



Reconnecting With the Land
Beaufort-Delta Region Youth Trapper Training Program, 2005

FINAL REPORT

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



FUR INSTITUTE OF CANADA
April 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Fur Institute of Canada is grateful to all of its partners in helping us to develop our third “Reconnecting with the Land” pilot program in the Northwest Territories.

Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development

Municipal and Community Affairs

International Fur Trade Federation

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Northern Stores

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Reconnecting with the Land Beaufort-Delta Region Youth Trapper Training Program

FINAL REPORT

Reconnecting with the Land is a trapper training and outdoor skills course developed by the Fur Institute of Canada. It exercises an alternative approach to education that incorporates local and traditional on-the-land learning with academic studies for northern and remote communities across Canada. The primary objective of the program is to provide an opportunity for youth to learn marketable, environmentally sustainable, and culturally aligned skills that they will be able to use throughout their personal and professional lives, and pass on to future generations. The FIC initiated this program in the Sahtú region in 2003 and 2004 after being approached by the local elders to help coordinate an on-the-land trapping program for their youth.

In 2005, the Fur Institute of Canada, along with its partners in the Northwest Territories (most notably, the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, or RWED), held a 20-day bush skills camp at Sitidgi Lake in the Inuvik area. The program was offered to youth aged 16 to 30 who were not in school or employed.

PROGRAM PREPARATION

On December 10, 2004, a call for applicants was made by RWED in Inuvik to Community Hunter and Trapper Committees, Renewable Resource and Game Councils, and Land Claims Organizations (Gwich'in Tribal Council and Inuvialuit Regional Corporation) in the eight communities of the Inuvik region. In anticipation of this program being made available, Renewable Resource Officers had identified certain individuals who participated in the Community Trapper Workshops that took place in the communities a few years ago. During the application phase of this project, officers approached these individuals and encouraged them to apply. The deadline for applicants was set for January 14, 2005.

Ultimately, nine students were enrolled in the course, with one from Fort McPherson leaving the course within a few days for medical reasons. He did not return to the program. Students who completed the course were:

Sachs Harbour:	Charlton Haogak, Age 17 Warren Esau, Age 20
Paulatuk:	Lee Ruben, Age 22 Jonathan Dillon, Age 20
Holman Island:	Ryan Oliktoak, Age 19
Tuktoyaktuk:	Bradley Voudrach, Age 17
Fort McPherson :	Ernie Robert, Age 26 Bryan Kay, Age 23

All of the participants who enrolled were between the ages of 16 and 26. None was employed or registered in school, thereby fulfilling the RWED goal of targeting youth considered at risk.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Beginning February 2nd, participants spent 19 days at a winter bush camp at Sitidgi Lake, 40 kilometres from Inuvik. The camp, comprising seven canvas tents, was set up by RWED officers over a two-week period at the end of January.

Of the eight participants who finished the course, two were Inuvialuit and six were Gwich'in. Given the cultural mix of the group, it was decided to offer both bush and tree-line skills, and to hire one Gwich'in and one Inuvialuit instructor. Sitidgi Lake was selected due to its proximity to the tree-line and access to both tundra and bush terrain.

Days One to Four involved orienteering (setting camp rules and expectations) and firearms safety. On Day Four, the participants were split into two groups which were maintained throughout the rest of the program. Participants learned survival skills like building fires, bear safety, firearms safety, first aid, and using maps and GPS's. They established trap lines on the tundra and in the bush. Students became adept at safely and effectively setting and checking traps, setting fish nets under the ice and preparing Wolf, Mink, Marten, Fox, Muskrat, Beaver and Lynx pelts for the world fur market. They also had a workshop on the Canada/Russia/European Union Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS). For a full outline of the course curriculum, please see Appendix III.



Particularly cold temperatures caused minor changes to the original curriculum. More time was spent finding, cutting, and stacking dry wood, and instructors used this opportunity to focus on chainsaw safety and camp maintenance. Second, cold weather meant fewer animals were caught in traps. RWED officers had previously organized for seven species of furbearer (Wolf, Mink, Marten, Fox, Muskrat, Beaver, and Lynx) to be available to students for practicing pelt preparation.

Much of the course focused on the daily activities of checking trap lines, beaver traps, and fishing nets. A full day was devoted to understanding the regulations surrounding humane trapping standards, as outlined in the NWT Regulations and the AIHTS. RWED officers spent one day towards the end of the course discussing wildlife management, local RWED projects, and the role of RWED Officers with the students.

On the final day, participants were recognized for their accomplishments. Each was given a certificate of completion, as well as a skinning knife and a GPS. Participants were also offered traps to take home.

Personnel:

One Gwich'in instructor (John Jerome) and one Inuvialuit instructor (David Nasogaluak) administered the large majority of course material.

Eileen Edwards was hired to be the camp cook. Aside from being an excellent cook, it should be noted that her maternal approach to the participants was a very positive influence on camp atmosphere.

RWED provided a large number of officers for basic on-the-ground support. The role of the officers was to oversee the safety of the camp, deliver some parts of the course material, and to ensure that overall order was maintained. At least one officer was on hand at the camp at all times.



