One River MANY RELATIONS

Summer 2014: Issue 3

Environment, Health and Indigenous Communities in Alberta and the Northwest Territories

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Ground-Breaking Community Health Study Released

Forward Thinking, Community Based Solutions Still Needed

Stef McLachlan
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Johnny Courtoreille showing Stef McLachlan traditional plant uses. Spring 2012.

As a professor at the University of Manitoba, I have been doing environmental health research with First Nations and Métis communities across Western Canada for over a decade. Over the last three years we have worked in close partnership with the Mikisew Cree First Nation and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in Fort Chipewyan. The first phase of this work focused on environmental changes. The second phase linked these environmental changes to community health and well-being.

> "...in the last 50 years there has been a sharp decline in the quality of the environment and the health of community members."

As researchers, we use a cross-cultural approach that grounds our western science within Traditional Knowledge. We take this approach because it allows the two knowledge systems to support one another in a highly effective way. The work is collaborative, it's community based, and it's holistic. Ultimately, it allows for much greater insights into the ongoing changes to community health and the environment.

The leadership in Fort Chipewyan and the grassroots have been demanding a baseline health study. Such a systematic, multi-year study would investigate the tremendous changes in health that have been taking place, ones that community members are so worried about. Although our research should not be seen as that baseline health study, it describes and gives credibility to these community health concerns.

Continued on page 2

Beyond Re-Activism

Tar Sands Healing Walk Moves People Forward

Matt Hanson, 2013 Healing Walk Attendee
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Walking past a Syncrude sign, north of Fort McMurray at the Syncrude Loop. Healing Walk 2013.

Matt Hanson attended the 2013 Healing Walk. After coming across a copy of One River, Many Relations, he submitted the following piece for publication.

"The last two years were the first two years in human history where new investment in electricity generation for renewable energy, for wind, and for solar exceeded new investment for electricity in oil, coal, and nuclear combined!"

Environmental activist Tzeporah Berman shouted these words to an encamped crowd at Indian Beach the night before the Healing Walk. Nonetheless, Canada's most "successful" energy corporations and investors continue to scrape the bottom of the oil barrel.

The tar sands, what Greenpeace calls the "most destructive industrial project on Earth" is the open vein of Canada's economic addiction, connected to fracking on the largest Indian reserve (Kainai Nation) to drilling in the Amazon rainforest. "There are three or four places on planet Earth where there is enough carbon below the soil, that if it gets dug up and burned, then there is no chance that we'll ever stabilize this planet's climate, and this is one of them," Bill McKibben, climate change scientist and founder of 350.org, said immediately prior to the beginning of the Healing Walk.

Continued on page 7

Elders and Youth Find Common Ground in Fort Resolution

Rosy Bjornson, Resource Management Coordinator, Deninu Kue First Nation
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The Slave River Delta Partnership – which includes the GNWT, Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development, Deninu Kue First Nation, Fort Resolution Métis Council, and Fort Smith treaty people – recently completed a pilot project funded through the Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program. The project enabled youth and Elders in Fort Resolution to take part in a Youth Monitoring Workshop held in March 2014.

The intent of the workshop was, in part, to introduce the youth to community based monitoring: what we have now, what they want to see, and how to be a part of it and what is involved in the work. Within this workshop, we brought the youth and the Elders. We talked to them about what they felt about the Slave River, and if they had any concerns about the water or the fish.

Discussion and questions went back and forth for the first day. The instructors would talk. The Elders would talk. The youth would talk. We all had a discussion about water health and fish health in the Slave River, and what may be impacting it.

Continued on page 3

Youth Monitoring Workshop activities, Fort Resolution. March 2014 .

1 Community Health Study Released — Stef McLachlan
3 Beaver Lake CN Taking Government to Task — Crystal Lameman
4 Snow Pack Study — Jane Kirk
5 Honour the Treaties Tour: Neil Young — Susanne McCrea
6 Water Worries can be a Real Nightmare — Kara King

Rene Bruno teaches youth how to set a snare. 2013.

Abandoned fishing boat in Fort Chipewyan. 2013.

Morgan Voyageur and son. 2013.

Community Health Study Released
Continued from page 1

What we did, in part, was hold a series of group meetings and interviews. Participants filled in health questionnaires and took part in body-mapping exercises, where people shared their own medical histories with us. These activities were followed by powerful discussions where people shared their health concerns or anything else they felt was appropriate.

In total, about 140 people participated in the health research, those from both First Nations as well as the Métis Local. This represents about 20% of the community as a whole. This work gave us insight into both the nature of the changes to health, as well as some of the causes of these changes.

