

Fort Nelson First Nation

Oral History Project

Final Report

Prepared by:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pink Tab	-----	Table of Contents
Grey Tab	-----	Project Summary
Yellow Tab	-----	1. Planning
Lt Blue Tab	-----	2. Documentary Research
Green Tab	-----	3. Interviewing, Field Verification
Purple Tab	-----	4. Final Report
Brown Tab	-----	5. Observations
Drk Blue Tab	-----	6. Recommendations
Orange Tab	-----	Appendixes 1 -10

The Fort Nelson First Nation's Lands, Resources and Treaty Rights Department has a vision to complete a Land Use (LU) Plan. This LU Plan is very comprehensive and can be thought of like a LRMP (Land Resource Management Plan) that considers land inventory, GIS data, data management, strategic planning for operational requirements, and the Nation's specific needs.

This Oral History Project is one phase of the LU Plan; the inventory gathering stage.

Project Summary

The Fort Nelson First Nation Oral History Project (the Project) was undertaken with the objective of collecting data through interviewing a determined number of Knowledge Holders¹, researching provincial archives for information specific to the Fort Nelson First Nation (the Nation), and developing a compendium of uses that will provide ideas for future uses of data. The land use data is to be recorded on maps, the interviews transcribed and photos and/or historical documents researched and copied. The entire collection of information is to be catalogued and stored in a fireproof cabinet in the Nation's Land's office.

The PROJECT TEAM:

Project Supervisor: Vera Nicholson

Project Manager: Annette Loe

Project Assistants: Lody Dettieh, Erica Thomas, Cynthia Burke

GIS/GPS: T8TA, Gavin Dickie

Computer Tech: T8TA

Interview team members: Lynn Michel, Sylvia Bramhill, Eva Needlay, Germaine Harrold, Judy Kotchea, Annette Loe

Transcribers: Jody Willier, Annette Loe, Sarah Dickie, Cynthia Burke, Jackie Badine, Kim Hicks, Becky Coons, Tiffany Dettieh

Advisors: the Nation's Chief and Council, the Nation's Elders, Vera Brandzin (Archaeology), Judy Half (Anthropology), Terry Tobias (TUS Guru), Caroline Forcier-Holloway (Canadian Oral History Society), Teresa Ziegler (transcribing), Tom Ouellette and Derek Doyle (project management), Andrea Morison, Colleen Colwell and Melissa Handley (SCEK program), Ken Howes (Culturelogix Consulting), Kim Hicks (Data Management).

And the valuable input of the Nation's Knowledge Holders, trappers and community members.

This final report is organized according to the 4 phases as set out in the SCEK proposal.

1. PLANNING
2. DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH
3. INTERVIEWING, FIELD VERIFICATION
4. FINAL REPORT
5. Observations and 6. Recommendations are included just before the 10 Appendixes.

¹ Knowledge Holder: a person who has been given knowledge by an Elder or has gained knowledge throughout his/her life about the Nation's history, land use or stories. Elders, trappers or community members can hold the knowledge.

1. PLANNING

1.1. Develop plan and secure funding

Proposal was developed collaboratively with Project Manager, the Nation's Chief and Council and the Nation's Land's Department then further streamlined to fit the Science and Community Environmental Knowledge (SCEK) Fund's guidelines by the SCEK Manager, Derek Doyle and Ken Howes, Culturelogix Consulting. A copy of the proposal is attached as Appendix 1.

1.2. Develop infrastructure and administration

Project Manager researched existing Traditional Use Study manuals, the Canadian Oral History Society, Environmental Knowledge handbooks and attended an Indigenous Mapping Conference to gain knowledge about the tools needed to conduct such a study. During the course of this research, existing materials were gathered and accessed to develop the foundation and administration of the project. Project Manager developed and refined questionnaire, set work-plan in place, developed employee training program, developed job descriptions and employee roles and responsibilities, set up filing system and purchased necessary office supplies and recording devices.

1.3. Inform Knowledge Holders, Trappers and community members about the study and get community buy-in

Project Manager and Assistants provided information in a variety of ways throughout the community. Inserts in monthly newsletter provided a mix of general to more specific information. Oral History Project (OHP) specific flyers were circulated door to door with time for visits with those individuals who had questions. Monthly Open Houses were a beneficial way to bring young and old together for regular updates or the "who, what, why, where and when" of the project. The Open Houses were held at various locations throughout the community at different times to accommodate different schedules of members. Information table was set up at 2005 Springfest and Heritage Days. Presentation was held at Royal BC Museum – Living Landscapes Project, May 26, 2005. Updates on project were provided at staff meetings.