EVALUATION OF THE SITIDGI LAKE PROGRAM

As the first scaled-back pilot program (Sahtú area programs in 2003 and 2004 were six months long), the goals of the Inuvik region *Reconnecting with the Land* program focused almost strictly on trapping and land skills training, with less emphasis placed on transferring traditional knowledge, language and culture. There was no pure academic component to the program.

Attaining our Goals:

The primary objective for the program was to provide an opportunity for youth to learn marketable, environmentally sustainable, and culturally-aligned skills that they will be able to use throughout their personal and professional lives and pass on to future generations. By all accounts, the immediate goal of the program was met, and the long-term aspect of this goal -- passing land skills on to future generations -- is very likely to take place.

Students have given some extremely encouraging feedback on the program through personal comment and a questionnaire. All students who took the course felt that their land skills improved to the point they are both confident traveling on the land, and in taking part in bush activities in the future. Each left the course with a skinning knife, a GPS, and traps.

Other objectives of land-based programming are to instil healthy living habits and to change students' relationship with authority. Taking students out of a closed learning environment often makes them less defensive, helping to change their relationship with teachers and authority and introducing them to a different way of living and learning. Isolation, in both distance and in time, can work to break some negative patterns that youth might develop in their teens. With this in mind, it is hard to know if the 20-day Inuvik program was able to have the same impact as longer programs at creating these sorts of changes.



The Effects of Program Expense:

Reconnecting with the Land, and outdoor programs in general, are dependent on a large amount of support. This includes cash to buy gas and food, and for equipment purchase or rental. Just as important, however, are in-kind contributions associated with the delivery of the program, such as human resources, administration, and land/lodgings. The overall cost of overnight programs in the Northwest Territories is estimated to be about \$350 per student per day.

Operations at the Sitidgi Lake camp were run extremely efficiently by an extended team of RWED officers and management, who undertook the delivery and administration of all daily camp operations (instruction, human resources, meals, and all logistics and planning). As the only partner involved in the actual delivery of the program, however, RWED's manpower, time, and in-kind contributions became prohibitively large to the point that the course is not expected to be repeated next year unless parts of the responsibility can be shared with other stakeholders.

The original 30-day course was scaled back to a 20-day course due to lack of funding. It is felt that greater involvement and coordination with other stakeholders, such as the schools and school boards, would help to take the full burden of program delivery away from a single partner. For this reason, it is suggested that RWED delegate some aspects of program delivery to other regional partners. Coordination is further discussed in greater detail in the Recommendations section.

A Unique Achievement:

One of the notable achievements of the program was its success in mixing students from both Inuvialuit and Gwich'in cultures. This aspect of the course was originally approached with some apprehension; however, the mix of cultures, experiences, skills and backgrounds embodied by the students and instructors turned out to be an asset to their overall experience. A great deal of scope was added to the course because students could understand the distinctiveness of their outdoor skills and traditions through the eyes of their fellow students.

Accessibility:

Ideally, on-the-land programs should be designed by the local community to respond to the needs and interests of their local youth. The 2005 Inuvik program focussed on at-risk young men. Going forward, some effort should be made to explore the possibility of expanding the target of the *Reconnecting with the Land* Program to young women, to adults, and to students not considered at-risk. Though only a handful of girls are expected to show interest in learning to trap, culturally appropriate programs for young women (such as pelt preparation, sewing, drying meat, picking berries and making crafts) could certainly meet the objectives of promoting traditional skills and achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the completion of the Sitidgi Lake program in Inuvik this year, FIC Executive Director Rob Cahill and Project Manager Elizabeth Cundill travelled to Yellowknife, Inuvik and Norman Wells. They met with over 40 individuals involved with the Reconnecting with the Land program since 2003. The purpose of these meetings was to:

1. Understand the objectives and challenges of on-the land programming in these regions. Specifically, meeting attendees discussed the Sitidgi Lake program's effectiveness, the challenges surrounding its funding and delivery, and realistic ways to implement this program in the future. Many of the recommendations discussed at that time are outlined in this Final Report.
2. Verify the level of commitment and interest in continuing on-the-land programs in the Beaufort-Delta, Sahtú and other regions of the NWT.
3. Identify, discuss, and promote *Reconnecting with the Land* to new and old funding sources such as the local Bands, Land Claims Organizations, Government, Industry, Community organizations (HTO's and RRC's), non-governmental organizations, and individuals in the communities.

The following recommendations flow from these meetings and focus on how to move ahead in establishing accredited, land-based education in communities across the Northwest Territories and Canada.

1) Create a Modular Format:

It was suggested that a series of curriculum modules should be developed, so that communities can choose a curriculum that fits with their needs and objectives. Communities would be able to pick from a series of outdoor education modules ranging from beginner to professional, depending on their objectives (culture and language, education, land skills, personal and life skills, at-risk youth) and targets (the various age groups, at-risk youth, gender, skill levels, etc).

- Each module would have a series of curriculum guidelines, resources, activities and outcomes associated with it.
- Some modules may have certificates of completion or formal certification in land-based skills, such as first aid, firearms/ chainsaw safety, small engine repair, or trapper training.
- Each module would have to have a series of measurable results; i.e., a measurable way to evaluate its success. Overnight programs of more than two weeks should also be followed-up on annually for three to five years. A questionnaire sample can be seen in Appendix IV.