The people we worked with spoke very clearly about the past and how things were better then. Even 70 years ago, people lived closer to the land, people ate country food. They lived traditionally as they had been from time immemorial. Yet, in the last 50 years there has been a sharp decline in the quality of the environment and the health of community members. Of all the changes, they were most concerned about increases in cancer.

Of the 94 people who participated in the body mapping, 24 had cancer. Indeed, 27 cases of cancer were reported, because some had it more than once. Moreover, many people suffered from depression and stress, type II diabetes, obesity and heart disease, and autoimmune diseases like lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. These health patterns differ greatly from Canadians as a whole and are a real cause for concern.

Some of the causes of these illnesses are typical of many northern and Aboriginal communities. There have been substantial changes in diet. This "nutrient transition" occurs as people start to eat less wild-caught food and more processed foods bought in stores. Many are now less physically active, as they spend less time on the land hunting, trapping, and fishing. This accounts for some of the health changes, especially as they relate to diabetes and heart disease.

Yet, at the end of the day, there is no doubt that industry is the most important driver of these changes. The Oil Sands 200 miles upstream and WAC Bennett dam in northern BC have affected water levels in the region. Many community members can no longer access their traditional hunting and berry picking areas. Results show that some wildlife, notably muskrat, are now rare in the region because of these changes in flooding and pollutants and are thus being eliminated from local diets. Other people no longer eat fish because of concerns about industrial pollutants. While many still eat lots of country foods, the impacts will only continue to undermine these traditions as mining activities get closer and closer to Fort Chipewyan.

> "Of the 94 people who participated in the body mapping, 24 had cancer."

Many felt that the combined degradation of the environment and the convenience of processed foods would continue to make people less and less healthy in the future. While country foods are still the best and most healthy option for community members, some spoke about the need to push back and to resist these negative changes.

Participants also spoke about the importance of identifying forward-thinking solutions to these health problems. Part of this reflects the failure of the existing medical system in addressing the ongoing health crisis. But people also highlighted the importance of self-care and cultural traditions in making up for some of the shortcomings in the health system. Studies that only focus on the problems, end up further disempowering and displacing people. The responses to the current health crisis have to be grounded in community and culture and traditions, or people will only continue to get sicker.

> "There is no doubt that industry is the most important driver of these changes in health and wellbeing."

Terry Marten cuts moose meat in Doghead, Fort Chipewyan.

Garret Marcel and his first moose of the year.

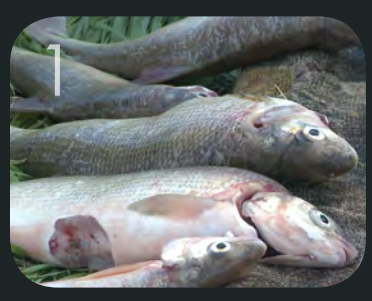
The polluted, "Shit Creek", Fort Chipewyan. 2013.

Learn how to Make Dry Fish!

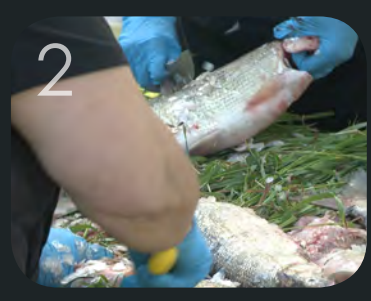
Lily Marcel, Fort Chipewyan

Last summer Lily Marcel, along with her sister Donna, taught a dryfish making workshop at the Uncle Fred Elder and Youth Lodge in Fort Chipewyan.

If you have a traditional recipe you'd like to share with our readers in Issue 4, please contact us at editor@onerivernews.ca



Use fresh caught white fish.



Scale the fish completely.

Slice from the back of the fish to the tail on each side, keeping as much meat on the skin as possible.

Run knife down backbon rate innards and the hea on clean surface.

Beaver Lake Cree Nation Taking Government to Task

Crystal Lameman, Beaver Lake Cree Nation Resident

Crystal Lameman.
Photo courtesy of the Dominion.

Crystal Lameman is a mother of two from Beaver Lake Cree Nation, which recently filed a Statement of Claim in Alberta's court of Queen's Bench taking the Government of Canada to court for over 17,000 treaty violations. They were granted a trial in March. She is currently doing contractual work with the Canadian Indigenous Tar Sands Campaign and Sierra Club Prairie Chapter as the Alberta Climate and Energy Campaigner.