1.4. File all the information collected

All information gathered will be filed in a secure place. Information will be inputted into a data system that can be queried or manipulated as required by the Nation's Lands Department.

1.4.1. Filing system summary

The Nations Land's Department has an existing filing system: Quartech Records Management System (Qrms). In this system, the OHP has a specific section/file number. Under this file number, there are sub-files where all the information is organized. This listing is included as Appendix 2.

All the information collected is kept in a fireproof safe in the Nation's Land's Building, in the file room.

1.4.2. Data system summary

A data management system (similar to the Malibu or IRIS model) was developed between Jeremy Burbee, GIS Advisor, Treaty 8 Tribal Association, Vera Nicholson and Project Manager. When the model was brought to the Nation's Lands office for refinement, there proved to be many glitches in the system. Rather than expend the energy and time needed to refine this system, the OHP model was shelved. This decision was made after considering that the OGC SCEK fund had approved and supported developing a data system specific to the Doig River Traditional Land Use Study. This model is being developed specifically to insert data collected during a land use study and may be just the tool that this Nation can use. The model will be available to other Treaty 8 Nations. There may be some adaptation or additional layers required.

2. DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

2.1 Archive research

Research of photos and documents in the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Department or the Treaty 8 Tribal Association and gathering of misc. items from various sources was conducted by Project Manager, Richard Resener conducted an Internet search of items relevant to the Nation, Ken Howes provided a bibliography of items researched and Lana Lowe conducted research of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs Resource Centre in Vancouver; the Regional Branch of Library and Archives Canada in Burnaby; and the British Columbia Archives in Victoria. Two maps from 1913-1914 were found; includes surveyors notes and First Nation site names and attributes.

All the information gathered is filed in the OHP filing system. A copy of Lana Lowe's report, Preliminary Archival Research Findings and Recommendations for the Fort Nelson First Nation Oral History Project, June 2005, is attached as Appendix 3.

2.2. Compendium of Uses

A compendium on uses is a report that gives a list of what further projects can be done with the information collected during this phase. This work was contracted out to Ken Howes, Culturelogix Consulting to complete, is titled, Uses and Applications of Project Data and is included as Appendix 4. Work also completed by Mr. Howes includes Interview Audit as Appendix 5, Traditional Ecological Knowledge Research Methodologies – A Literature Review as Appendix 6, and Methodologies for Data Analysis as Appendix 7. Mr. Howes also includes: The Gutah Research Project and Communities and Natural Resources in Transition: Linking Social Science, Decision Makers, and Practitioners for a Sustainable Future as reference material and included here as Appendix 8 and 9 respectively.

3. INTERVIEWING, FIELD VERIFICATION

3.1. Develop interview guide/questionnaires

An extensive interview guide was developed and refined by the Project Manager and Advisors. The questions in the guide are to collect information specific to the Nation's history, culture and land use. The questionnaire is 15 pages and includes a release form.

3.2. Select and train interviewers

Interviewers were recruited from the local community and trained by Project Manager. Postings for this position were regularly inserted in the monthly newsletter and job postings flyer.

3.3. Conduct the interviews

Sixty four knowledge holders are identified in the Nation's community. Seventeen of these knowledge holders were interviewed as part of the 2004/2005 work, see Appendix 10. The interviews ranged from 1-2 hour to more intensive 10-12 hour sessions. Topics covered during these interviews include: intro of project, release form authorization, family lineage, birth site, travel routes, hunting, food, tools, trapping, fishing, animal, ecological knowledge, medicine, plants, berries, Native place names, specific sites (cabins, graves, trails, spiritual sites, underground springs), stories/myths and land/law management.

The intent of the Oral History Project is to interview knowledge holders and gather their knowledge before they pass on and take their information with them.

A knowledge holder can be thought of as an Encyclopedia. Encyclopedia: "A work containing information on all subjects", (The New International Webster's Pocket Dictionary of the English Language, 2000, p 161.).

The information gathered through these interviews varies according to how extensive the interview was.

