

# Teslin Tlingit Council



Prepared for: Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust

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## Teslin Advanced Wolf Trapping Course Final Report

We would like to begin by thanking the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust for their support of our local initiative to promote land-based trapper education, in order to facilitate local, responsible, and ethical management of wildlife. With the support of this funding, Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC) hosted a Wolf Trapping Course on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>, which enabled two local trappers to establish wolf gangsets in an area that was not previously active in wolf population management. This area is within Game Management Subzone 10-22, part of the Nisutlin River Region, an area well known as being critical moose habitat.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

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The Wolf Trapping Course consisted of 4 days of training that were split between indoor and land-based activities.

#### *DAY 1 - classroom activities:*

- Wolf biology and behavior
- Traditional trapping knowledge
- Rights and regulations
- Breakaway snare building and trap/snare preparation

#### *DAY 2 – field set-up*

- Set #1 - old kill site - 4 footholds and 12 breakaway snares set up in field
- Set #2 - 65 breakaway snares set up and baited

#### *DAY 3 – field gangset assessment*

- Changes made to gangsets as required
- Set #3- 108 breakaway snares set up and baited

#### *DAY 4 - classroom pelt handling*

- Skinned and boarded one wolf pelt from start to finish
- 2 days later wolf was turned

This project identified and met six specific goals:

1. To get local people out on the land for educational and capacity building
2. To engage the local population in mentoring roles
3. To encourage local participation in wildlife management
4. To encourage cooperation of local hunters and trappers
5. To encourage youth to participate in experiential education
6. To encourage more activity on an existing and underutilized trapline

Two local TTC citizens participated in the course, one, a long-time trapper who wanted to expand to include wolves in his trapline management efforts, and the other, a youth who has demonstrated a keen interest in trapping, and holds an assistant trapping license on his father's registered trapline concession. Due to the hands-on, land-based nature of the course, participants are now set up with active wolf trapping sets, and have, within the first couple of weeks, successfully caught one wolf, and properly handled the pelt with additional guidance from the instructor, Frank Johnstone. This training allowed the participants to make use of TTC's Wolf Pelt Handling Incentive program, which, as a condition of the incentive, requires that pelts are properly and respectfully handled, and which facilitates trappers obtaining the highest potential price at auction.

According to local trapping knowledge, it was generally agreed that the area chosen to develop wolf trapping capacity should target a wolf pack that is not already being trapped. This exercise was explained to the participants as an important consideration for the responsible management of predators. Once potential areas had been identified, the instructor contacted the trapline concession holders to gain the support and participation of a concession holder. It was a priority to foster a partnership with local trappers that would translate into a long-term commitment to continue managing a wolf trapline.

Wolf biology and behaviour was jointly taught by the instructor Frank Johnstone, the Yukon Government Wolf Program Coordinator, Peter Knamiller, and a TTC Elder, Doug Smarch Sr. This approach provided the participants with a complimentary and comprehensive understanding of scientific, local, and traditional knowledge of wolf biology and behaviour.

The style of snare that the participants were trained to build and employ in the field utilizes only breakaway hardware, which fails under 750lbs of pressure, improving the safety of ungulates traveling in areas where wolf traplines are being maintained.

TTC will support the long-term benefits of this program by maintaining ownership of the trapping supplies and monitoring the use of the equipment to ensure it is being responsibly and effectively operated and maintained to promote successful and ethical wolf management in the Teslin area. This year's participants have agreed to leave the current gangsets open for this full season and open them again for the following season. The participants now also have local contacts for tips on skinning, boarding, and trapping as they need it.

## COMMUNICATIONS

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*See attached advertisement poster*

Advertising for the course was done using posted one-page flyers on bulletin boards, via email list, and through the Teslin Renewable Resources Council. In addition, the instructor conducted active outreach in the community to boost interest and to get commitment from a trapline concession holder to support the course. Although participation was low, the experience and training that the participants received was highly effective.

Land-based training is an effective approach to ensuring that efforts to educate local trappers are being properly implemented in the field, and gives trappers the confidence that comes from having an experienced trapper present to provide advice and manpower during the establishment of trapping operations. Due to this specialized approach, participants were able to follow through with their classroom training and attain success in managing a wolf trapline.

This program has identified a need to begin fostering an interest in trapping and the commitment required to maintain a successful, ethical, and responsible trapline within the community prior to organizing training workshops. This may be attained through additional incentives or by promoting accessible assistance for trail cutting or trapline set-up, such as is provided by the Teslin Tlingit Council Game Guardian program. Additionally, the success of this type of training was recognized to be, in part, a function of the group size due to the sensitive nature of wolf behaviour. It has been suggested by the instructor that two to three participants allows for effective education without creating a disturbance on the landscape that will be detrimental to the success of the trapline.

Teslin Tlingit Council



is hosting a

# Wolf Trapping Course



**Dates:** February 1st/2nd; 8th/9th

**Location:** TTC Longhouse; Field location TBA.

**Instructor:** Frank Johnstone

For more information or to sign up, please contact Gillian Rourke at:

**(867) 390-2532 ext. 376** or  
**[gillian.rourke@ttc-teslin.com](mailto:gillian.rourke@ttc-teslin.com)**

Sponsored by:

This course is free and open to the public



This course will focus on the necessary steps in setting up for wolf trapping:

**Day 1 - Indoors**

Traditional and biological knowledge of wolf behaviour; snare building

**Day 2 - Field\***

Wolf set building

**Day 3 - Field\***

Wolf set assessment and alterations

**Day 4 - Indoors**

Pelt handling

**\*Participants are required to provide their own transportation to the field sites (vehicles and snowmobiles)**