I come from Beaver Lake Cree Nation, which is located in Treaty 6, about 2 ½ hours east of Edmonton, AB. My nation is located in between two of the three tar sands deposits in northern Alberta. Directly north of us is the southern portion of the Athabasca deposit area. Southeast of us is the northern portion of the Cold Lake deposit. Both those areas fall within our traditional hunting territory, which spans 38,972 km^2. Of that, 34,773 km^2 have been leased out to major international oil and gas companies.

My Uncle Al was the former chief of our community. He was chief for 35 years. He was one of those leaders that understood what it meant to lead a community. He made every decision based on the community and the preservation of our treaty. He started to see the rapid decline of some of the species we rely on. Species like caribou, which have declined in staggering numbers. He noticed the unmitigated impacts of industry on our treaty, and felt we needed to do something as a community.

> "... the statement of claim that the leadership filed... cited over 17,000 treaty rights violations; 17,000 leases and permits granted to big oil without the federal government fulfilling their duty to consult Beaver Lake Cree Nation"

He came to the people with the idea about filing a statement of claim in the Alberta Court of the Queen's Bench. He brought it to our community and the people voted in favour. So in May of 2008, the leadership filed a statement of claim against the Alberta and federal governments. That statement of claim cited over 17,000 treaty rights violations; 17,000 leases and permits granted to big oil without the federal government fulfilling their duty to consult Beaver Lake Cree Nation in this development. We were granted a trial, and now we are preparing to take on the government in defense of our treaty rights.

The first day we were in court was also the first day of action for Idle No More. And Beaver Lake, we had already coordinated a rally for our court day. The courthouse is directly across the road from the department of Indian Affairs, so we did a collaborative rally with Idle No More. The rally went from a couple hundred people to over 1500 people. We marched to the courthouse and sang an honour song on the front steps. Later, community leaders said they could hear us from inside the courtroom.

Beaver Lake Cree Nation wants the developers, industry, the government, to prove to us that there's such a thing as sustainable development, and what that looks like. And we will determine if we want to further develop this territory or not. And we will determine what that development looks like. We will determine what consultation looks like. What they have now is not working, obviously.

> "When I think about what we're fighting to preserve, it's whatever it is that defines human beings and human relations. That's what we're fighting to preserve."

This land can't be owned, this land that's held in trust by the Crown, industry seems to think they bought it. It's not yours. It's being held in trust. Our inherent rights are being violated. In those deposit areas, we need to have a pass to enter our own land, you have to go through this long process for each site. When I think about what we're fighting to preserve, it's whatever it is that defines human beings and human relations. That's what we're fighting to preserve.

I think what people are starting to realize is they can't rely on the nation's poorest people to take the strongest stand against environmental destruction. As a nation, as people, as human beings together, we have to collectively do this. It's not our own to carry. We didn't do this.

For more information on the Beaver Lake Cree Nation's legal challenge, take a look at thetarsandstrial.ca and raventrust.com

Slave River Youth Monitoring Workshop a Success in Fort Resolution

Continued from page 1

The next day, we brought the Elders and the youth back together and we did some more hands on activities. We were talking about the food web. How water is life, everything needs water. So we did some activities with string and created our own web, where everyone was a different species. We did that also with industry and recreational harvesting, the human activity and how that needs water too, and creates pressure on water.

We also did communication activities, teaching the youth how important it is to communicate together and to collaborate. They had to walk together with a potato between their foreheads around the room.

We also did an activity to do with predator and prey. Seven of them were mice, three of them were foxes, and two of them were wolves. We chased each other around the community hall. At the end you had these playing cards, the hearts were lead, the spades were mercury. Depending how many cards you caught at the end of the game, that represented bioaccumulation.

We also did an activity where we each set out a piece of land by the river and we all described what we wanted to see on that land. Some of them wanted to sell it. Some left it green. Some wanted to put a mine or do oil and gas development. Some just had trap lines. But it was all on the river, and at the end we put the pieces together and looked at the cumulative impact of everybody's project being on the river together.

Youth Monitoring Workshop activities, Fort Resolution. March 2014 .

The participants really liked the workshop. You could see at the beginning where they kind of felt like they didn't want to be there, but then the next day they were kind of bouncing around ideas, having to work together. It was a lot of fun. They wanted to be there, they didn't want it to end. The youth learn in school about science, but they don't really get to sit with the Elders and you don't get to sit with the people who do that kind of monitoring work in the field. The Elders said too that they wanted to see more stuff like that because it brings them together. There's not much of that Elder-youth relationship these days, not like it used to be.

For more information on the Slave River Delta Partnership's Youth Monitoring Workshops, contact Rosy Bjornson.