2) Be Initiated at the Grassroots Level:

Communities know their own needs the best, and their motivation is a prerequisite to implementing successful and meaningful programs. Local people are aware of the resources that they have, such as cabins, teachers, and trap lines, and so should be central to deciding which of these are available and can be used in delivering a *Reconnecting with the Land* program in their area. Further, local people are aware of what organizations, businesses, and groups might make good partners.

3) Include Elders:

Elements of apprenticeship and mentorship should be incorporated into the overall program. This could be done most meaningfully by tapping the skills of local elders, who could pass on a component of culture, language, and mentorship, perhaps even beyond the end of the program. Another possibility would be to coordinate with local hunters and trappers willing to take on graduates of the program, as helpers.

This approach could easily be extended to girls and young women by implementing programs focused on preparing skins and producing fur products.

4) Coordinate:

Given the great amount of interest and effort paid to land-based education at the grassroots level throughout the NWT, it has become apparent that high-level coordination will be needed in order to fund these programs in a cost-effective way. A coordinated approach should also allow communities to share information, experiences and approaches, and to develop the required quality in teaching resources and personnel. At the moment, there are few instructors who are both qualified and willing to take charge of several youth in an extended on-the-land situation. Aside from finding qualified lead instructors, on-the-ground support is also needed (such as a youth care worker, an elder, RWED officers, or another teacher). Coordination at the community level is very important in order to maintain the long-term availability of these programs.

5) Be Consistent:

On-the-land education is typically plagued by short-term efforts and unreliable funding. In order to succeed over the long term, programs must be available on an annual, ongoing basis. All students will be more likely to consider land-based careers (such as environmental monitoring and the renewable resource sector) if they perceive that land-based education is a regular and essential part of the school curriculum. Through the *Reconnecting with the Land* pilot projects, it became apparent that at-risk youth would re-enrol and were more likely to stay enrolled in school if accredited, land-based education were made available to them. Long-term funding from local, regional, territorial, and industry stakeholders is required to offer these programs on a consistent basis.

6) Develop a Solid Evaluation Process:

On-the-land programs should have a follow-up component in order to determine their effectiveness. This includes knowing if students apply the knowledge they learn in the program, whether they pass on the skills and knowledge to other people, and whether the

program positively affects their success in school, the community, and in their personal lives.

As has been pointed out in previous RWTL programs, not all change is instantly apparent, and not all success is measurable. The value of outdoor programs does not lie entirely in the hard skills that are learned by the students. Their value may lie in the students realization that traditional knowledge is a valued part of formal education, experiencing a complete absence of drugs and alcohol, or the confidence that results from discovering they can learn, and apply their knowledge in a challenging environment.

7) Develop a Strong Communications Process:

It is important to have an effective communications program to reach the communities, youth, schools, government, trade and media.

Communications from government bodies (such as RWED) to community members is crucial if students are to be aware of the *Reconnecting with the Land* program. Also, it is vital to establish a reliable path of information if potential students are to know what prerequisite courses might be required for their application, when application deadlines are, and other pertinent information. Some recommended channels include using the local schools, church, youth centres, and renewable resource office for posters and flyers. However, follow up must be made to find out if these channels are actually effective in dispersing course information, as local offices or schools may receive the information, but may not always post it. For this reason, it is important to have a strong contact person in each community whose role it is to establish contact with local partners (schools, parents, trappers, etc).



GOING FORWARD

It remains the FIC's long-term plan to develop the Inuvik pilot project into an annual, accredited program. The 2005 pilot program in Inuvik was an excellent and positive first step in achieving this goal. RWED, as the primary deliverer of this program, is also committed to youth on-the-land programming.

The Beaufort-Delta School Board continues to show strong interest in integrating alternative and outdoor education into their current school curriculum. The FIC will continue to establish meaningful and long-term relationships with potential government, land claim, community, NGO, and industry partners.

The FIC's objective is to facilitate the collaboration and coordination process, with the aim of formalizing long-term, accredited, land-based programs so that these may become a consistent part of the fabric of northern education and training. With this in mind, and with the support of the meeting attendees and their organizations, we aim to submit a proposal on how to move ahead with this process.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: CALL FOR APPLICANTS



December 4, 2004

Hunter and Trappers Committees
Renewable Resource Councils

RE: Inuvik Region 20- Day Land Skills Program

It's great to announce that the Department of Resources Wildlife Economic Development (RWED) in conjunction with the Fur Institute of Canada have secured funding, and will be administering the Inuvik Region 20-Day Land Skills Program that will commence on February 02, 2005.

You may recall that RWED has been trying to secure funding for this project for the past few years. The original plan was for a 30-day program, however it has been scaled back to be 20-days. The Renewable Resource Council's during Regional meetings, the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board have indicated their support for this project.

The location will be at Sitidgi Lake where two instructors can teach land travel and trapping skills in both a tundra and bush environment. The target group is 16 – 30 years of age who are currently not in school and may be unemployed. The main objective of the program is to encourage the participants to return to school, learn traditional skills in harvesting of animals and furbearers, and subject them to the various funding programs to either continue their education or to acquire equipment enabling them to harvest from the land.

RWED is seeking your support and involvement in the selecting of participant(s) from your community. Interested individuals between 16 – 30 years of age would need to complete an application and submit to your organization. RWED is recommending that your organization select who the successful participant(s) will be no later than January 14, 2005. RWED will then contact the individuals to arrange travel, accommodations, and provide them with a program kit.

