

# INLAND&LIFE

Wildlife Health and  
First Nations Communities

Spring/Summer 2011, Issue 3



Volleyball fun



Colouring Time!



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY A. VELEZ

Moose X-ing

## National Policy Gathering

Tamara Steffensen, [tj.steffensen@gmail.com](mailto:tj.steffensen@gmail.com)

THE IN LAND AND LIFE PROJECT has community members and university researchers looking into wildlife health. Along with this, ILAL communicates with the community about CWD and other wildlife and environmental health concerns. ILAL has communicated with video interviews, with our community partners, phone interviews with government and others. We have also had conversations with people on the land and we have been able to find both the problems and potential solutions of communicating about wildlife and human health.

This summer we are going to use some methods of communication that have been suggested by community members. We will be holding a National Policy Forum (June 14-15) to bring out government representatives, researchers and community representatives from Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation, Paul First Nation and Cote First Nation to talk about wildlife and human health. It will start in Edmonton and will be followed up by travelling to Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation where there will be a feast to introduce the visitors to interested community members.

People will have the chance to meet each other then we will have an Isga fireside sharing circle. In this space everyone, including community partners, government representatives and researchers will have the chance to share their concerns, stories and solutions to issues they are seeing around wildlife and environmental health. Francis Alexis will be leading the circle to insure that is carried out in a way that is respectful of Isga teachings. It is our hope that by bringing people out on the land

to discuss these issues we can help create connections between all the different experts here to move forward together to begin solving these problems.

There will be another fireside sharing circle bringing out industry representatives on the land around the end of the summer (the date will be announced soon).

I will be recording peoples' responses to the Isga fireside sharing circles before and after the sharing circle. If you are interested in participating please feel free to contact me because I would appreciate hearing about your views on this project.

Hope to see you there!



PHOTO COURTESY OF TAMARA STEFFENSEN

Tepee Time!

## To Tell Stories of the Land

FRANCIS KOOTENAY  
Fireside Sharing Circle Facilitator

### THE NATIONAL POLICY GATHERING

is important because after the National Policy Gathering we'll have a better idea of how it affects us when the land is developed. I will tell stories about the earth, the forest, the land and the legends. I have some stories the old people told and I want to share them with the people. In



At the community consultation

PHOTO COURTESY OF TAMARA STEFFENSEN

a sharing circle everybody gets a chance to share their thoughts and feelings and expectations. Every person is affected by what happens to the land. Dominant society thinks that you have to be an expert to have a say and I do not think that that is fair. Animals are experts in the forests and they do not have a say. The environment is destroyed and developed. A lot of important habitat is affected. When trees are cut down the plants that live in the shadows die and go away. Even though they say they are going to reclaim the land it is not the same anymore. There are important things out there; sacred places, the land gives us a lot. These sharing circles will allow us to share this information.

I think it's a good thing that this gathering and project are happening. Finally it is happening. I think it will be good.

# Past and Future Project Updates

Stephane McLachlan, mclachla@cc.umanitoba.ca



Stef and the kids  
PHOTO COURTESY OF DEAN REHNE

**THIS PHASE OF THE IN LAND AND LIFE PROJECT** is now entering its final stages. And some results are starting to become clear. Results from interviews with community members show that the decline in moose health IS widespread and substantial. Most members we have interviewed feel that this decline in health IS associated with gas and coal mining. There IS much concern about increases in wildlife diseases as well as parasites like cysts and tapeworms. But results from the sample testing show that these parasites are NOT a threat to human health. Likewise, we have NOT found any Chronic Wasting Disease in any of the moose and deer brains, a disease that is increasingly affecting wild elk and deer in Saskatchewan and now Alberta. But we did find higher than normal levels of a heavy metal called cadmium. NOT high enough to be stressed out about. But high enough to want to do more work in this area.

We have put a huge amount of energy into bringing these results to community members – in ways that are understandable and meaningful to everyone. This takes the form of community presentations and campouts on the land. This newsletter you are now reading has also been an important way of sharing this information – to

community members and outsiders alike. We have been sending it to scientists, governments, and tribal councils across Canada. We have also made many presentations to scientists and governments at conferences across the country. We will hold a national gathering in June 2011, where senior government officials and scientists from across the country will visit. Camping overnight in Alexis, they will hear about community concerns and our research results. And importantly – they will be available to discuss these and to talk about next steps. Tamara Steffensen (from Manitoba) and Misty are taking the lead on coordinating this. This campout will be followed by a second camp in August 2011 that focuses on discussions between community members and industry. Babawale Odunuga (from Manitoba and before that Nigeria in Africa) is exploring ways that these outcomes can be shared with youth and other community members using cellphones and the Internet. As many will know, Helen Cote -Quewezance, Leona Tootoosis and Diamond \*\* from Saskatchewan. And they have now invited community members from Alexis and Paul as well as some of us researchers to visit their communities (Cote and Keeseekoose). Their campout will be held late July 2011.