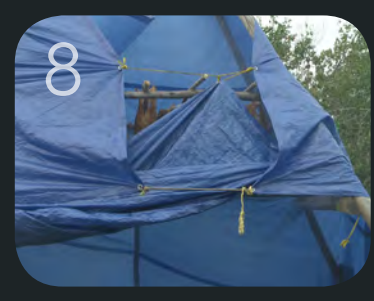
The view from the Uncle Fred Elder and Youth Lodge, Fort Chipewyan. 2013.

e to separate, then place

Start slicing starting from wide side of fish to the tail making sure they are very thin slices.

Stretch both fillets so the slices come apart.

Dry on rack up high for the day in the sun and the wind.



By evening put fish in smoke house. Keep it away from heat and no open flame! Repeat for a couple of days.

Bring it inside and let it dry completely, then enjoy with butter or lard!

Snow Pack Studied for Contaminants in Oil Sands and Delta Region

Dr. Jane Kirk, Environment Canada
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Jane Kirk collecting samples with colleague.

Jane Kirk is a scientist with Environment Canada. Kirk works with the Joint Oil Sands Monitoring program to study contaminants in snow pack in the oil sands region and the Peace-Athabasca Delta. She and her team have just submitted a paper on mercury and methyl-mercury contamination to Environmental Science & Technology.

With a PhD in Environmental Biology and Ecology from the University of Alberta, Dr. Kirk studied contaminants in snow pack throughout her graduate work. She took some time out from the field to talk to us about her research with the Joint Oil Sands Monitoring Program in the oil sands and Athabasca-Peace Delta.

Basically, what we do is we use the snow pack to look at the deposition of contaminants, such as mercury, metals, PAHs from the air to landscapes and water bodies of the oil sands region. If you sample the entire snowpack from the land or ice surface right to the top, it's a temporally integrated profile. It represents all the contaminants that were deposited over the entire winter. In that way, you can obtain a loading of contaminants. You don't just get a level, you can actually calculate the amount of contaminants that could enter the ecosystem at the time of snowmelt. It's a very useful type of sample to obtain.

With our snowpack measurements of different contaminants we can calculate loading. We take the snowpack profiles using a snow-corer to get as much bottom snow as surface snow. Then we take them back to the lab, melt them and analyze them for concentrations of metals: Mercury, methyl-mercury, PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons). And water chemistry parameters, things like sulfate, carbon. We also take measurements of the snowpack density so that we can convert those concentrations to loadings. So we can know the grams or the amount of contaminants per meter square of area.

> "Deposition is very elevated within the major development area, specifically within 50km of some of the major upgraders and mining developments."

We sample at a variety of different locations. This year we sampled across a grid on the landscape. If you do that, you can create a deposition map if you have sufficient spatial coverage. The two keys are sampling the entire profile for your sampling interest, and sampling at sufficient spatial coverage so that you can create these deposition maps.

As for results, what we see is that deposition is very elevated within the major development area, specifically within a region within 50km of some of the major upgraders and mining developments [in the oil sands region]. Really, it looks like a bulls-eye pattern on the landscape. But the deposition decreases quite rapidly as you move out from the major development area. It's a roughly 50km radius from the major development area that receives the highest loading. What we're seeing, our results to date suggest that the highest deposition is between the Muskeg and Steepbank Rivers.

We're also doing sampling in the Peace-Athabasca Delta in collaboration with Fort Chipewyan residents. We've been doing that for three years. People are obviously very concerned about what's happening in the Delta. I did train local residents to do the snowpack sampling and clean methods. We just finished the collections within 100km of the oil sands region. [In late-March] they're going to do the sampling in the Peace-Athabasca Delta.

The next step is to bring the samples back to the lab, a difficult process in and of itself.

You can just imagine the logistics of just melting this stuff. Even getting it across the country is quite crazy. We have a freezer truck that's parked at the helicopter hangar for the duration of the sampling. It sits there at -20C degrees. The trucking company doesn't go all the way across Canada, they have to transfer trucks in Edmonton. So that's always a bit of a nightmare making sure the samples stay at -20C for the whole duration. Transporting snow is not the easiest thing to do. But the results are a temporally integrated sample of the deposition for the whole winter, so it's very valuable.

Dr. Kirk expects results to start coming in by the fall of 2014, with analysis to follow.

Jane Kirk taking snow samples. 2013.

Métis Dancers. 2013.

Dene dancers. 2013.
Photographs taken by Leonard Flett

Flags at dusk: Photo by ACFN Member at Poplar Point, 2009

Honour the Treaties Tour Shone Spotlight on Fort Chipewyan

Susanne McCrea, Communications Director
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Neil Young took his solo show on the road in a four city Canadian tour, in January 2014, to raise awareness and funds for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN). Young's Honour the Treaties tour played stops in Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, and Calgary.

