



## **MUSKWA KECHIKA**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH CAMP**

AUGUST 14 – 23, 2008

## **FINAL REPORT**

**Submitted by**

**Treaty 8 Tribal Association**

**2009**

## **Introduction**

The Mission of the Treaty Tribal Association (T8TA) is to have all First Nations signatory to Treaty 8 in British Columbia unite to protect secure and manage the land and environment for economic and cultural uses for all future generations in the enhancement and implementation of the true spirit and intent of Treaty #8.

T8TA had the honour of hosting and coordinating the Muskwa-Kechika Environmental Youth Camp August 14-23, 2008. This initiative was in collaboration with, encouraged and supported by the Council of Treaty 8 Chiefs.

## **Location**

The location of the camp was 20 miles southeast of Mile 442 of the Alaska Highway on Moose Lake. The camp is owned by the MacDonald family and traditionally used by First Nations people. The camp was equipped with a cook's cabin, outhouses, tents, two fire pits, hiking trails, fishing spots, as well as three quads and two boats used for transportation and educational purposes.

## **Sponsors**

A project of this magnitude is successful due to the funding support of the Muskwa Kechika Board, Treaty 8 Communities, industry, and local businesses. The financial contributions and discounted rates we have received have truly fostered the reality of operating a youth camp. We are grateful for your understanding and encouragement. Thank you!

We would like to thank the following for their assistance:

- AAA Safety
- Doig River First Nation
- EnCana
- Glentel Communications
- Halfway River First Nation
- Muskwa Kechika Management Board
- Northern Metallic
- Spectra Energy
- Talisman Energy
- Treaty 8 Tribal Association
- Wapiti Sporting Goods

## **Associates**

We would like to thank the following people for their assistance and time:

- Angus MacDonald
- Ashley Sheppard
- Brad Sorell
- Constable Jeff Jackson
- Corrine Porter
- Donovan Cameron

- Chief Harley Davis
- George Donnessey
- Jack Askoty
- Jason Lee
- Jocelyn Schick
- John MacDonald
- Judy Cameron
- Leeanna Rhodes
- Elder Mida Donnesy
- Monty Lynch
- Emma Pye
- Riannon McCannel
- Rose MacDonald
- Sindee (First Aid Attendant)
- BC Forest Service Smoke Jumpers
- Victor Kisoun
- Victoria Davis
- Walter MacDonald
- Wanda Sorell
- Maurice Lirette (MoE)

## **Campers**

What is a camp without campers? What is a camp with campers? WOW! The dynamics of the group of campers was truly amazing. They learned, taught, trained, realised, discovered, gathered, understood, recognised, accomplished, reached goals and completed their experience!

They overcame fears and concurred dreams. They inspired each other and made goals. They tried new things and broke old habits. They cried and laughed. Throughout the ten days — they grew!

Thank you for coming and enlightening the experience with your soul:

- Andria Mayes
- Blake Louis
- Calvin Jr. Dickson
- Chris Lowe
- Chrystal Courtenall
- James Zeiger
- Jordan Dickson
- Shelby Davis
- Tate Kucera
- Travis Sheppard
- Wyatt MacDonald

## **Project Goals**

The overall goal of the 2008 Muskwa-Kechika Environmental Youth Camp is to offer youth a two-week wilderness experience. They will 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!

This year was special as we celebrated the ten-year anniversary of the Youth Camp. We celebrated ten consecutive years in nurturing the development of our youth with traditional and wilderness living. We offered them an opportunity to experience First Nation traditions and ceremony. They had a chance to discover their heritage, strengthen their culture and increase their knowledge.

## **Project Objectives**

The 2008 Environmental Youth Camp 2008 met these objectives:

- Provided an experiential learning opportunity in environmental stewardship for a youth residing in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area by way of forest awareness, hikes, mapping and GPS orientation, plants and traditional foods, shelter building, spirit spots and personal ecology, spruce bed making and wilderness survival skills
- Promoted an understanding amongst youth on the values, biodiversity and environmental uniqueness and history of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area by educational presentation and group discussion on the importance of protecting and respecting the environment and educational presentations on [he Muskwa-Kechika Management Area, as well as photography of the land and its' developments;
- Offered 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 such as crafting, beading, sewing, medicine bag making, building a sweat lodge drumming, singing, plant, identification, traditional games, traditional teachings. Moose hunting, skinning and drying of the meat;
- Assisted in developing the life skills, self-esteem and confidence in youth and build relationships with other members of the region as well as responsibility for the camp, teamwork and accountability by providing clean up, cooking and dish duties, fire building, talking sticks, fireside games and songs, group bonding activities, initiative games, secret friends and sunrise ceremonies; and
- Provided experiences in traditional and contemporary land and resource use planning and developed their interests in the environment by thy meat rack and dry meat making, educational presentations, GIS presentations, skinning moose, traditional tool making and hunting.

## **The Camp**

The camp crew took four days to set up the entire camp, which included, water pumping stations, shower creation, tent building, common area shelter, spruce bow beds, wood chopping, grass cutting, trail making, saddle cleaning, horse shoeing and fire pit building The camp crew consisted of Monty Lynch, Angus MacDonald, Brad Sorell and Riannon McCannel. They teamed up together and ensured the camp was ready for the campers!

