

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Trapper Culture Camp Final Report 2014-15



Prepared for: Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust

**Prepared by: Jen Laliberte, Cultural Education Coordinator,
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department**

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Acknowledgements and Participation

Mähsi Cho for all of the support we received in planning for 2014-15 First Trapper.

- Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund for funding support
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- Bruce Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Trapper
- Peter Nagano, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Trapper
- Mike Taylor, TH Camp Caretaker
- Peggy Kormendy, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Trapper and Elder
- Debbie Nagano, TH Heritage Director Trainee and TH Trapper
- Jen Laliberte, TH Cultural Education Coordinator
- Ryan Peterson, TH Fish and Wildlife Steward
- Tyler Rear, TH Youth Mentor
- Shawn Hughes, YG Conservation Officer
- Nicole Cook, TH CELC
- Ashley Bower-Bramadat, TH CELC (elementary)
- Ricky Mawunganidze, TH Youth Enhancement Coordinator
- Alexa Mitchel, TH Youth Enhancement Support Worker
- Austen Gaven, TH Assets Administrator
- Patti Sidney, TH Assets Assistant
- Glenda Bolt, DZCC Manager for lending furs
- Robert Service School for allowing the youth to attend First Trapper

Project Purpose

Trapping fur bearers is one of the oldest economic activities in North America and many other parts of the world, although for the Dawson and TH community, it has been a declining pursuit for many. TH's goal is to enhance this once vibrant and growing occupation. Given the structural razing of our culture and customs, it is critical that we simultaneously revive old ways while crafting new ones to impart to our youth the values passed down to us. Given also the decline of trapping activities in our Traditional Territory, it is equally important that we continue to teach and educate our children on the importance of the enhancement of trapping activities. TH feels the need to provide additional opportunities for youth to learn more about conservation and stewardship. Through this project, local youth will gain the value of fur bearers and the importance of their habitat and conservation. By continuing to educate as many youth as possible, we believe we are helping to instill within them the value of stewardship and are thereby helping to ensure the future health of our fur bearer resources. Moreover, TH is inspired to organize the First Trapper education program for all TH Youth and other youth living in Dawson City, with the expected achievement of high interest and participation for an enriching education program. Elders and Commercial trappers will be recruited to provide their expertise and traditional knowledge and biologists or wildlife field technicians will provide their knowledge of fur bearers' habitat within TH Traditional Territory.

First Trapper Background

In an effort to achieve objective 16.1.1.2 of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) Final Agreement - "to preserve and enhance the renewable resources economy" – TH has initiated a trapper education program known as "First Trapper" for youth to learn all about trapping in the north. TH is interested in teaching conservation and stewardship on furbearer wildlife in TH Traditional Territory to both First Nations and non-First Nations youth in Dawson.

The program was officially established in 2012/2013 fiscal year by the TH Fish and Wildlife Branch with support from other TH departments. For the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 fiscal years, the program was organized by the Heritage Department and supported by the TH Fish and Wildlife Branch.

In order for the program to have success, there is a need for assistance with finances and human resources to keep the program going. The First Trapper program relies on the financial support from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust fund and in-kind financial support from TH. The program seeks human resource support from various TH departments such as Fish and Wildlife Branch, Health and Social Department, and Heritage Department. There are particular individuals that are targeted to help with finances or to help out with the program as a teacher, supervisor, or an organizer. TH also relies on support from YG Environment Department, particularly the Regional Biologist, Wildlife Technician, and Conservation Officers for the northern area. The program puts a huge emphasis on support from local First Nation and Commercial trappers and Elders who can share their experiences, local and traditional knowledge related to trapping, living and work on the land.

There is a strong interest from the community to see this program succeed and we have had consistent involvement from youth. We still anticipate that the program is undergoing some growing pains, but we sense that the participation and interest will grow, so TH wants to continue to provide this program in the future. TH will continue to recruit individuals to provide their expertise and traditional knowledge for the program. TH will make best efforts to do the planning and preparation for the First Trapper program starting in November of each year. Timing for the camp will need to be flexible each year based on the weather, school schedules, community events, work and/or personal commitments.

Trapping Camp has been planned for various locations over the years. This year's camp was scheduled to take place at Nänkäk Chèholay (Land of Plenty: R-22), on Kilometer 9 of the Dempster Highway. This camp is just across the highway from the recently-acquired TH trapping concession #31. Because 31 is a small concession, close to the highway and Dawson, it is an ideal site for educational use.