The One River team was pleased to contribute a ten minute video look into the life of the Indigenous Peoples in the Athabasca Delta, illustrating the natural beauty and culture, as well as the environmental challenges they face. Not everyone can visit the Athasbasca Delta, but when our team produced the support film for the Neil Young Honour the Treaties tour, we wanted to make people feel as if they had.

The tour exceeded its goal to raise $75,000 toward the ACFN legal defence fund, earmarked for their challenge to the recently approved Royal Dutch Shell Jackpine, oil sands expansion, which ACFN aims to prove violates their rights to hunt, fish, trap and gather under Treaty 8, signed in 1899. The community is also concerned about a proposed Pierre River mine and proposed provincial land use plan, which ACFN claim runs contrary to their treaty rights and traditional land uses.

"Between the time we started talking to Neil, in early September 2013 to the end of January 2014, the tour raised an unprecedented half a million dollars," said Ereil Deranger, spokesperson for ACFN.

Deranger said the tour met another goal by getting even "non-political" people talking about treaty rights at the dinner table. Young has stirred up debate among Canadians with his controversial criticism of the Harper government's lack of consideration for treaty rights, drawing criticism and praise from all angles of Canadian media. Rock radio stations in Fort McMurray went so far as to ban Young's music on their stations.

Neil Young speaks at Honour the Treaties tour. January 2014. Photo courtesy of Eriel Deranger.

Fort McMurray FN Commits Muskego Memories to Film: Watch Now!

Cleo Reese, Fort McMurray First Nation
Ph:1.780.334.2293

Cleo Reese is a grandmother and Band Councilor in Fort McMurray First Nation and an organizer of the annual Tar Sands Healing Walk

In Fort McMurray First Nation we have quite a few concerns about the environment around us. Due to the fast pace of development of industry on the land, together with climate change, the impact on our traditional territory is greater than if it was just one or the other.

The Technical Advisory Group for the First Nations of Alberta worked with us to research muskeg and capture our Elder's traditional knowledge on film, because that is a very significant part of the ecosystem up here. If something happens to the muskeg [Cree=Muskego], it has huge impacts for many generations to come. Being in the boreal forest, there are lots of wetland areas, with bogs and fens and muskeg, creeks and small lakes. A lot of the Elders still remember how things were before all the land was taken up by industry. The Elders have noticed that the muskeg areas are drying out. There is water being taken out of the land around here for industry. We feel there's more water being taken out than there should be.

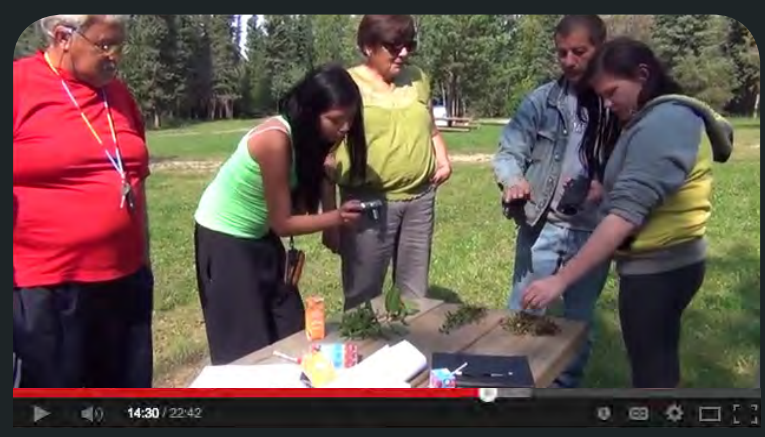
The birch trees seem to be dying out. The birch trees we have here are quite small. They're not growing, they're dying off it seems. People need to know where that is coming from, why that is happening. We know there's a lot of water affected here. We don't know if that's climate change, or industry. But the water quality of our lake, Gregoire Lake, is not good any more.

Last year the Enbridge spill was very close to our community. It was only 20km away. That was in our traditional territory. Now there's oil saturated fens, and small lakes out there. The surface oil has been cleaned up, but there's still a lot that seeped into the ground. And that's a muskeg area.

We're also concerned about air quality. The Elders tell us that the air doesn't smell the same. That the air doesn't smell good. If humans can smell that, then certainly animals will smell that too. We're seeing a disappearance of local wildlife. I guess we still have rabbits around, but they're not in abundance as they used to be. We're not seeing moose around very much; they're more rare now than they were before.