The project will have thirteen participants. The following is the suggested number of participants from each community. Please keep in mind that if a particular community cannot fill their total number of participants, RWED will coordinate with the communities to maximize the number of students.

Paulatuk, Holman, Sachs Harbour	1 participant each
Tuktoyaktuk, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Inuvik	2 participants each

	13 total

During the past few years and anticipating that this program would be made available, Renewable Resource Officers have been encouraging individuals to take this program.

Officers have identified certain individuals who participated during the Community Trapper Workshops that took place in your community a few years ago. During the application phase of this project (December 10 to January 14), Officers will continue to approach individuals and encourage them to complete an application to have submitted to your organization.

RWED would also appreciate your recommendation on who you think would be proficient instructors. The intent is to have one Gwich'in and one Inuvialuit instructor, who have considerable amount of knowledge in land skills and trapping, traditional methods of harvest, and can teach traditional value of wildlife. We would appreciate any names that you submit to the Department. Please find enclosed the 20-Day project description, applications, and posters. RWED will keep your organization informed as the project unfolds, and we will submit a final report.

If there are any recommendations, concerns, or if you require more information about this program, please contact the undersigned or a Renewable Resource Officer.

Sincerely,

Tim Devine
Manager Wildlife and Fisheries
Dept. Resources Wildlife and Economic Development
Inuvik Region
Telephone: (867) 777-7230

Cc. Robert Charlie Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board
Frank Pokiak Inuvialuit Game Council
Norman Snowshoe Gwich'in Tribal Council
Regional Renewable Resource Officers
Daryl English Regional Conservation Education Officer

APPENDIX II: “RECONNECTING WITH THE LAND” TRAPPING AND LAND SKILLS CURRICULUM

INUVIK REGION - February 02 – 22, 2005

February 02: Camp Orientation

Delivery by an Officer:

- Roles and responsibilities of participants, instructors, officers.
- Objectives of the 20-day land skills program
- Classroom sessions are informal and encourage exchange of information.
- Disciplinary: Verbal Warning, Dismissal
- Concerns \ Complaints \ Requests go to the officer.
- Request for cigarettes \ misc. items go to the officer.
- Think safety
- No drugs or alcohol
- Equipment Use: do not abuse and permitted use only
- Equipment is used for the program and not for leisure
- Breakfast: 0730 – 0830, Lunch: 1200 – 1300 Supper: 1800 – 1900
- Lunches to be prepared for Field Trips
- Overview Curriculum
- Instructors will evaluate participants throughout the program
- Participants will receive Journal books and they are encouraged to make daily entries and all observations throughout the program. Issue Journal books to each participant.
 - Instructors and officers will maintain control of firearms.

Firearms Awareness

Delivery by officer:

- Safe Handling, cleaning, and sighting –in, Firing Range.

Set Fish Nets for trapping bait

February 03: Survival Skills – Classroom

Delivery by Instructors(s):

- List of equipment when traveling on the land
- First Aid kit contents
- Clothing
- Hypothermia
- Identifying dangerous situations, overflow, thin ice.
- Observing weather and obtaining forecasts
- Making a survival kit.
- Let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.

Delivery by Officer:

- Map Reading
- Global Positioning System (GPS) overview and use

February 04: Trapping Orientation – Classroom

Delivery by Instructor(s):

- Identifying species and their tracks
- Prime Fur Harvest Window
- Safe Handling of Traps
- Preparing Traps
- Types of Bait

Delivery by an Officer:

- Fur Price Program
- Mackenzie Valley Fur: Marketing of NWT Furs
- Trapping Regulations, Seasons
- Beneficiaries of LCA: no trapping licence required, exclusive right to trap
- Stretching Boards – Classroom
- Stretch boards for martin, fox, and wolf

February 05: Pelt Preparation – Classroom

Delivery by Instructor(s)

- Skin furs provided: martin, bear, wolf, mink, muskrat, beaver, and lynx.
- Boil and dye traps

February 06:

(Split participants into two groups. To remain in the same group throughout duration of program)

Delivery Inuvialuit Instructor:

- Group 1 - Establish Tundra Trap-line

Delivery Gwich'in Instructor:

- Group 2 - Survival Skills – In the Trees
- Building Fire
- Shelters
- Signaling aircraft

February 07:

Delivery by Inuvialuit Instructor- Group 1

- Survival Skills – Tundra
- Heat sources
- Shelters – snow huts, wind breaks
- Signaling aircraft

Delivery by Gwich'in Instructor- Group 2

- Establish Bush Trap-line

February 08:

Delivery by Officer and Instructors

- Chainsaw Safety
- Cut Trees and Deliver to Camp
- Survival Skills in the Trees
- Buck Wood and Pile at Camp

- Survival Skills in the Tundra

February 09:

Delivery by Inuvialuit Instructor- Group 1

- Check Tundra Trap-line

Delivery by Gwich'in Instructor- Group 2

- Caribou \ Moose Hunting

February 10:

Delivery by Inuvialuit Instructor- Group 1

- Set Fish Net

Delivery by Gwich'in Instructor- Group 2

- Check Bush Trap-line
- Set beaver and muskrat sets

February 11:

