



IN LAND & LIFE

Wildlife Health and
First Nations Communities

Fall 2010/Winter 2011, Issue 2



Modern day meat rack



Allie deboning



Looking for berries

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA WEIER



Lee, Misty and Gabriel

PHOTO COURTESY OF MISTY POTTS-SANDERSON

An Update on In Land and Life!

Misty Potts-Sanderson, mpotts.sanderson@gmail.com

THE IN LAND AND LIFE PROJECT, to me it means more than just studying contamination in the animals. I think that industry is a continuation of what has happened since we signed the treaties. A lot of years ago we signed the treaties in good faith. Industry wants to use our land. They want us to approve so that they can show that they are working with us. It's kind of like bullying. If we don't participate they are just going to do it anyways. They are destroying our lands and medicines. They say that we should prove it. Prove that they are destroying the land. We can't prove it in the western way. For me, In Land and Life is showing industry that there is an impact. We are primarily taking about CWD but we are finding other things. It's a way for people to come in and engage with us and learn about exactly what it is that we are talking about. It is an important tool. It is one of the arrows that we will use in our fight against industry.

It is important because it is my history and my family and everything I know. Our whole life revolves around that. Being on the land. We come back to work and do what we need to do, but we always want to get back to the

land. It is how we heal. Just being out there, the process of it is an important process to us. If we are told that we can't go out there because there is CWD, how do we know that government and industry didn't just make that up. We're creating knowledge and having a hand in that.

There are many important people who have been involved in the project. Late Grandma Mary-Anne Mustus; she was an Elder. She heard what it was about and due to her illness she could not come and camp, but she came to the feast at the first campout. Grandpa Stanley Alexis and Auntie Suzie Alexis and Auntie Angela Jones were all there as well. We prayed and I asked them for their prayers and guidance and permission. Since then Late Grandma Mary-Anne has passed on. She came there and she gave us her blessing. Late Michael Alexis was out at the first campout and he brought Auntie Angela and he has passed on since then as well.

Before this project is finished I want to find out what the situation with the animals is. I want some solid findings. The community expressed the problem. The community said that there was something wrong with the moose and I want to be able to show that. I want to answer their questions. Explore every avenue that we can. I want to have built capacity in the community. I want people to have participated and to be aware and to take responsibility for what we are going to do next. The gap between the youth and Elders is growing. I want to say that we have been brought together to learn about our traditional way of living. When a youth who has been involved in the project goes hunting and someone thinks that there is something wrong with the animal I want the youth to be able to say and know what is going on. Ben, Justin and Reagan are youth who participated in the campout and they will be able to say that they participated and that they will be able to speak with knowledge.

Anna Weier, weier@cc.umaitoba.ca

ONE OF MY JOBS for the In Land and Life project is to communicate with people. I communicate about the project and about the research. I help put together this newsletter. This July there was a ten-day community campout. It was a hunting and research campout. We prepared meat. We learned about each other. We spent time making food. And playing cards.



Anna and Gabriel

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEFAN EPP

We discussed some of the research results as well, and talked about ideas for future projects. People from the Alexis Nakota First Nation were there as well as researchers.

During the campout I learned the joys of living in a tipi. It kept me dry from the rain. And I was able to dry out my clothes by the heat of the tipi fire. I have never been able to do that in a tent. I helped debone a moose hindquarter. I made dried meat and capumi (pulverized dried meat). We rushed against heat and flies to prepare the moose meat before the meat went bad. Stoney was spoken. I began to understand the connection between language, culture, wildlife and the land. I played with children. I prepared and ate a feast centered on moose nose soup and moose ribs. I swam in the river and played games. For a few short days I lived a life where wildlife and living on the land were central. I realized that CWD, wildlife diseases and land uses that affect wild animals also have the ability to destroy an entire way of living that is deeply connected to wildlife and the land.

The knowledge and the experiences that I gained from the campout will now guide the work that I do for the In Land and Life project. I am so thankful personally and professionally for the opportunity to learn and live in community.

Ish Nish to everyone who helped make the campout so amazing!

Traditional Foods

Manon Roy, Human, manonroy@mts.net



Manon learned how to make dried meat

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA WEIER

LISTEN TO AND WATCH anybody from the Bear clan at the campout and it quickly becomes clear that moose means everything to these people. Hunters go out before daybreak and late into the night in the hopes of a successful harvest. Once a moose arrives back at camp, a frenzy sets in and within minutes everyone is hard at work cutting meat, building drying racks and tending fires to dry the meat. People move quickly so that nothing is wasted. “We use the moose for everything... Every part of the moose, the guts inside, we use it all! It’s healing “, says Elder Angela Jones.

