up to make dry-meat. The boys that were chosen had not cut meat before and for the most part are excited to take part in this traditional practice.

The moose is small, the Elders say it is last year's calf. This makes the job much easier as a large moose is a huge amount of work. The hunters had to shoot the moose in the leg damaging one hind quarter and making the hide unusable, but everything else is used. With the Elders to oversee the process three youth are instructed on the proper way to butcher a moose. They are also given other instructions on covering what is left with tree boughs and on leaving a bit of heart in the tree. The Elders work quickly making it seem easy with their deft work. The youth are suitably impressed by the amount of skills that it takes to butcher once they try their hand at it.

Day 4 Muskwa-Kechika



Chief Hunter and Richard Wokeley instruct Dion Metecheah, Brent Fox, and Dustin Courtorielle on the finer point of skinning and quartering a moose in the bush. Brent Fox holds a leg back while Chief Hunter shows Dustin Courtorielle how to sever the leg from the rest of the body by cutting where the joint is.





Dion Metecheah receives instruction on removing the nose and the tongue by Maisie Metecheah. These parts of the animal are considered delicacies.



Now that the hunt has been successful it is time to start drying the meat. This meat rack was constructed by the Elders with some help from a few participants. Junior Jackson and Brent Fox are enlisted to help bring in poles for the rack and in no time it is constructed.

Cutting the meat on the other hand is a much harder task than it might seem. The amount of skill that is necessary is phenomenal. The Elders teach by showing how to do something first. The youth participants try without much success to mimic the nice clean cuts of the elders. Unfortunately the dry meat that most of them make is thick and full of holes. The Elders with grace reassure them that they will still be good for dry-meat soup.





A close-up of the dry-meat rack shows the difference in skills. The plastic stands by in case of rain. This proves providential as shortly after this picture was taken the rain started to come down hard. For almost an hour Elders and participants sat under tarps cutting meat for dinner and for drying.



Day 5 Muskwa-Kechika

It's the final day at the camp and everyone is preparing to leave. The youth help take down the camp and pack up for whoever is leaving. Many Elders decide to stay at the camp site through the weekend.



Timber Wolf of Prophet River First Nation gets tied into his high chair by his father Brian Wolf. Luckily Timber does not seem to be phased by this and smiles for the camera.



Family is important to First Nation culture and T rina Harrold takes a well deserved break from cooking for a hungry camp to spend some time with the children. Pictured here with T imber Wolf, S elena Field and S arah Forrester. Below Chief Gerry Hunter comforts a baby while the meal is being prepared.



Muskwa-Kechika Youth Camp in the Treaty 8 territory ran into difficulty before it began. Due to unforeseeable circumstances the camp had to be delayed by almost two weeks. This delay meant the loss of the Ghost River Rediscovery staff, which made the camp more difficult. Fortunately the Elders of Halfway River First Nation were adamant about the importance of fostering youth-elder relationships. Without their help this camp would not have happened. A plan was formulated to continue with the camp as a slightly scaled down version. With this plan in place the new site and dates were picked to go forward with the camp.

In the future it would be prudent to formulate a back-up plan. Just in case. With that said the Muskwa-Kechika Youth Camp for the Treaty 8 territory was a resounding success despite the shortened time period. During a five-day camp the youth that were present learned many lessons. These lessons ranged from learning to butcher a moose properly; to how to sew moccasins. With those two major activities going on the elders also found time to organize berry-picking sessions and stories around the campfire.

The elders that consented to be a part of this camp were amazing, without their tenacity the camp would never have been as successful as it was. They truly made all of these activities look easy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for participating in the Muskwa-Kechika Youth Camp.