The day before camp started the cooks Victoria Davis and Judy Cameron arrived with loads of groceries and supplies. They were eager to see their kitchen and were pleasantly surprised that they actually had beds to sleep on! This delight brought smiles to their faces — until they also saw all the organising that needed to be done. They persevered and had everything in order within 24 hours — what a feat of determination and motivation — a great team endeavour! Three of the campers also arrived a day early and were advised by Jocelyn Schick until the other counsellors arrived.

The first day of camp the campers arrived and organised their sleeping arrangements and tent mates. They quickly settled in and found their place in the team and we began to play games and get to know each other. Only one counsellor arrived, Ashley Sheppherd and was the only one for three days, so Jocelyn stayed on to assist where she could. The campers were 75% male and 25% female, making the sleeping arrangements perfectly separated.

The first three days the campers participated in general day hikes, horseback riding, bracelet making, fire building and camp chores. The day hikes were orchestrated by Jocelyn who provided an opportunity to walk through gaming trails and swim in the river. They identified wildlife prints and discussed each with the group. The horseback rides took the group to the top of the mountain which overlooked the West Toad Valley. The youth were amazed at the view and enjoyed yelling at a black bear at the bottom of the mountain. They were interested in the echo of their voices and the view from the binoculars.

The other two counsellors, Donovan Cameron and Victor Kisoun arrived on Saturday and were welcomed with open arms. The refreshing energy of the two male counsellors was exactly what the camp needed to develop and grow. Along with the counsellors, Kaska Elder, Mida Donnessey along with her daughter Emma and son George arrived to provide guidance and traditional education. Mida brought with her some crafting supplies and was excited about the opportunity to skin a Moose with the campers.

Sunday brought Doig River First Nations Elder Jack Askoty to the camp. Jack was an inspiration to the campers and assisted with all facets of the camp. He taught the youth about drumming and the meaning behind the drum. He was able to teach drumming techniques and stick games. Angus also assisted with the drumming and traditional games as well as horseback riding tours.

Constable Jeff Jackson from the Fort St John RCMP detachment arrived on Monday. Jeff brought his crime prevention and law enforcement background from a professional perspective. On a personal and interest note, he is a professional photographer and taught picture taking techniques to the campers. This added an element of excitement and fun to the camp and was able to stay on for five days. Throughout his time he took 750 pictures and

facilitated a PowerPoint presentation before his departure. Jeff really bonded with the youth and gave them one more reason to respect their superiors and Elders.

Tuesday and Wednesday were days to embark on activities such as crafts, horseback riding, horseshoes, drumming, stick games, team building techniques and wilderness hikes. The campers were given alternative activities to participate in and made interest choices. They were kept busy with Counsel Fires and Spirit Spots. The Counsellors worked hard to instil and provide leadership qualities to each youth. They were able to create a way to split the individuals into teams for camp chores, fire building and activities.

A Moose was spotted from the look out point of the camp and the team of hunters packed their gear and headed for the boat. Atop the waters of Moose Lake, the boat manoeuvred its way to the area of the Moose. They walked into the clearing with the others watching from a high point and Victor took one shot — bull s-eye'. He got a Moose. The youth teamed up and went down to the Moose site. They were able to participate (those who wanted to) in the cutting and skinning of this wonderful catch. They quartered the animal and transported it to the camp site where a Moose cutting camp was erected to skin and dry the meat.

Grandma Mida worked with the youth to cut and trim the meat. They created a smoke hut and began to cure and hang the meat. The youth were amazed at the site and were interested in seeing and tasting the final product. That night for diner — they had moose steaks — they were the most-tender steaks ever eaten. Seems that the food at the camp — no matter how it was prepared tasted so great — better than you ever remembered.

Chief Harley Davis and his daughter from Saulteau First Nations, Jason Lee and Leeanna Rhodes from Treaty 8 Tribal Association arrived Thursday afternoon. Chief Davis gathered the group and searched for wood and supplies to create and build a sweat lodge. The lodge was erected in one day and that day also brought the delight of a Moose hunt.

The last night was honoured and blessed with a sweat lodge for all who felt comfortable attending. The inspirational sweat lasted till 2 00 am and was the perfect way to spend the last night of camp. The last morning the group had their last breakfast together and ended the day with gifts, hugs and the exchange of contact information.

Throughout the camp the meals were prepared with gourmet ingredients and many options. The cooks went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the campers, staff and visitors were all fed and nourished. They ensured snacks and beverages were always available to all and made a point of asking if anyone needed anything.

The camp was able to secure a level-three first aid attendant and Sindee

quickly became part of the team! She encouraged youth to try new things, provided Batman and Dora band-aides to those who had minor cuts and bruises. All in all she was there out of caution and was not needed for her first-aid background. She was needed as a leader and was able to participate with activities and horseback riding.

Some of the challenges we experienced were moving the gas and food to the location of the camp. The personalities of the youth were very different and it took time for them to gel and work with each other.

Some of the highlights we experienced were power-point presentations, excellent food preparation, Moose hunting and traditional games. The usage of brand-new GPS units was really educational. The friendships that transpired will last for a long time. The knowledge and education of the land in the MK area was well accepted. The youth were interested in playing a role to help preserve the area.

The 2008 Muskwa-Kechika Environmental Youth Camp was a huge success and we look forward to the next camping experience.



Treaty 8 Tribal Association 2008