I was blessed with the opportunity to share some of these experiences for 10 days this summer, with the goal of interviewing community members about their wild food harvesting. My project is to use pictures to show what a year of harvesting looks like in the community. The ‘In Land & Life’ Harvest Calendar will include information on what wild animals and plants are harvested by the community. There will also be information about the times of year when these are harvested. My research paper will explore the importance and meaning of traditional foods in terms of health, culture, spirituality and socioeconomics.

The goal of the project is to show all that is at stake for the people of Alexis. They find themselves struggling, like many other Aboriginal communities around the world, to maintain their traditional lifestyle while adapting to all the pressures of mainstream culture.

The people of the Isga Nation live in the heart of oil and gas country. Many are concerned about the state of the environment. And the survival and health of all that lives and breathes in the forests, lakes and streams where they harvest wild foods. All is not well in the bush. Many harvesters expressed concerns about eating some of the foods they harvest. “Our forest is not clean anymore”, says Daisy Potts. Gas companies cut into the bush to make way for pipelines. Logging companies replant pine instead of lichen-rich spruce trees, a source of food for moose, deer and birds alike, according to elder Christine Painted Stone. Lakes are being contaminated with chemicals and sewage. Chemicals are being sprayed on wild berry patches, leaving trails of dead leaves everywhere.

Hunters young and old are seeing the effects. Many have noticed changes in the plants and animals, like cysts and puss in the lungs and kidneys of moose, deformities in the fish, loose-skinned ducks, and a substantial decline in the availability of wild berries, to name a few.

Harvesting numbers have also declined, based on people’s recollections of the past. There is less time and there are fewer resources to hunt, and less wild foods available. But the harvest does go on, and people want to find solutions to their worry-filled future. Younger folks are also learning the traditional ways from their elders, and devel-



Justin skinning a rabbit

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA WEIER

oping a taste for wild foods. “It tastes good” is something I heard often during my interviews.

Wild food is so much more than great flavor to the Isga people. “It’s all very, very important, all of it”, says Misty Potts, principal community coordinator of In Land and Life and member of the Isga Nation. Just taking one animal, for example taking a child on a beaver hunt, is so critical to teaching and learning many life skills, she says. Like where to find medicine and how to prepare it, how to track and find an animal, how important it is to be punctual, how to make the best of one shot, how to skin and pack out an animal, how to make a pelt and sew clothing from it, how to cook it, how to share it. All this from one animal, one walk in the bush. That is the importance of this place.

I look forward to reconnecting with the people who shared so much of their time and stories with me. I will be meeting with some community members in Alexis to get feedback on a first draft of the Harvest Calendar this fall. Can’t wait!

Ish Nish.

Announcements

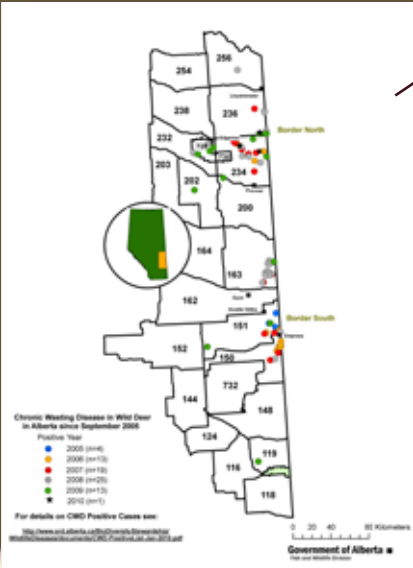
- There is a community meeting to talk about results of the animal samples and the Harvest Calendar on October 8th at the Alexis Training Center. There will also be a time to give feedback on the video of the project with Troy Stozek. Everyone is welcome!! Please come and join us for a lunchtime feast.
- The Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Center based out of the University of Saskatchewan will test any Saskatchewan deer head for CWD. If you are interested in being involved in this program, please call us at 204-474-9316 and 1-866-580-8160 and we will help you get your samples tested.
- Congratulations to Misty for a successful masters defense!
- Katie Peterson is at the University of Manitoba until Christmas taking classes. If you’re going out hunting please continue taking samples and give them to Percy Potts.
- If you have any questions or comments about anything that you have seen or read in this newsletter, please let us know. Also, let us know if you are interested in contributing to the newsletter. We can be contacted by phone at 204-474-9316 and 1-866-580-8160 or by e-mail at inlandandlife@gmail.com
- We encourage you to visit the project website for up-to-date information at www.inlandandlife.ca

Corrections

- The picture on the front of the July newsletter was listed as being Bernice. The photo is actually of Doris Day Chief.