- Fur Institute of Canada – AIHTS Workshop

February 12:

Delivery by Gwich'in Instructor- Group 1

- Caribou \ Moose Hunting

Delivery by Inuvialuit Instructor- Group 2

- Check Tundra Trap-line and Fish Nets

February 13:

Delivery by Gwich'in Instructor- Group 1

- Check Bush Trap-line and Fish Nets

Delivery by Inuvialuit Instructor- Group 2

- Set Fish Nets

February 14:

Delivery by Inuvialuit Instructor- Group 1

- Check Tundra Trap-line

Delivery by Gwich'in Instructor- Group 2

- Check Bush Trap-line

February 15:

Delivery by Roger Catling and Guy Erasmus

- Wolf Preparation

February 16:

Delivery Inuvialuit and Gwich'in Instructors

- Take Down Trap-lines

February 17:

Delivery Inuvialuit and Gwich'in Instructors

- Skin all Furs

February 18: RWED Day

Delivered by Department of Resources, Wildlife & Economic Development staff

- Diseased Wildlife
- Bear Safety
- Wildlife Management – Regional Projects
- Field Operations – Responsibility of a Renewable Resource Officer
- Maintenance Snow-machine \ Sled \ Komatik

February 19:

- Closing Ceremonies
- Program Evaluations
- Financial Support Programs
- Certificates
- Knives and Trigger Locks

February 20 – February 22: Participants Travel to Communities

Note: Participants from Sachs Harbour will travel on February 22. These participants have option to work for the Department on February 21 to assist in taking down camp.

APPENDIX III: PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE AND FOLLOW-UP



Dear Program Participant,

As a graduate of the Youth Conservation/Education Program, we would like your opinion on the program to help us improve it in the future. Your answers will help us to know if the course is useful. If you wish to add extra comments, please feel free to use the back of the questionnaire. All comments, positive or negative, are welcome.

This is an *anonymous* survey. It should take about 5 minutes.

GENERAL

I took the course in (please tick one)

- ☐ 2002-2003 (Turton Lake)
- ☐ 2003-2004 (Turton Lake)
- ☐ 2005 (Sitidgi Lake)

How was your overall experience? (Circle one)

NOT SATISFIED

SATISFIED

VERY SATISFIED

What aspects of the program have helped you the most?

What aspects have not been useful?

What changes would improve the program? Please be as specific as you can.

Would you recommend outdoor education programs to other youth in your community?

YES NO

TRAPPING

Do you feel that taking the program helped you to become a better trapper?

YES NO

How many days a month do you spend at least some time trapping? (Please tick)

- ☐ 1-3 times a month
- ☐ 4-6 times a month
- ☐ 7-10 times a month
- ☐ More than 10 times a month

Have you used the skills you learned? (Please tick)

- ☐ Hunting
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Snowmobile maintenance
- ☐ Hunter safety
- ☐ Other ? _____

Since finishing the program, have you taught other people to trap? If so, who?

EDUCATION

Are you still enrolled in school?

YES NO

If you answered "No", please tell us why.

Have you taken any courses or done any skills training since finishing the program?

YES NO

If Yes, what have you taken?

Did taking the program help you to further your education?

YES NO

Did taking the program help you to learn: (please tick)

- ☐ traditional language
- ☐ traditional knowledge
- ☐ other aspects of your traditional culture (give examples if you like)

HEALTH (Completion of this section is optional)

If you smoked cigarettes before the course, did the course help you to stop or limit smoking after the course was over? Please comment if you like.

N/A YES NO

If you drank alcohol before the course, did the course help you to stop or limit drinking after the course was over? Please comment if you like.

N/A YES NO

If you used drugs before the course, did the course help you to stop or limit using drugs after the course was over? Please comment if you like.

N/A YES NO

Has taking the course made a positive impact on your personal wellness?

Diet and choice of foods?	YES	NO
Mental health/ peace of mind?	YES	NO
Confidence?	YES	NO

Other?

PERSONAL

Please state your...

Educational Goals:

Career Goals:

Personal Goals:

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO IMPROVE THE “RECONNECTING WITH
THE LAND” YOUTH CONSERVATION/EDUCATION PROGRAM**

APPENDIX IV: PRESS RELEASE



Reconnecting with the Land - Aboriginal Youth at Risk Conservation/Education Program

Inuvik NT, March 2, 2005 – Eight young men have just returned home from a unique experience at Sitidgi Lake. For three weeks, the youth lived in canvas tents in a winter bush camp where they learned trapping and outdoor skills.

“Reconnecting with the Land” was developed and delivered by the Inuvik Region’s Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (RWED) Department and the Fur Institute of Canada (FIC). The program was offered to youth aged 16 to 30 who were not in school or employed. Participants learned survival skills like building fires, bear safety, firearms safety, first aid, and using maps and GPS’s. With qualified instructors, they established trap lines on the tundra and in the bush. Students became adept at setting and checking traps, setting fish nets under the ice and preparing Wolf, Mink, Marten, Fox, Muskrat, Beaver and Lynx pelts for the world fur market. They also had a workshop on the Canada/Russia/European Union Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards.

The FIC initiated this program in the Sahtú region in 2003 and 2004 after being approached by the local elders to help coordinate an on-the-land trapping program for their youth. This is the first time that the program has been offered in the Inuvik area and, by all accounts, it was a huge success.