First Trapper Teachings

Getting out on the land to a Trapline provides significant trapping experience. The First Nation trappers, with years of experience, provide excellent teachings and knowledge of the many different kinds of situations that could be encountered when out on a Trapline. Some of those situations could possibly include circumstances such as overflow, hand parts caught in the trap or a broken down snowmobile. Additional knowledge and hands-on experience include setting the trap such as the Belisle 330 for wolf, lynx, and fox, and the Belisle 120 for marten and mink. The intent of the First Trapper program is to teach traditional knowledge and skills to the younger generation through the assistance of Elders, supervisors, and trappers. Further presentations provided in the program include topics about diseases and biological data of fur bearing animals and management of commercial and subsistence harvesting. During the program there are opportunities to include elders and knowledgeable trappers to share their life-long experiences, stories, and traditional knowledge. There is also a camp organized to provide more hands-on teachings and experiences in a camp setting. The youth get the opportunity to travel on the land with experienced trappers and elders to visit traplines.

Participants

Following the structure of previous years, we established the limit of 8 youth participants for the program to maintain an enriching experience for the youth and have adequate supervision. We had 8 youth register for the 2014-15 First Trapper program. There was 1 male and 7 female participants. All youth attended the Friday session, but During the Friday in-town session, we had 4 supervisors and 1 Elder share their knowledge of trapping and other land-based bush survival.

Planning and Preparation for Activities

This is the third year Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has organized a First Trapper program. The Fish and Wildlife Branch and Heritage Department teamed up to carry out the activities associated with the First Trapper program and the Cultural Education Coordinator from the Heritage Department took up the bulk of the responsibilities to organize the First Trapper program. The departments set-up and organized an ad-hoc planning committee including individuals from the Fish and Wildlife Branch, Heritage Department, Education Department, and TH Trappers. The planning committee's role was to provide direction, guidance, assistance, and advice to the Cultural Education Coordinator. The Cultural Education Coordinator successfully completed the Yukon Trapper Training Workshop in early December to assist in planning and facilitating the camp.

In an attempt to ensure the event was open to feedback and input from as many TH citizens as possible, the Cultural Education Coordinator drafted a letter to mail out to all TH trappers in early December, with a tentative plan to host the camp in February, depending on availability of trappers. After Christmas in early January, the Cultural

Education Coordinator followed up by phone and email with all the trappers who had received the letter. Bruce Taylor and Peter Nagano, who had been involved in previous years, were the trappers who confirmed involvement. As a group, we planned for an in-town orientation on Friday, February 6th and the camp to follow from Saturday February 7th to Monday February 9th. Trapping Camp has been planned for various locations over the years. This year's camp was scheduled to take place at Nänkāk Chèholay (Land of Plenty: R-22), on Kilometer 9 of the Dempster Highway. This camp is just across the highway from the recently-acquired TH trapping concession #31. Because 31 is a small concession, close to the highway and Dawson, it is an ideal site for educational use.

Tasks involved in preparing for First Trapper 2014-15:

- Sending out notification/letters to Elders and citizens
- Booking the training facility (TH Hall) and ensure it is operational for session
- Providing equipment for presentations
- Preparing a powerpoint presentation with help from YG Fish and Wildlife powerpoints
- Compiling the orientation packages and worksheets
- Inviting Elders, presenters and trappers
- Ensuring the trapping equipment and furs were available and moved to the training facility.
- Setting up tables and chairs
- Cooking/arranging for lunch, snacks, and beverages
- Preparing honoraria contracts for Elders, Trappers, and Caretaker
- Having Caretaker haul gear and equipment to R-22 site and prep cabins
- Arranging to have trucks, skidoos, outdoor equipment, and food available
- Ensuring the trapping equipment and fuel were taken to the site

Project Activities

First Trapper Orientation Day Friday, Feb. 6th 2015 TH Hall

9:00am—Introductions and Welcome Icebreaker (snacks, juice, tea, etc.)

9:30am—YG Trapping Education Powerpoint Presentation/Intro

10:30am—Shawn Hughes, Conversation Officer Services—Yukon Trapping Legislation and Conservation Officer Services Roles

11:30am—Ryan Peterson, TH Fish and Wildlife—TH/Yukon First Nations Trapping

12:00pm—Lunch Break (lunch served in the Hall)

1:00pm—Peggy Kormendy, TH Elder, and Debbie Nagano—Traditional Trapping

Knowledge and Experience in TH Traditional Territory

2:00pm—Game/Activity with Ricky and Alexa

2:30pm—Bruce and Peter—Fur Handling, Pelt Turning, Safety in the Bush

3:30—Bruce and Peter—Marten Box Building

4:30pm—End of day—Questions, Reminders for Packing, Gear List Review etc.