These outcomes are important, and show how hard researchers and community members have worked together on In Land and Life. Everyone participating in interviews. Hunters collecting samples.

Researchers making sense of the results and sharing these back with community members and outsiders. They also show how important it is to conduct research that links Traditional Knowledge with Western Science. And to have research that is answerable to and controlled by communities. This community-based approach has everything to do with the success of our project. But unfortunately this kind of cross-cultural and community controlled research is still very rare. So we are busy promoting this research approach to other scientists and to governments wherever we can.

We have also been busy writing new funding proposals. In part this is to help all of us continue this important work.. And of course this future funding will allow us to continue to work together and to continue building our working relationships and friendships with one another.

In fact, we just received another year worth of funding from Health Canada to investigate what the cadmium results might mean. We want to expand the sampling to include other kinds of animals. We will still test moose. But we will also include fish, and rabbits as well as water, soils, and plants. We will test in places that we know to be affected by oil and gas. And we will also test in places that perhaps are less affected. We will combine this testing with interviews – about changes in animal and plant health. But also hold interviews about changes in human health. If the community thinks it important, we will also do some tests for cadmium on human hair and urine. These results will be shared back to the community in campouts and in community presentations. And if the community approves, we will share at least some of these results with outsiders. So stay tuned.

Well they just rang the bell that lets me know that the plane is starting to descend into Toronto. A city that is even further away from Alexis and Paul than is Winnipeg. And the wind they warned us about is now shaking the plane around.

This turbulence forces shifts my thoughts from the friendships we have made in the communities to the crazy concrete chaos below. That said, I know that there are also many pressures that face these communities, I hope that our research doesn't make the community situation more stressful or create any worry. And I and the others involved in the research look forward to further discussions and to continuing these relationships for many, many years to come.

**"We have NOT found any Chronic Wasting Disease in any of the moose and deer brains..."**

## Samples in the Classroom

Katie Petersen, kateanne.petersen@gmail.com



Katie and a moose nose  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA WEBER

**I MET DIXIE DAVIES** in the Alexis high school cafeteria one crisp February lunch hour. I had been visiting with Daisy Potts, cultural coordinator for In Land and Life, who is also the cook for the junior and senior high school lunch program. This cafeteria is a hub of activity at lunchtime and for me has been a great place to make contacts with people in the Alexis community.

Dixie told me that as her Grade 7-8 science classes were in

a biology unit, this would be a perfect time for me to do a presentation to them about our wildlife health study. The students are very visual and hands-on, she said. With this in mind, myself and Justin Adams, a young hunter who has been very active in collecting moose samples for the project, came to present to Dixie's two science classes on February 17. I brought in 2 short videos shot by In Land and Life researchers showing footage of moose sampling by Alexis community members on their traditional hunting territory.

The students were interested in the sampling procedure and many had questions about the organs they were seeing in the videos, and the abnormalities that have been found in the moose. Many of the students themselves have hunted moose and other animals. I also brought in a set of frozen moose samples, recently harvested from a young cow moose on the reserve by Shane Potts, Daisy's son. Justin and I explained the procedure for collecting each organ sampled, and he answered many of the students questions about moose hunting and sampling. The students really enjoyed being able to see the organ samples up close, to

pass them around in their ziploc bags, and especially to pose for photos with the lower leg bone, which is taken as a sample of bone marrow and hide. I hope these presentations in the schools and our work in the community will help inspire more youth to learn about their traditional practices and also about wildlife health in the areas where their families hunt.



Outside the Alexis School  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA WEBER

2005

**Ta-kiyoxa waheeba**  
September

- First wild case of Chronic Wasting Disease found in Alberta

2009

**Wagiya waheeba**  
July

- University presentations to Chief and Council about wildlife health research possibilities
- Community feast

**Washopa waheeba**  
August

- First campout with researchers and community members

2010

**Osnid waheeba**  
January

- Mapping with hunters

**Wagiya**  
July

- Second campout with researchers and community members

# Traditional Recipes from Daisy's Kitchen

## BANNOCK

### Ingredients:

Big silver bowl 3/4 full of flour  
2 palms full of baking powder  
2 palms full of salt  
2 second pour of oil  
water

### Instructions:

Put flour in bowl and mix in the baking powder and salt. Make a well in the flour mixture and pour the oil and the water into the well mixing until a dough is formed.