All of this points to the fact that we need to get more research done. We need more baseline data to understand what is happening to our land. The more information that we can get out there, the better. The more public support we can get, will help us get these research studies done as quickly as possible.

onerivernews.ca/drymuskeg



No such thing as a dry muskeg. Screenshot from *Muskego Memories*.

Water Worries can be a Real Nightmare in Fort Resolution

Kara King
frmcpresident@northwestel.net

Kara King. Photo Courtesy of Kara King

Kara King is the president of the Fort Resolution Métis Council. With a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta, Kara was elected to her current position in 2012.

I started having this recurring dream since I was in my teens, and I'm in my 30s now. In the dream, I'm looking at Slave Lake. There's no water in the lake. I keep on looking for it. In my mind, I know I've got to go East to get water, because the East part of Slave Lake is the deep part. So I start walking. But when I get there, it's just damp, there's no water. I had another dream about it where there was just dead fish. Dead fish on the sandbar and no water.

I shared this dream with one of my professors. She was from Mexico. She said, "You know, this might be a sign that you're supposed to do something about it." I don't know what it could possibly be, though. But it's always been something that's been on my mind.

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Right now the Northwest Territory Métis Nation is working on trans-boundary water negotiations that GNWT is having with Alberta, Saskatchewan, BC, and Yukon. The trans-boundary water negotiations are still ongoing, but we've asked them questions about whether there was a spill contingency plan in place. For example, if something like the Obed mine spill happens again, who's going to make sure our drinking water is safe?

> "Both with the new Site C hydro dam in B.C. and Fort McMurray upping their water intake this year, I imagine it's going to be a real low water level this year."

The recent Obed Mine tailings pond spill, for us, was a real eye opener. The Dene Nation had a meeting shortly after the spill, and they invited people from Fort Chipewyan up to talk about it. They were saying that people were on the land, living off the land right now for their income, and they didn't even know the spill has happened! They'll be drinking that water, not knowing! When you read about this stuff, it causes skin cancer, neurological disorders in children. It's really concerning to me, like WOW! Fort Chipewyan said one of their biggest concerns is, "who is going to go out and tell all these people they can't drink the water." Nobody was paying attention. It was the largest spills in Canadian history, and nobody's talking about it!

Another thing we'd like to see is that the amount of contaminants that come North be lower than they are right now. I'd like to see more water able to flow North than what is currently being diverted. Both with the new Site C hydro dam in B.C. and Fort McMurray upping their water intake this year, I imagine it's going to be a real low water level this year.

I could talk forever about water, because it's something near and dear to my heart. And it's not just me, there are a lot of people who are equally frustrated when these things happen and nobody takes it serious. A lot of people in Fort Resolution have taken to buying bottled water, even though you have to travel to Hay River to get it.

If Fort Resolution is a cancer cluster, and we bury more people every year to cancer, and more people are diagnosed, why would you want to take that chance?

Use of bottled water on the Slave River.

Paddlefest 2014 Brings Paddle-Lovers to Mountain Portage

Michael Tyas, ORMR
michael@onerivernews.ca

John Blyth is the president of the Fort Smith Paddling Club and the NWT Kayak Association. Come check out Paddlefest this year from August 1-4 at Mountain Portage. Find them on Facebook @ Slave River Paddlefest.

Why is paddling awesome?

Paddling is awesome because you get to go to cool places with your friends that not a lot of other people get to go to. Also there is lots of variety out there, because of seasonal water level fluctuations, every time you go to a place, it's different. The river and whitewater in general is not a static thing and is very dynamic.

Other than going to hard to reach places, what are you doing out there?

A kayaker is going on the river for three things. You're going out there to do "River Running," or running the rapid, which is navigating a technical line through a set of features. Another is to surf really large waves and do a variety of tricks on them, called playboating. And then the third set is also playboating, but in holes or hydraulic features. Those are where water pours over an obstruction and recirculates back on itself.

The Slave River is pretty much the best for all of these activities. It has this unique combination of massive quantities of water, and it is losing a gradient just quick enough to make it runable. If it lost a gradient any faster it would be really crazy. Mountain Portage consistently loses gradient, more like a series of steps that it strings out over a while. Rapids of the Drowned in Fort Smith is a gentle gradient and then BOOM it loses it all at once and it's pretty gentle afterwards. At Mountain Portage, the river flows around this big peninsula, so you can put in at the upstream side of it, paddle around, hike up the downstream side and then you're ready to go again. Toss in the Pelican Sanctuary and the water warmed up by the delta and you get yourself a pretty cool spot. Pelican near Fort Fitzgerald is pretty phenomenal too. The whole river is being squeezed into this 200 meter wide section and drops about 30 feet. It's one of the biggest runable rapids in the world.