“I learned so much about survival and trapping,” said Bradley Voudrach, a 17-year-old from Tuktoyaktuk, who is now back at school. It was really fun; I would definitely do it again.”

Caroline Kay, an elder from Fort McPherson, is especially grateful for the experience that her grandsons Bryan Kay, 23, and Ernie Roberts, 26, were given. “I’m so happy that there are programs like this. I’m 90 years old, and I have lived on the land almost my whole life. I still go, even today. It’s important that traditional skills are passed on. It makes me proud to see my grandchildren practicing these skills. They really enjoyed it, and I just want to say thank you to everyone who did this for them.” Bryan and Ernie could not be reached for comment as they left town three days ago to go trapping.

“This kind of program is extremely important,” said Bob Bailey, RWED Assistant Deputy Minister of Operations. “It allows young people to get out on the land, to learn some skills from their elders that they can use to provide a living for themselves and for their families.”

This year’s participants were Charlton Haogak and Warren Esau from Sachs Harbour, Lee Ruben and Jonathan Dillon (Paulatuk), Ryan Oliktok (Holman Island), Bradley Voudrach (Tuktoyaktuk) and Ernie Robert and Brian Kay (Fort McPherson). Two instructors delivered the program – David Nasogaluak, an Inuvialuit from Tuktoyaktuk and John Jerome, a Gwich’in from Inuvik. Renewable Resources officers were on site to coordinate operations and to teach participants about Wildlife Management and the responsibilities of RWED officials.

“Communities across Canada have shown interest in the *Reconnecting with the Land* youth program,” said Rob Cahill, FIC Executive Director. “Besides teaching life skills and building self-esteem, the program promotes conservation and animal welfare principles. We extend our thanks to RWED staff who delivered this year’s course, and to our generous sponsors, Municipal

and Community Affairs, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, International Fur Trade Federation, and Northern Stores.”

The Fur Institute of Canada, a national non-profit organization based in Ottawa, was established in 1983 on the initiative of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Wildlife Ministers. Its overall mission is to promote the sustainable and wise use of Canada's fur resources.

For more information, please contact:

Robert B. Cahill, Executive Director, Fur Institute of Canada
130 Slater Street, Suite 605, Ottawa Ontario K1P 6E2
(613) 231-7099 x 226

APPENDIX V: ARTICLE FROM THE “WESTERN STANDARD”

MAY 2, 2005 | WESTERN STANDARD

ENVIRONMENT

CANDIS McLEAN

Twenty-three-year-old Bryan Kay, a Gwich'in-Inuvialuit from Fort McPherson, N.W.T., north of the Arctic Circle near the Yukon border, feels his life just got a shot in the arm. He's recently returned home from a three-week crash course in the trapping skills that have been passed down in his community for generations. The course, called Reconnecting with the Land, is aimed at helping aboriginal youth at risk—young men 16 to 30 who are neither in school nor employed—to learn the skills their ancestors once learned from their fathers. And Kay couldn't be having more fun doing it. Laughing about the experience of the Inuvialuit boys from the northernmost barren land who had never before seen a tree, Kay exclaims: "Those greenhorns! All they knew was that chainsaws knock down trees, and they were cutting them down without looking which way they were leaning. I'm surprised no one got trampled by a tree."

In the Arctic these days, the skills that were once passed from generation to generation aren't any longer. For one thing, there isn't always a father around to learn from—thanks to increasing rates of single motherhood and rising divorce rates. And even those kids lucky enough to have a dad, aren't learning trapping and survival skills at his knee. That's because over the past couple decades, after the fur trade was decimated by animal rights groups, such as Greenpeace, an entire generation of natives have been forced off the land and onto welfare.

For Kay, and dozens of others like him, things may finally be turning around. The fur trade is showing signs of recovery, thanks largely to the insatiable appetite for skins coming from China and Russia. One of the largest seal hunts in Canadian history began in March (despite the complaints and threats of boycotts from animal rights activists) and furs are once again hot on the catwalks of Europe's fashion capitals. And prices are on the way up.

All the good news of late for the Inuit has got their young men's self-confidence and optimism about the future soaring. "I love my sanctuary—out on the land," says Kay. Since the course began, he says, he has spent every spare minute he's had out trapping, as though it's the most natural

Return to THE LAND

After nearly losing their centuries-old way of life, a revival of the fur trade is giving young natives hope for the future



In Reconnecting with the Land, young natives are learning to net fish under the ice, set traps and prepare animal pelts the way their forefathers did

my friends because I'm bored. They should teach more kids these skills because it shows them a different way of life that keeps them out of trouble." Animals, too, he believes, since some say that the demise of the arctic hunter has led animals to lose their fear of man. "Black bears tend to wander into town," says Kay. "One went into my cousin's house and really messed it up. Hopefully with more hunting, things will return to normal."

Getting things back to normal is exactly what the Reconnecting with the Land program is designed to do. The program started in 2003 in the territories' Sahtu region, around Great Bear Lake, after local elders there approached the Fur Institute of Canada, looking for

help in teaching their youth the age-old traditions of trapping, which were quickly vanishing. The program this year was expanded to the Inuvik region as a joint project between the institute and the region's Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development Department. Participants learn everything from how

to build fires to first aid and orienteering. They were taught how to set and check traps, net fish under the ice and prepare pelts of wolf, mink, marten, fox, muskrat, beaver and lynx for export.