Spread the bannock onto a pan and bake in a 450 degree oven until golden brown and a fork comes out clean.



Making bannock

## DRY MEAT FLOUR SOUP

### Ingredients:

Dry meat  
Chunks of moose fat  
Diced potatoes  
Diced green onions  
Flour

### Instructions:

Put water in a pot and bring to a boil. Cut the dry meat into one inch squares, throw them in the pot and boil for an hour.

Add the diced potatoes and onions and boil until the potatoes are tender. Mix the flour with some water and pour it in the pot mixing as you add it to the soup, this is the thickening agent. After a good stir let the soup boil for another 10 minutes.

Note: A medium sized pot will feed 10-15 people

## MOOSE NOSE SOUP

### Ingredients:

Moose nose, heart and tongue  
Rice  
Raisins

### Instructions:

Cut the nose off the moose and put it on the coals of a fire to sear the hair off. Put the heart and tongue over the fire for a while as well.

Boil the nose, heart and tongue in water for two hours, or until tender. Take out the heart, nose and tongue and cut into pieces. Add rice and raisins to the pot and cook together.



Searing the moose nose

## Announcements

- There will be a retreat for Indigenous Activists in Alexis sometime in August. Please get in touch with us if you are interested in being involved.
- A National Policy Gathering will be taking place June 14 and 15 in Alexis. The purpose of the gathering is to bring together scientists, community members and government officials to talk and listen to concerns about wildlife health. There will be a fireside sharing circle as part of the gathering.
- There will be a fireside sharing circle with community members and industry in the fall. This will be to give community members a chance to voice their concerns and give industry a chance to better understand that community perspective.
- If you have any questions or comments about anything that you have seen or read in this newsletter, please let us know. Also, let us know if you are interested in contributing to the newsletter. We can be contacted by phone at 204-474-9316 and 1-866-580-8160 or by e-mail at inlandandlife@gmail.com
- We encourage you to visit the project website for up-to-date information at [www.inlandandlife.ca](http://www.inlandandlife.ca)

# Keeseekoose and Cote Campout

Helen Cote, asldkfj,lsdjf, U of M,  
weier@cc.umanitoba.ca



Diamond, Helen and Leona enjoying the sunshine

**SOPHIE GENAILLE** was born May 1886. She was a 16 years old Metis girl when she married old John Whitehawk Wapi-kake. She had 5 sons and one girl. The baby girl was 7 months old when John died. He died in the early 1900's and later Sophie married his younger brother Arthur Severight. Arthur took Sophie into Treaty and they had 4 daughter and 2 sons.

We are the descendant of Sophie's clan and we welcome you into our territory. Sophie's clan consist of the Cote family, the Kakakaway family, the Genaille family, and the Bryant family. We will not all be at the campout as we want to make this a small gathering. We also understand that the purpose of the camp is to test our moose, deer and elk meat.

David Kakakaway (elder) and Brenda his wife will be the major organizers. David and Brenda have stated that it is very important to return back to our traditional ways as we are losing our languages, our ceremonies and our customs.

We hope to invite a Kici-Anisnabe (old man) to bless our feast, which we want to do to welcome our relatives from Alberta. We would also like to honour the visitors from the universities as well as the children. David would like to take this opportunity to put up a sweat for our young men which is our custom and practice. The women do not sweat in our territory and we ask that you honour that. Our women plan to cook as much traditional food as possible, and we also plan to pick medicines. Dymid Kakakaway would like to do a tour of our territory, we want to dry meat and we want to dance.

See you there!  
-Sophie's Clan

When: July 18-22, 2011  
Location: Peepaw Porcupine Forest, SK  
Please bring:  
- dishes  
- silverware and knives  
- tipis and tents



Meat cutting at the campout

waheeba

Ubshe iyadase waheeba  
October

- Sharing of research results with community partners
- Video screening

2011

Babdibi waheeba  
June

- National Policy Gathering

Wagiya waheeba  
July

- Saskatchewan campout

Washopa waheeba  
August

- Activist conference (Alexis Reserve)

Ta-kiyoxa waheeba  
September

- Industry fireside sharing circle

campout  
archers and  
y members



PHOTO COURTESY OF BABAWALE ODUNUGA

Investigator:

## Babawale Odunuga

**Q: What got you interested in working with the project?**

**A:** It is my desire to explore human aspects of environment as they relate with research. I love working with people and am excited to learn how education, conservation, and environment are viewed from the perspective of a different culture.

**Q: What would you like to see happen through the work of the project?**

**A:** My aspect of the project has to do with research around new social media and communication of science. I hope to see youth in the community embrace their identity, appreciate their culture, empower themselves and perhaps help change public image concerning the first nations people.