> "The Slave River is pretty much the best for all of these activities. It has this unique combination of massive quantities of water, and it is losing a gradient just quick enough to make it runable."

Are there any threats to the river that have you worried?

When you have this combination of head (the vertical drop of the water) and discharge, you're always going to have people in the dam business looking at it as a potential location as you can generate a lot of power. Last winter, there was a committee within the Alberta Government looking at energy stewardship and dams. They were tossing around this idea of a dams in north eastern Alberta. Everything discussed was transcribed and is on the public record. A bunch of industry representatives were invited to talk, and one of those representatives was from ATCO Power. Alberta asked about the status of the dam on the Slave River, in his words he essentially says it's officially off the table but they're waiting for the right circumstances to attempt a second time. So knowing that, it encourages you to get out there and enjoy it because you never know when it might disappear.

Check out Paddlefest from Aug 1-4, 2014 at Mountain Portage, Fort Smith. Find us on Facebook at "Slave River Paddlefest"

Beyond Re-Activism:
Tar Sands Healing Walk Moves People Forward
Continued from page 1

The 4th Annual Healing Walk, attended by about five hundred demonstrators, sent a clear message: local people matter, have voice and are strongly represented across the country and the world. The First Nations in and around the tar sands – the Athabasca Chipewyan, Cree and Dene peoples – are leading humankind by simply walking, in prayer to the Four Directions. The timeless spiritual wisdom of tradition, ceremony and community slowed industrial traffic as far as the eye could see on July 6 around the 14km Syncrude Tailings Loop.

"If you breathe air and you drink water, this is about you," Crystal Lameman, Treaty 6 activist of Beaver Lake Cree Nation, declared at the beginning of the Healing Walk at Crane Lake Park. The pragmatism of interdependence is not only springing from Western science itself, but is being voiced by the First Peoples with greater potency.

"I think what has to happen is a change in understanding. It's not a matter of power, or of muscle or of energy," the late philosopher Alan Watts said in the documentary, Zen.

Bad news is good news. People think as they please, or, more accurate to Canada, as is pleasing. Regardless of labels, oil sands, or tar sands, industry gets the lip service. "I don't want to squander my energy entirely on being reactive, on being reactive to their craziness. Be clear on where we are going," LaDuke stressed with grounded intensity. "It's our choice upon which path to embark. One miikanan [path] is well worn but it's scorched. The other path, they say, is not well worn but it's green, and it's our choice. It's our choice. That's what our people said about 800-900 years ago."

The wisdom of the Anishinaabe prophecy of the Seventh Fire shared by Winona LaDuke at the 4th Annual Tar Sands Healing Walk offers all a path, or miikana, to a future that is fresh and green, and very simply, to a future. Beyond pro- and anti-, beyond reaction, there is a beginning; a place, from where all people begin life renewed. In the name of Mother Earth, the Original Peoples along the Athabasca River, and every Healing Walker: All my relations.

Healing Walk: Lisa King and her son, Allan Paul Tssessaze King. Fall 2013.

One River, Many Directions

Coming to a Screen Near You...

Michael Tyas, Co-Director of Film
michael@onerivernews.ca

The film was a partnership between the University of Manitoba, Mikisew Cree First Nation, and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation to hear from land-users and Elders about environmental change that is happening in their community.

The film was a spinoff from a research project that was seeking to get feedback from Elders and land-users on what kind of testing should be happening in the community. I was brought in to professionally record the interviews with the Elders in order to turn it into something bigger, more accessible than just a paper report. Now, two and a half years later we have this remarkable documentary.

What's really unique about this film is that it's entirely community voice driven. There's no scientists, politicians, or celebrities, which is kind of the trifecta of a typical documentary about the Oil Sands. Community voices are normally just a token segment in a typical documentary. It's an important story that really hasn't been told, until now. We've heard a lot about the Oil Sands, but it has never truly been from the community perspective on this scale before.

DVD cover of the One River, Many Relations documentary film.

What's really unique about this film is that it's entirely community voice driven. In fact, I nearly cried during one of the showings, hearing the feedback afterwards. It was important, for me, that the film accurately represented the feelings that people had. The most important job of a story teller is to get it right. And based on the feedback we've had so far, I feel I did my job well. The reactions, when I showed it, were at times tears (not just mine), other times real nods of affirmation that the story was accurate and true to what the community wanted the outside world to know. Robert Grandjambe even bought me ice cream! So that brings me a lot of pride... ice cream after the screening!