The Spread of CWD

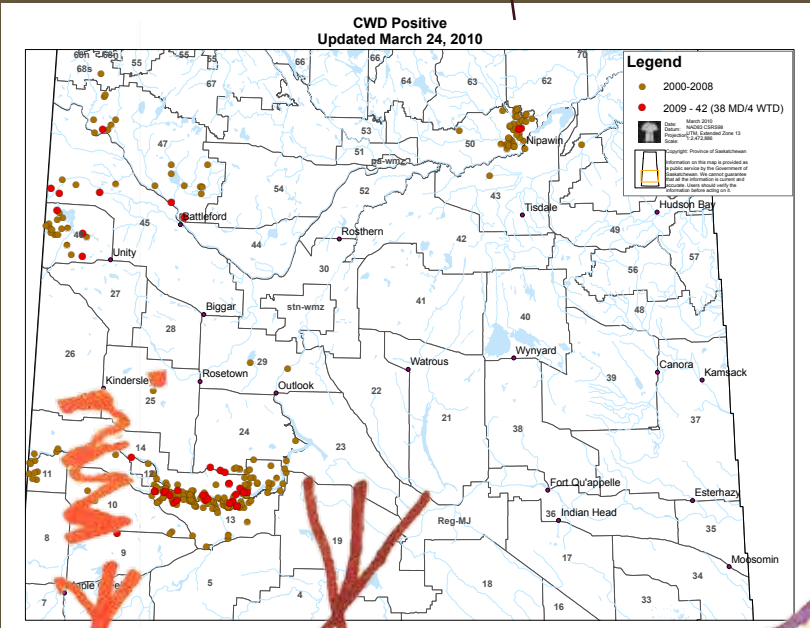
THE DOTS ON THESE MAPS show where cases of Chronic Wasting Disease or CWD have been found in the United States, Alberta and Saskatchewan. CWD is a disease of moose, deer and elk. Animals with the disease may stumble, drool, lose weight or behave in ways that are out of the ordinary. The disease targets the brain by creating holes that can only be seen with a microscope. There is currently no scientific evidence that the disease can infect the people that hunt and eat these animals. But some caution should be taken when handling any suspicious animals in CWD prone areas.



GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [HTTP://WWW.SRD.ALBERTA.CA/](http://www.srd.alberta.ca/)



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE ALLIANCE (WWW.CWD-INFO.ORG)



GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN, MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT [HTTP://WWW.ENVIRONMENT.GOV.SK.CA/](http://WWW.ENVIRONMENT.GOV.SK.CA/)

Sampling Update

Carmen Fuentealba, cfuentea@ucalgary.ca

SAMPLES WERE RECIEVED from 16 moose. Fifteen had brain samples suitable for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing. We are pleased to report that CWD was not detected in the 15 samples examined. This is a strong indication that the moose that were sampled did not have the disease.

The abnormal tissues found by hunters were examined at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Abnormalities were mainly parasitic conditions such as cysts in the muscle (meat), liver and lung, and liver flukes. These cysts are a result of parasitic diseases that have been around for a long time. People will not get sick from accidentally eating a cyst as the adult worms live in the guts of meat-eating animals such as dogs, coyotes and wolves. If a dog eats a specific kind of cyst called a hydatid cyst, the tapeworms can develop in its intestine and eventually produce eggs. These eggs may be stuck in the dog's fur and can be transmitted to humans. The eggs will eventually grow into cysts in the lungs and liver of those humans. Simple precautions to avoid accidental transmission are to wash hands after touching dogs and before eating, not allowing dogs to have contact with the cysts and de-worming dogs. More information about this disease and details about the life cycle of common parasites can be found in <http://srd.alberta.ca/BioDiversityStewardship/WildlifeDiseases/Default.aspx>.

Samples of liver, kidney, fat, and hide were submitted to Maxxam Analytics (Burnaby, BC) and the Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island for toxicological analysis. There they were tested for heavy metals and contaminants in general. The main contaminants found in areas with oil and gas operation were not detected in the samples. Increased levels of Cadmium (a heavy metal) were detected in the kidney. The levels of Cadmium in the tissue samples examined in our study are higher than moose that have been tested in other locations. The levels of Cadmium are not as high as the levels in some fish that are considered safe for humans to eat. Although these results are not a cause of concern right now, these results suggest that there should be more testing of liver and kidney of hunted animals in order to identify the source of Cadmiun and detect if the amount of Cadmium found in samples is increasing over time.