**Q: What is your favourite book or story and why?**

**A:** One book that readily comes to mind is Joan Puls Osf, "Seek Treasures in Small Fields". The book captures the essence of loving others, the need for appreciating the small things in life, embracing beauties of common things in our everyday life and journeys. It emphasizes the need for putting things into perspective and giving a part of yourself to others.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEAN REHNE

Investigator:

## Justin Adams

**Q: What got you interested in working with the project?**

**A:** I'm a pathologist; I study animal diseases, so I am interested in anything that has to do with animal sickness. I am also interested in public health so this project was a good fit. Working with the community is also something that appeals to me.

**Q: What would you like to see happen through the work of the project?**

**A:** I think that the main goal is to see if CWD is the problem at all in the animals that the community is hunting. The safety of traditional food. If anything, just to give some information about CWD that is the main focus of the project. The other thing is to respond to questions that people have about what is found in the meat and if it is safe. We are exchanging information. We are learning. And, hopefully, we will end up with a better understanding between traditional and scientific knowledge. Find some common ground.

**Q: What is your favorite book or story and why?**

**A:** Isabelle Allende is an author I like. People may have heard of her book, "The House of Spirits". I really like her new book called "Island Beneath the Sea". It is about slaves in what now is Haiti. Ultimately it is about relations between people.

# Biomonitoring Project with AFCN & Mikisew

Nicole Nicholls, CONTACT INFO  
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**THE MEMBERS & ANCESTORS** of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) & Mikisew Cree First Nation (Mikisew Cree) have lived in the Northern Alberta region for thousands of years. The traditional lands contain the largest oil sands deposit in the world. Crude oil is removed from these oil sands through mining and other methods. The mines are clustered around the Athabasca River, which flows north into the Peace-Athabasca Delta and then Lake Athabasca. This water system is the lifeblood of ACFN and Mikisew Cree traditional lands. The members of these First Nations depend on these water systems for their traditional livelihood, their culture and their Treaty Rights. Many ACFN and Mikisew Cree members live in Ft. Chipewyan, on the shores of Lake Athabasca, which is downstream of the oil sands developments.

There is growing concern, and mounting evidence, about the health and environmental risks associated with oil sands development. There is evidence that pollutants from oil sands developments are entering the Athabasca River system and flowing northwards to the Delta. Unusually high rates of rare cancers have been identified in the community of Ft. Chipewyan, downstream of the oil sands developments. Fish with strange deformities have been pulled from the waters of Lake Athabasca. Our First Nations members now are afraid to eat their traditional foods and they have suffered an impact to their culture and Treaty Rights as a result. Recent scientific advisory panels appointed by different levels of government have found that the environmental monitoring systems for the oil sands region have critical gaps and flaws.

ACFN and Mikisew Cree have been raising concerns about these issues with Industry, the Alberta Government, and the Federal Government. The ACFN and Mikisew Cree peoples believe it is our sacred obligation to act as stewards of the environment in cooperation with the various government and other relevant entities. Our people want answers to their questions. Questions like: "are our traditional foods safe to eat?" "What contaminants are in our water?" "Will I get sick if I eat my traditional foods?" "Are our traditional medicines polluted?" We are tired of waiting for governments to step forward to answer these questions and so we have partnered together with Dr. McLachlan from the University of Manitoba to design and implement a project that can help give us some answers.

## Hello and Goodbye

**THERE ARE CHANGING TIMES** in the In Land and Life project and there are some people who will be coming and going from the project. In March Dayna Kroeker and Stefan Epp visited Alexis for the last time on this project. Dayna Kroeker worked on designing the In Land and Life Newsletter and Stefan coordinated the overall project. Dayna Kroeker will be moving out West to British Columbia and Stefan will be staying in Winnipeg. He will be teaching a course at a University in Winnipeg.

Troy Stozek who has worked very hard on the In Land and Life documentary just came back from a trip in

South America and he has moved out to rural Manitoba to work a farm for the summer. Hopefully we'll see Troy again!

There are also some new people who will be working on the project. Babawale Odunuga has joined the project. He came out to Alexis for the first time this March to learn more about the community. There is an interview with him on the last page of this newsletter. Erica MacPherson is currently helping to finish the documentary video the Troy began. We will soon have another new member on the team who will take over Stefan's position. All of the people on the project are excited to visit and hang out with people again this summer for the National Policy gathering and other get togethers!



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Dayna's little meat blanket



Stefan's expert meat cutting



Troy packing a bag



Welcome Babawale!

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANNA WEIER & KATIE PETERSEN

FSC logo here