But Reconnecting with the Land has given participants more than just a trade, says Warren Esau of Sachs Harbour, N.W.T., who took part in the program. It may return a sense of purpose to a generation of men. "Learning to trap will work major on kids [who are] drinking and breaking and entering, and provide a living for those without much education," says Esau, 20, who has a Grade 9 education, and a wife and one-year-old daughter to support. Warren's mother, Aleta Esau, blames many of the social problems faced by her community on the Greenpeace activists who convinced the European parliament in 1983 to outlaw baby harp-seal pelts, resulting in a reduction in the number of Canadian seal pelts sold to 60,000 in 1983, from 186,000 in 1982, and leading to the collapse of markets for all skins. Her father, Peter Esau, 70, who can neither read nor write, raised 10 of his own plus four adopted children on the meat he hunted and trapped. "In the early 1980s, my dad helped finance our education by giving us fox furs to sell," she recalls. "Then everything went downhill, trappers were losing money after paying for gas and supplies. People had to move to get jobs, the population dropped. We had to live on white-man food instead of country food; obesity and diabetes increased." Working in a store in the late 1980s, Aleta says, she cashed a soaring number of welfare cheques. "People looked embarrassed or ashamed. They were used to living on the land; they now had a choice to get a housing unit in town but there's nothing to do there with no skills. I saw my son heading that way, but now he's getting out on the land more. He doesn't like to stay in one place, needs to be travelling; it's something inherited. Warren would have got more in trouble if it hadn't been for the program." Concludes Aleta: "I'm thinking Greenpeace should go and pick on someone else and let us do what we've been doing for centuries."

Undoing the incalculable devastation that animal rights groups have wrought on small native villages across the Canadian north is a big task, says Elizabeth Cundill, project manager for

Reconnecting with the Land. "Greenpeace and PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] have done a lot of damage, affecting the self-image of natives," Cundill says. "It should be a terrible weight on their shoulders." In the view of animal rights groups, she says, people are not at the top of the hierarchy. But the irony, she says, is that the generations of native trappers had a very strong connection to the land and the animals. As a result of fewer young people trapping, the hinterland is facing a crisis. "We are losing the eyes and ears of the land, losing the stewards," says Cundill.

Biologist and trapping coordinator for the province of Quebec, Pierre Canac-Marquis, credits trappers with such feats as the preservation of a small caribou herd in the Gaspé Peninsula. "Trappers began reporting they were not seeing many cows," Canac-Marquis says. "We researched and discovered the population was in big trouble—predators were killing the newborn calves. With the help of trappers who worked very hard each year to control predators during the calves' crucial first six weeks, the herd was saved." The biologist also credits trappers with lobbying to have leg-hold traps outlawed, and complying on a daily basis with the Agreement on International Humane Trap Standards.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the fur trade that was brought on by animal rights activists didn't actually do anything to save any creatures' lives: biologists and governments continued to cull animals to prevent overpopulation and preserve the health of the herds. The pelt bans didn't stop animals from being killed, it just made it impossible for natives to get value from them. Animal rights groups "are relegating animals to pests instead of a valuable natural resource," says Robert Cahill, executive director of the FIC. By the institute's estimates, in 1974, on the eve of Greenpeace's "ban wagon," Canadians were selling ring-seal pelts at \$14 each;

by November 1977, the price had plunged to one dollar. Money no longer went to the community, and youth were deprived of an activity they could share with their parents. Removing indigenous people's traditional world, Cahill says, has left young people lost. "Suicide is 10 times higher [in trapping communities] than other communities," he says. "Alcoholism and solvent-sniffing is rampant, as are school absenteeism and dropping out."

Aleta Esau witnessed first-hand the devastation the fur boycott brought her community. "I'm thinking Greenpeace should go and pick on someone else and let us do what we've been doing for centuries," she says

In the meantime, notes Alan Herscovici, executive vice-president of the Fur Council of Canada, U.S. tax reports show that animal rights groups have managed to parlay their anti-trapping crusade into lucrative business. Posters and pamphlets featuring cute photos of cuddly seals don't tell donors that when they give money to save the seals, they are destroying human lives in the process. In 2003, PETA declared that it had raised US\$21.5 million, the Humane Society of the United States raised US\$69.5 million, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare raised more than US\$77.5 million. Worldwide, Greenpeace made US\$103 million last year. "Protest has become a massive industry," Herscovici says. "These groups do not produce anything,

have no inventory, just attack others and play on the sympathies of compassionate people who are easy pickings because, for the first time in human history, the vast majority live in cities and don't have a clue" about surviving off the land.

University of Alberta anthropologist, Marc Stevenson, has studied the correlation between Inuit suicides and the decline of the sealskin market and found a direct relationship: as the price

desperation of northern native communities this way: "When seals got boycotted, I lost my family. There was absolutely no hope It just took the values of my ancestors for such a long, long time away from me, away from my father, and away from him to pass on."