Chronic Wasting Disease Phone Interviews

Tamara Steffensen, t.steffensen@cc.umanitoba.ca

WE ARE TRYING to determine peoples' perceptions of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and their opinions on how it is being managed and communicated. So far we have spoken with 43 people from across Western Canada and the United States. The people that were interviewed represent farmers, hunters, government officials and the cervid industry. We also talked to scientists, non-governmental organizations and Native organizations.

All the stakeholders have been very diverse. No two interviews have been alike. Peoples' concerns range from CWD not being a problem to CWD being their highest priority. The only thing tying all of the interviews together is a feeling of frustration about this issue.

Many hunters and outfitters said that they have become comfortable in dealing with the disease. Some people in areas with CWD do not even wait for testing to consume their meat. A few people mentioned that the only reason they wait for the test is because of concerned family members. But there are some people who refuse to hunt in known CWD areas and would stop hunting if it spread throughout their province. Many were unhappy with the management programs in place and felt that their concerns were not being addressed. This is echoed in many farmers responses who also feel their industry is overly regulated and are losing (or have lost) their livelihoods.

Government officials and scientists want to inform the public of the risks of CWD. They felt that the unknowns still associated with CWD make communication hard. The government



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEFAN EPP

indicated that they do not want to panic hunters, farmers and the public but they still want to inform them. In general, people felt that until there is more scientific information there is very little that can be done to improve communication.

Most felt that communication with Native communities has been poor. Many pointed out that they want to see improved communication, but time and lack of funding have been a problem. Some felt that if the disease was not found near the community then the information available to the general public was enough. A few representatives who went out and spoke with people on the land felt that their communication had gone well and that those communities had a good understanding of CWD.

In future, one of the ways we will attempt to improve communication between the different groups is by trying to establish fireside discussions, an idea suggested by community members from the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. These talks about wildlife diseases will take place on the land where there is a connection with wildlife. The talks will also take place in ways that are acceptable to those who know most about the land, the Native people.

Q & A

Leona Tootoosis

Treaty Governance,
Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations



Q: What, if any, are the implications of Chronic Wasting Disease for Aboriginal Communities?

A: When we first heard about it, it was alarming, not knowing... the cure. Was it going to be healthy for eating? And I guess it caused a lot of bewilderment about how we are going to find out if it is healthy or not?

Q: Could you describe what is happening with the health of the wildlife in your community?

A: It's barely any wildlife, except for deer. I don't know if there is any testing being done if they are killed. That's why we want to have it done in Saskatchewan..

Q: So, have risks about CWD been communicated to indigenous people in your region?

A: No, not at all. Most people when they have a kill just take it to the butcher shop and have it packaged. That's all.

Q: And what are some of the concerns?

A: It causes fear and, I guess more of it is bewilderment... that something had to be done about it. Most people know... why they are like that. Becuase of pollution, maybe water, and of course pesticides.

Q: Have you or someone else in the community been talking about chronic wasting disease to others?

A: Oh yes, we have. We talk about it at work, with the Land and Resources Department, you know, and when they talk about hunting territories, crown land, where people camp and go and hunt. It comes out.

Q: So, when you are at work and you are discussing your concerns, has anything come about that?

A: Well...they're planning a camp too, I don't know what date it's going to be on... we just finished having a camp here with youth and Elders. And the next meeting will be with Land and Resources.

Q: Do you think as it is, people aren't really worried about those cysts?

A: The people in the city are kind of concerned, you know the one's...that get raw meat. They just talk about it, but what can they do? They just go ahead and eat it... they're not tested for one thing, including the fish...The thing is...a hunter, the moment he gets up, he prays in the morning that he gets good hunting and we pray that the meat is good.

You know there's the spirituality bit of it too, you know, The hunters pray before they go and hunt. they put out something, like in the trees to make it go back to nature...Yeah, so that's what they do. Get that circle. So, I don't think that it is poisoned. We hope, in a way we're firm believers, but it still has to be tested.

DRAWINGS COURTESY OF LORRAINE AND



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA WEIER



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEAN RENNIE



PHOTO COURTESY OF ORLANDO ALEXIS

Investigator:

Annie Kootenay

Q: What got you interested in working with the project?

A: I got interested in the project because I'm interested in the area of study, environmental science. It interests me because I noticed that there aren't as many moose as there were before. There are fewer berry patches and springs than there used to be.

Q: What would you like to see happen through the work of the project?

A: I would like to see a solution, actually. Or the beginnings of a solution. I would like to find out what is causing the sickness in the moose. And if oil and gas has anything to do with what is going on with the animals. I would like a solution and better management.

