

## **Grassy Narrows Trappers' Council Trapping Workshop** **Final Report**

On October 21, 2010 a trapping workshop and community feast were held in Grassy Narrows First Nation north of Kenora. The Grassy Narrows Trappers' Council hosted the event, with invitations extended to members of the Kenora Trappers' Council as well as Grassy Narrows community members.

### **Attendance**

When the project was conceived, organizers Andrew Keewatin (Grassy Narrows Trappers' Council) and Clarke Anderson anticipated having community elders as well as representatives from regional and provincial trapping authorities assist with demonstrations of trapping techniques, skinning, stretching and preparing furs. The anticipated audience was to have included Grassy Narrows community members of all ages, as well as trappers from Kenora and the surrounding area.

In an unexpected turn of events, a death in the community meant that the community was observing a four-day mourning period during the week of the trapping workshop. Many elders and community members were prohibited by custom from attending community gatherings, including the trapping workshop.

Nevertheless, the trapping workshop was very well attended by youth from the community. 125-150 students from all grades at Grassy Narrows School, plus their teachers, participated in the workshop, held in the gymnasium of the community hall. Andrew Keewatin, president of the Grassy Narrows Trappers' Council, gave students some background on trapping and its importance to the traditional culture of Grassy Narrows. Students were then encouraged to explore the gymnasium and visit the many displays and exhibitions about traps, trapping, skinning and stretching techniques.

In addition to students, there were about 25-30 adult community members who attended the workshop. Among these were six elders who directly assisted with fur preparation demonstrations. These elders also shared insights and experiences related to trapping with the youth.

Six members of the Kenora Trappers' Council were in attendance, plus a handful of other non-Aboriginal, non-community members (mostly teachers). Some of the members of the Kenora Trappers' Council brought trapped animals for the demonstrations and participated in demonstrating fur preparation techniques as well.

## **Presenters**

Ken Maw, the trapping instructor with the Kenora Trappers' Council, and Roger Toews, the Fur Harvesters' representative for Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario accompanied Andrew Keewatin and Clarke Anderson (Kenora Trappers' Council president) in demonstrating skinning and stretching of furs. Ken maintained an exhibition table with an assortment of traps and he answered questions regarding trapping regulations. Roger had a table of prepared furs, ready for market, and he answered questions and explained the processes involved in valuation of prepared furs.

Andrew provided explanation to students about the cultural value of trapping as a traditional practice in their community.

## **Meeting Project Objectives**

As per the Statement of Work provided for this project, there were seven proposed objectives, listed below with comments as to how the project met (or did not meet) each objective:

### ***3.1 Educate community members, especially youth, about the cultural practice and importance of trapping***

The greatest success of this workshop was its ability to reach community youth. With over 125 students of all ages from Grassy Narrows School in attendance, workshop presenters and attending elders were able to transmit a great deal of traditional knowledge to the youth.

In his opening address to the students, Andrew Keewatin shared background about traditional ways of life wherein people were entirely reliant upon the land for survival. Lorna Brown, the school's Director of Education, remarked that it was beyond many of these kids' comprehension that trapping and procurement of food and goods from the wild meant survival for their grandparents or great-grandparents. Ms. Brown further commented that many of these students are the third generation to live removed from the land, reliant upon pay cheques rather than traditional life-sustaining practices like hunting, fishing, trapping and berry picking.

As they toured the different stations, students questioned presenters not just about the furs and fur preparation but also about the animals themselves. Clarke Anderson shared that one community elder had been shocked when a young boy asked him "What is this?" and pointed to a common red squirrel. Other students questioned whether the muskrat was a baby beaver. In contrast, at the end of the day some of the women elders

took home the beaver meat as a desirable traditional wild food. Elders and presenters alike were surprised to witness the degree to which the community's youth have become removed from the land that surrounds them.

At the end of the day, teachers had students in upper grades write journal entries to reflect on their experiences from the day. Workshop assistant Janice Anderson (Clarke's wife) asked Grassy Narrows School principal and director of education Lorna Brown for copies of some of the students' reflections, and these will be passed along when they are received.

### ***3.2 Educate non-community members about the cultural and economic importance of the trapping industry in Grassy Narrows***

Ten non-community members including teachers and six members of the Kenora Trappers' Council participated in the workshop, either learning or demonstrating trapping techniques. Some members of the Kenora Trappers' Council (KTC) were difficult to persuade to attend as the venue was seen to be too distant from Kenora, in too remote a location. Other trappers – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike – were already out in the field, on their trap lines. Nevertheless, of those six members of the KTC who did attend, all participated in demonstrating fur preparation techniques or otherwise worked alongside the students, sharing stories and lessons.

Many of the currently active Grassy Narrows trappers were unable to attend the workshop, either because of the mourning period observance, or because they were already out on their trap lines for the season. As a result, it was difficult for the workshop presenters to facilitate discussion specifically about current economic and cultural values for the community with regard to trapping, or current trappers' personal experiences.