Pinning circumpolar social problems solely on the animal rights movement is overly simplistic, points out George Wenzel, a professor at McGill University, who is specializing in the Inuit-Eskimo

massive consequences for natives. "Greenpeace opposes the commercial seal hunt, but does not oppose an indigenous hunt," says Bruce Cox, executive director of Greenpeace Canada, based in Toronto. "We recently made a policy decision not to try to shut down fur markets in Europe largely because of the impact on indigenous people. But Greenpeace objects to the seal hunt because of the unsustainability of the hunt. When in doubt, science says: take a precautionary approach."

But the efforts of Greenpeace and outspoken celebrities, like Brigitte Bardot, will do little to help the image of seal fur worldwide—regardless of who did the trapping. And for no good reason, says Milton Freeman, a senior research scholar with the Canadian Circumpolar Institute at the University of Alberta. The propaganda being spread by animal rights groups—including a call for an international boycott of Atlantic Canadian seafood—makes it sound like the hunt is unnecessary and inhumane and puts the seals at risk of extinction. All of that is false, says Freeman. "In the 1970s there were 1.7 million harp seals, as compared to 5.2 million now, so there are three times as many, yet hunters are not taking three times the number," he says.

Despite the international attacks, 2005 promises to be a good year for trappers, Freeman predicts, with some forecasting that sealskin prices could jump as high as \$100 per skin from last year's \$70, and other fur prices following suit. "Sealskin is now a high-fashion item on the catwalks of Europe—very edgy and funky." The reason for the turnaround, he speculates, may be that causes are as susceptible to faddishness as anything else. "Perhaps protests go in and out of fashion," says Freeman.

With the anti-fur movement out of vogue, Warren Esau is looking forward to a revival of the traditions of his people that were nearly lost to them. After having been given the opportunity to reconnect with the land of his ancestors, Esau says he wants only to be left alone, to raise his daughter in a land without trees and on meat without chemicals. "It's beautiful here, an eye-catcher, nothing will beat these barrens," he says. "Maybe now I can actually make a living for my family the way they used to long ago." **W**



After years of stigma, brought on by a worldwide anti-fur campaign by animal rights groups, fur is once again hot in the fashion world. Rising demand and prices are rejuvenating native communities that once relied on trapping for their livelihood

of sealskins went down, suicides went up. While it is difficult to assign cause-and-effect, from 1970 to 1982 an average of five Eastern Arctic Inuit committed suicide each year (with a spike in the years after Greenpeace sprayed seals green in 1975), then suddenly in 1983, the year of the European sealskin ban, the number of suicides leaped to 13 and remained in the double digits until 1995, the last year of the survey. Quoted in the study, *Inuit Suicide and Economic Reality*, Inuit Anglican priest Reverend Louie Mike of Iqaluit sums up the sudden

culture. But they are partly to blame. "The movement is a problem for various aboriginal peoples, but by no means 'the Problem,'" he says. "In an environment of chronic wage underemployment, intergenerational discontinuity about what has cultural value, and badly skewed access to the cash resources that hunting requires, the animal-rights people exacerbate matters—albeit, I think, less severely than was the case 25 years ago—but are not the root cause."

And despite their ongoing opposition to the fur trade, even Greenpeace has realized that the fight against fur has

APPENDIX VI: LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Tetlit Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council

Box 30 Fort McPherson, NT X0E-0J0

Phone: (867) 952 - 2783 Fax: (867) 952 - 2212

March 21, 2005

Rob B. Cahill
Executive Director
Fur Institute of Canada
605 – 130 Slater Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 6E2

RE: Request for letter of Support

Dear Mr. Cahill,

The Tetlit Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council held their regular monthly meeting on Monday March 14, 2005 and discussed your request for support.

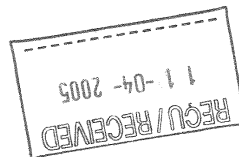
The Renewable Resource Council agreed that the recent "Reconnecting with the Land" program delivered by the Inuvik Region Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development department was very successful. All Council members in attendance were pleased with the success of the program and unanimously gave their support to future programs. We believe that today's youth should continue to learn our traditional activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing and more importantly, learning how to properly take care of the land and its resources.

We look forward to more of our youth taking advantage of this program and thank the Fur Institute of Canada and their supporters on behalf of all aboriginal youth for taking the initiative to develop this program.

Sincerely,



Georgina Firth
Coordinator
Tetlit Gwich'in R.R.C.





Gwichya Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council
General Delivery, Tsiigehtchic, NT, XOE OBO
PH: (867) 953 3608 Email: ggrro@hotmail.com

April 14, 2005

Robert B. Cahill
Executive Director
Fur Institute of Canada
130 rue Slater Street, Suite/Bureau 605
Ottawa, ON, K1P-6E2
(P) (613) 231-7099
(F) (613) 231-7940

Re: Youth on the Land Programs in Northern Communities

The Tsiigehtchic Gwichya Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council held a regular monthly meeting on March 11, 2005.

The GGRRC has decided that the youth lands program should continue. This will help to keep the traditions and cultures alive in the Northern Communities, between the different aboriginal groups and land claim areas.

Motion #72-03-05 " That the Tsiigehtchic Gwichya Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council supports the program to continue".

Moved by: John Norbert

Seconded by: Jason McLeod

All in Favor: All

Motion Carried.

Please feel free to call the GGRRC Coordinator at the above number if you require further information.

Sincerely,

Phillip Blake
Vice President

Cc: Chief
Peter Ross