We're really excited for this upcoming stage with the film, which is taking the film on the road. It's an important message that we're now planning the next stage; figuring out how to get it seen and heard. We're hoping to maximize the effect this film can have. Submitting it to film festivals, making it available for institutional use. The proceeds from DVD sales will be going directly back into the Community Based Monitoring Program. Eventually, it will be available online as well, for anyone to see, after we've finished the film festival circuit. Of course, if you live in Fort Chipewyan, you'll have access to one of the 700 copies we sent in the mail in April.

Just because the film is finished, our presence in the community has only just begun. We're planning the next stage of the work that we do. I'm really looking forward to continuing my relationship with Fort Chip, seeing the friends that I've made and visiting again soon.

Michael filming during the Healing Walk. Fall 2013.
Photo courtesy of Meagan Wohlberg.

Your Newsletter is Moving Online!

www.onerivernews.ca

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Jonathan Ventura. Photo courtesy of himself.

Michael Tyas.
Photo courtesy of Meagan Wohlberg.

The Environmental Conservation Lab at the University of Manitoba has been conducting research in Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories for the past couple of years, and we've heard a familiar story repeated again and again: In the debate about resource extraction, local voices are either marginalized or silenced. Outcomes from research that is being conducted on traditional lands is often not being conveyed back, leaving community members in the dark about the most current scientific developments that affect the health of their environment. Local communities are looking for ways to learn more about the changes they are feeling and seeing, while having a global voice that contributes meaningfully to the conversation. As international attention is focused on one of the Earth's largest industrial projects, *One River, Many Relations* is proud to offer a news service devoted entirely to the communities that live downstream.

The One River News website is now online! We hope One River News will be the go-to website to engage in discussions about environment changes and human health concerns, as well as stories of resilience and other success stories from communities along the Athabasca, Slave and Peace Rivers. We want the site to reflect the true diversity and complexity of the issues at hand. As such we'll be looking to you, the reader, to share your side of the story, on your own terms.

OneRiverNews.ca will feature original content, including exclusive videos, photos, articles, and other submissions from readers like you. We are also offering a platform for scientists conducting research in your area to convey their results in plain language that anyone can understand. The website will also aggregate fresh news and views from local and national media, and other stakeholder groups. One River News will allow you to keep up with the latest news, stories, and community events in one place.

The Website Will Focus On:

1. Telling your own stories and sharing your perspectives;
2. Hosting original media, including videos, audio, photos;
3. News and media aggregation;
4. Linking communities together through online conversations;
5. Hosting online copies of this newsletter and producing news content.

How can you get involved?

Contact us about submitting articles, recipes, scientific research or results, information on proposed developments, community events, or anything else. You can send and share direct links to your friends and family about all the important and interesting things you find on the website. You can also help start the global conversation by commenting on the website, and sharing and discussing articles on Facebook and Twitter.

Find us online at www.onerivernews.ca

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Community Profile:

Kendrick Cardinal, Fort Chipewyan

Kendrick Cardinal hunting. 2013.

Kendrick Cardinal is a member of the Fort Chipewyan Metis, and a community hunter who works road construction, and does maintenance on the winter road from mid-November through till the end of March. He took some time off before a shift in March to talk with us about his work.

What is it that you do at your job?

I go onto the winter road and I do the flooding and stuff like that. Then I'll go and monitor the road, fix signs and all that other stuff. That's pretty much my whole job, monitoring, fixing signs, maintenance.

How much ground do you cover doing that?

I do about 50km, but I travel the whole road, which is 280km, from Fort Chip to Fort McMurray. I work eight to ten hours a day, most days.

Is there any special equipment that is used in your line of work?

Just an auger and a water pump, and the truck.

Do you enjoy the job? Are you hoping to keep doing it in the future?

I hope so. I enjoy it, and the money's good. So I hope I can keep doing it.

What do you do when you're not working on the winter road, in the summer?

I'll still be working for the roads again in Fort Chip. But I enjoy hunting, fishing, and boating. Getting out on the water.

Leaving Fort Chip on the winter road.

We plan on releasing our fourth issue of One River in fall/winter, 2014. We are excited about connecting with and supporting local contributors.

Do you write, take photos or create poetry or songs? Know some good jokes or country food recipes? We'd love to include them. Are concerned about your environment or health and have something to say? We'd like to publish it. Please contact Sheldon (editor@onerivernews.ca) or Stef (stephane.mclachlan@umanitoba.ca). Or phone Michael at the One River news desk at 1.867.872.0081.

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Unless otherwise specified, all photos here are courtesy of Michael Tyas, ORMR.

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Mikisew Cree First Nation
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