Communications

Calling all TH Trappers!

TH Heritage is seeking trappers to help share their knowledge, expertise and experience with Youth at the 2015 First Trapper Culture Camps in February/March.

Honorarium offered for your time and contributions.

Call Jen Laliberte at 993-7100 ext. 153.



Heritage Department, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

December 15th, 2014

Dear

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department is currently planning for the 2015 First Trapper Culture Camp. I am contacting Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in trappers to see who would be interested in participating in this program to help teach our youth the basic processes and procedures of trapping and caring for harvested furbearers, in order to encourage use of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traplines and increase subsistence lifestyle in young people.

TH's goal is to enhance the once-vibrant occupation of trapping. It is critical that we simultaneously revive old ways while crafting new ones to impart to our youth the values passed down through generations, to maintain culture, knowledge, and traditions. TH feels the need to provide additional opportunities for youth to learn more about conservation and stewardship. Through this project, local young people will gain understanding of the value of furbearers and the importance of their habitat and conservation. By continuing to educate as many youth as possible, we are helping to instill within them the value of stewardship and are thereby helping to ensure the future health of our fur bearer resources.

We are currently looking to hold this camp over two or three weekends in February—one weekend to provide an orientation and do the initial setting of the traps, then a second weekend (or daytrip) to check traps, and a third weekend to clean and prepare any animals harvested (or alternately clean and prepare furbearers donated/provided by trappers if none are harvested during the camp).

I am able to provide honoraria payments for your time and contributions, and would be so appreciative of your time and knowledge to help make this program a successful educational experience for our youth. Please get in touch if this is an opportunity you would be willing to contribute to.

Mähsí',

Jen Laliberte
Cultural Education Coordinator, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
Phone: 867-993-7100 Ext 153 Email: jen.laliberte@trondek.ca



Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

First Trapper Camp

Orientation and Camp: February 6th—9th 2015

Check Traps & Skinning: TBD

**For Youth Grade
7 and up
Families/Elders
welcome to
come out too!**



**Hosted at
Nänkäk
Chèholay (Land
of Plenty, R-22)**

**Learn safe, ethical, and respectful trapping
practices and Cultural Teachings with
TH Trappers, Elders, and Staff**



For more information :

Jen Laliberte: 993-7100 Ext. 153
jen.laliberte@trondek.ca







Recommendations

As in the previous years, we struggled to have a camp portion happen for the First Trapper program, and this year it was the result of an exceptionally long and intense cold snap. The week before camp was scheduled to take place, the temperature dropped to -50. Because of logistical and safety concerns at operating equipment and having youth and staff out on the land at these temperatures, the decision was made to attempt to re-schedule the camp for a weekend when the weather warmed up. Unfortunately the weather did not break for weeks, and then other events and programming were already scheduled, and it became impossible to find another opportunity to have a camp before the trapping season ended and the reporting needed to be prepared. Bruce and Peter still set traps on concession #31 in the hopes that we might be able to host a skinning day out at the Nänkäk Chèholay site (Land of Plenty: R-22), but we were not successful in harvesting anything for this purpose. The unpredictability of the weather during the trapping season makes planning and organizing this youth camp very challenging. We did our best to try to be flexible and adapt to the circumstances, but we had to prioritize the safety and well-being of the youth, Elders, and staff given the extreme temperature conditions. If we are able to have a camp portion of the program next year, we will make better use of the funding provided by Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust.

The Cultural Education Coordinator will also continue to work with the TH Education Department and YG Education Department to create an accredited course for the First Trapper program. This is slated to happen for the 2015-16 year.

Conclusion

We hope that each year the TH First Trapper program will improve and continue for the foreseeable future to benefit youth in the TH traditional territory. We want to create enriching experiences for them so they develop an appreciation for trapping and instill the value of conservation and stewardship of furbearers in the Yukon.

We appreciate the financial assistance from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund and TH for continuing to fund this worthwhile program. Working with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust was excellent to deal with—strong communication, flexibility, and assistance as required. We had a very positive experience.