Andy Keewatin spoke about broad community cultural and traditional values around trapping in his opening remarks, and a few community elders who had trapped in years past were present and were able to convey their experiences to workshop participants, including the non-community participants.

### ***3.3 Explain the rules and regulations under which licensed trappers operate***

Rather than have a formal presentation or seminar on trapping rules and regulations, this information was conveyed informally as workshop participants visited information tables.

Ken Maw, the trapping instructor from the Kenora Trappers' Council, had a table set up so visitors could see different types of traps. He spoke about fur harvesting regulations and regulations governing trap lines to those who visited his table, too.

Roger Toews, the Fur Harvesters' representative for Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, had a table of finished furs and explained about valuation and usage of furs in the worldwide economy.

### ***3.4 Provide hands-on demonstrations of trapping and fur-preparation practices***

Students were shown all the different demonstrations - intact animals prior to fur preparation, skinning, fur stretching, and finished furs - and were then encouraged to participate in various hands-on activities. Students mostly participated in stretching skins. Clarke remarked that students preferred working with muskrat skins as they were small and easy to handle without damaging them. One boy stretched a couple of beaver skins and commented that it reminded him of trapping with his uncle in the past.

Grassy Narrows Trappers' Council and Clarke Anderson provided the animals used in this workshop with the exception of two beavers, which were donated by a member of the Kenora Trappers' Council.

Throughout all the demonstrations, elders, members of both Trappers' Councils, and the Fur Harvesters' rep oversaw students' participation and answered questions and shared insights. The main demonstration presenters were Andrew Keewatin, Clarke Anderson, Janice Anderson, Ken Maw, Roger Toews, and community elders Quentin Quoquat, David Sneaky, Mary Assin, Lee Assin, Charlotte Loon, and Elizabeth Pahpasay.

At the end of the workshop, the wild meat was donated to willing recipients in the community.

### ***3.5 Provide a forum for community-wide, and community-to-community exchange of information and discussion related to trapping as a culturally and economically important practice***

The exchange of information among Aboriginal elders, youth, Grassy Narrows community members, Kenora trappers, and non-Aboriginal non-community members happened naturally and organically throughout the day. There was no focused forum or facilitated discussion. Instead, information was shared as people participated in hands-on activities. Elders were able to convey to youth and non-community members the values they held related to trapping and subsisting off the land. Kenora trappers were able to share expertise with the students, and students were comfortable asking questions, trying fur preparation demonstrations, and learning from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trappers alike.

### ***3.6 Provide a community-level forum for discussion regarding sustainable management of trapping resources***

This is one aspect of the workshop that was not as successful as anticipated. Due to the absence of currently active community trappers (due to both the observance of the mourning period and some trappers already being away on their trap lines), there were simply not enough people present to really engage in a solid discussion about trapping resource management.

Clarke Anderson remarked that it was difficult to try to have this discussion without the current Grassy trappers present as regulations pertaining to management of trapping resources differ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trapping groups. For example, it would not have been worthwhile for the members of the Kenora Trappers' Council to describe to the students present the methods by which Kenora trappers' trap lines are managed, as the system any of these students may end up using should they choose to trap may be entirely different, as per provincial policy.

Nevertheless, the workshop organizers maintain that this is an important discussion that they would like to see happen at a future date for several reasons. First, although policy differs across cultural lines, management of the trapping resource (forests and fur bearing animals) is a regional issue irrespective of human cultural boundaries. Second, management policy is currently set by agents external to the region, and may not represent a model (or models) that are best suited to the needs of trappers in our region. Finally, engaging Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trappers in this discussion may be an opportunity to begin a process for establishing regulations that better meet the needs of all trappers in the region.

### ***3.7 Create an opportunity to build connections and greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trappers***

The organizers of the workshop felt that it provided an excellent opportunity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trappers – and non-trappers – to gather and enjoy a shared educational experience. Not only were social connections and greater understanding fostered between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trappers, but these connections were established between elders and youth, and between Aboriginal youth and non-Aboriginal trappers. The event organizers feel that having people from diverse backgrounds participate in a hands-on community learning event has proven to be a highly successful means of building cross-cultural, intergenerational bonds.

The opportunity for sharing community extended beyond just the workshop into the evening's community fall feast. The Grassy Narrows Trappers' Council hosted musical entertainers The Whynots, Doc and Marcella Vezina and band from Patricia Beach, Manitoba. Many of the students who had participated in the workshop during the day returned for the feast in the evening with their families. Again, due to the observance of a mourning period, attendance at the feast was lower than anticipated, but for those who did attend the event was very enjoyable and provided an excellent venue for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to share time and place.

#### **Final Budget**

Please see attached final budget.

Time in-kind: Clarke took mileage for some trips, but not all and Clarke's, Janice's and Andy's time preparing and running the workshop was provided in-kind.