Q: What is your favourite book or story and why?

A: My favourite book would have to be Monkey Beach by Eden Robinson. It talks about Haisla traditions and it is a coming of age story for young Haisla teenagers. She has a gift. It is a good wholesome book with Aboriginal traditions.

Q: What is your favourite memor from the campout?

A: Sitting in the kitchen and playing crib, I really miss that.

Investigator:

Carmen Fuentealba

Q: What got you interested in working with the project?

A: I'm a pathologist; I study animal diseases, so I am interested in anything that has to do with animal sickness. I am also interested in public health so this project was a good fit. Working with the community is also something that appeals to me.

Q: What would you like to see happen through the work of the project?

A: I think that the main goal is to see if CWD is the problem in the animals that the community is hunting. The safety of traditional food. If anything, just to give some information about CWD that is the main focus of the project. The other thing is to respond to questions that people have about what is found in the meat and if it is safe. We are exchanging information. We are learning. And, hopefully, we will end up with a better understanding between traditional and scientific knowledge. Find some common ground.

Q: What is you favorite book or story and why?

A: Isabelle Allende is an author I like. People may have heard of her book, "The House of Spirits". I really like her new book called "Island Beneath the Sea". It is about slaves in what now is Haiti. Ultimately it is about relations between people.

Lands Consultation Manager:

Orlando Alexis

At my job as the lands consultation manager I handle all the consultation for Alexis with all the oil and gas companies, all the power and gas companies, all the timber harvesting companies and an occasional coal mine or gravel mine.

I moved back in 1998 and the moose have gotten more unhealthy since then. You can tell by the smell which ones are good and which ones aren't. It was great to see Misty come in and actually do something to find out about the sick animals. She is laying a foundation down to show the impact of oil and gas on the community. There is a direct correlation between what they are doing to the land and what is happening to the animals. What they are doing to the land is trickling down to us.

We need to get back to utilizing our resources that we have as native people...with the moose habitat study and the diseased moose. When I speak about having to go back to that at some point in the future. Will that be there? Will that be there for us to engage in once again? If we're pumping tailing ponds out everywhere and having burrow pits everywhere...and I know the companies say that the animals don't go to the burrow pits, but if you go out there, there are tracks everywhere. Moose will lay in there. They'll go underwater in the burrow pits. They eat in there. And then who eats the moose? We do.

What was your favorite Campout Memory?

I think that the serenity of it. It's peaceful, and everybody is so friendly, like you knew them from before. And the hard working people that I observed, you know there was no specific time to do anything. It was just done as needed without needing to be told. Even those young boys splitting wood so early in the morning. That was something. And providing for the tepees. They split wood for the tepees, and the cooking of course. I never seen moose nose prepared like (that).

It was just astounding to see. Three moose and an elk. I never seen that much meat in my life. People were just looking at me when I was saying how those racks were the length of a tepee pole, and me telling them there were five faces. They couldn't really see. I mean, you know the way they looked I could tell.

-Leona Tootoosis, Elder from Saskatchewan

I don't have one specific one because there are so many things. The interaction with individuals. The privilege of being invited to the sweat lodge. I put it as high as last year when there was traditional singing. Percy and a group would sing. To be going back and getting in touch with the spiritual side of things. Realizing how we are similar and have common roots.

-Carmen Fuentealba, Researcher from Calgary

Turns out that one of the highlights of campout for me was getting stuck in the bush. Yup! Our truck got stuck in the mud on a cutline in the early evening. I had been asking to go walking in the forest for several days to learn about plants and animals, so I was happy to volunteer to hike out for help with Percy. "It's two miles to the nearest farm" he said. No problem I thought. Well, three hours later we knocked on some poor lady's door and got ourselves a ride home. But hey, what a blessing! During our hike I witnessed a beautiful forest sunset, saw deer leaping gracefully through the quiet woods, and got to use some of my new-found knowledge of plants to keep me going. Who knew I would depend on bush berries and Rabbit Root so soon!

-Manon Roy, Researcher from Winnipeg

When I heard that Orlando shot a moose in the swamp and they sent Eugene in to go swim for it.

When we got stuck in the bush and Manon and Percy had to walk a couple of miles to get us a ride back.

-Andrea Kootenay, Alexis community researcher



CAMPOUT HOT OR HAWT



Tamara and Dayna

Layers
Great Gasses
Sly smiles



Verdict:

HAWT



Daisy and Alice Potts

Patterns
Bright Colours
Headband



Verdict:

HOT

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