



The Land Between

Cottage Country's Conservation Organization

www.thelandbetween.ca

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A JOURNEY OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE



Gathering Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge

In September 2008, Curve Lake First Nation began a journey to gather Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge about species and species at risk. The project would raise awareness of the cultural significance and importance of the species and continue our traditions within the community, the Williams Treaty Area and The Land Between region. Zac McCue and Krista Coppaway were hired from the community. They jumped in and created project flyers that were posted and distributed throughout the community- The word got out within the first week!

Vignettes of each of the species at risk were produced along with a one page brochure that identified the 9 species that were being studied. A questionnaire was produced and sent out to Elders and community members that hunt, fish and trap in and around the community.

Zac and Krista attended meetings and workshops at several locations including Parry Sound and Ottawa that dealt with Species at Risk. They also contacted individuals from Curve Lake that may have traditional knowledge that they were willing to share.

A celebration event called the "night of nostalgia" was held at the Curve Lake Cultural Centre with special invitations delivered to community members who may hold traditional knowledge. It was hoped that reminiscing about our past would spark discussion around traditional relationships and uses of Species at risk and other non threatened species.

A presentation highlighting each species was produced and presented by Krista Coppaway, a slideshow of over 300 old photos of Curve Lake were shown along with a video of Wellington Williams and son Gary Williams touring around the Curve Lake islands and Wellington spoke in Anishinaabe about what it was like "back in the day" and about the animals they encountered along their tour.

Elders shared traditional knowledge about non threatened species that were food sources and that linked the Anishnaabek culture to the land. Stories about the Butternut and American eel were shared during the discussions. A traditional feast of moose stew, wild rice pudding and saasgan was prepared for everyone who attended. Some of the knowledge shared confirmed what was gathered earlier in the month. The food was delicious and everyone enjoyed the gathering.

But overall, we discovered that there is a lack of traditional knowledge about species at risk specifically. Theories as to why this might be pointed to the fact that we passed our traditions on through stories and practical experience, not through the written word or other medium. Others

suggest that the speed at which our traditional territory was colonized impeded and interfered with our traditional practices.

However, what is clear is if no action is taken soon, this important knowledge will be lost as we loose our Elders. So that Curve Lake First Nation is reaching out and communicating with other First Nations in these areas to gather and share knowledge. This way we can keep our traditions alive, effectively assist in the recovery of species at risk and steward the land.

We are also developing a guideline of best practices and lessons learnt to share with other First Nations. One lesson is to talk about other species that would be comparable to those that are at risk. And, Curve Lake will continue to gather this important Anishinaabe traditional knowledge with the support from the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk.

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge will be gathered within the Williams Treaty territory and "The Land Between" and distributed throughout this area. By distributing communication and educational products that contain ATK present and future generations will learn about who they are culturally, and the essential interrelationship that we and living things have with the surrounding natural world.

If you would like to see the work that Krista and Zac have done; to visit our Cultural Centre; or to learn more about Curve Lake First Nation, check out our website: www.curvelakefirstnation.ca.

To First Nation People, the Turtle is sacred.
It is Mother Earth. Turtle Island.

The turtle shell has 13 scutes corresponding to the 13 moons in a year and the 7 parts of the turtle: head, tail, body, and 4 legs, represent the 7 Grandfather Teachings; the 7 codes of life and Indigenous North American values

that have existed for ages...

1. Bravery
2. Respect
3. Honesty
4. Humility
5. Wisdom
6. Honor
7. Sharing