3.3.1. Interview summary

The Nation's knowledge holders possess different aspects of the information base. Their input covers a wide spectrum that contains an in-depth knowledge of the social arrangement, environment (water and land), political/law organization, land management, wildlife and economic structures. Information gathered is in raw unedited form, and is available to be condensed, crunched or edited depending on what the information will be used for.

Cassette tape and digital recorders, still cameras, video cameras and pen and paper were used to collect the knowledge holder's interviews.

The file on each interview contains:

- questionnaire, interview notes, typed interview, taped interview, interview on disk/cd, copies of loaned pictures and video tape (when possible).

3.3 Field verification

Two field trips were taken during the course of this project; one to the Snake River settlement and one to the Khantah settlement. A field visit was made with the Project Manager and a Knowledge Holder to the historical Snake River settlement in the winter of 2004. A videotape and notes were taken of this visit. A river trip was made with Project Manager, field crew and knowledge holder to the historical settlement of Khantah, June 2005, the settlement of Fontas River was also visited during this trip. Video footage and field notes were taken of this trip.

3.4. Map the information

A 1:600,000 scale map is made for each knowledge holder who provides information that can be mapped. Information that can be mapped includes: travel routes, hunting areas/sites, fishing areas/sites, trapping areas, Native place names, wildlife areas or specific birthing/spawning/nesting sites, community/settlement areas, and site specific entries (cabins, camps, graves, settlements, spiritual sites, underground springs).

Mylar overlays were developed for knowledge holders where possible, those having more intensive interviews. Each map was coded, to protect the confidentiality of knowledge holder. The coded maps can be cross referenced with knowledge holder's file. The mapped information was written on the Mylar with permanent black felt marker.

The Nation plans on digitizing and storing the maps in the Nation's mapping department, where they could be referenced either individually or collectively: providing the ability to view the data as required. A paper copy of this coded map was to be included with this Final Report, however, due to circumstances beyond the Manager's control, the digitizing is expected to be completed at a later date.

This map inventory gives the ability to manipulate the data as required: to show an overview, areas of importance, common areas or areas having significant value and/or attributes. This data can be over-layered onto other layers in an effort to build up the inventory base or determine possible impacts of development or expansion.

4. FINAL REPORT

Provided here. Includes:

- Summary
- 1.Planning
- 2. Documentary Research
- 3. Interviewing, Field Verification
- 4. Final Report
- 5. Observations
- 6. Recommendations
- Appendix 1 – Science and Community Environmental Knowledge Fund Proposal, 2004, FNFN OHP.
- Appendix 2 – Quartech Records Management System – OHP list
- Appendix 3 -Preliminary Archival Research Findings and Recommendations for the Fort Nelson First Nation Oral History Project. Lana Lowe. July 2005.
- Appendix 4 – Uses and Applications of Project Data, Sept 2005, Ken Howes.
- Appendix 5 - Interview Audit, May 2005, Ken Howes.
- Appendix 6 - Traditional Ecological Knowledge Research Methodologies – A Literature Review, Dec 2004, Ken Howes.
- Appendix 7 - Methodologies for Data Analysis, Sept 2005, Ken Howes.
- Appendix 8 - The Gutah Research Project, March 2004, Heritage North Consulting.
- Appendix 9 - Communities and Natural Resources in Transition: Linking Social Science, Decision Makers, and Practitioners for a Sustainable Future, 2004, Forrex.
- Appendix 10 – listing of the Nation’s Knowledge Holders

5. OBSERVATIONS

1. Community buy-in was the most challenging and rewarding action to take. Without it, the project will not achieve all it's capable of. To gain community support and trust took a lot of time commitment and consistency in work ethic and communication with the community. Some things that worked were the ongoing Open Houses, these were well attended and when collaboration was had with language classes and Elders, the connections between young and old really flourished. The attendance varied, with 10 being the low and 50+ people attending the last Open House.
2. The Elders need to see the commitment and samples of the work done, they need to have something they can grasp onto and not only hear about. To hear about it, can be confusing – English is not the first language of many Elders. They need to see you in the community, coming to their homes, spending time to get to know them on their turf, not in the office buildings. They have a lot to say and share, they will not tell their story to just anyone, it takes time to develop the trust. At this point, we have captured about 5-10% of what individual knowledge holders have to share, the remaining 90-95% remains in their heads.
3. Open Houses brought young and old together to share stories and different ways of life. Was very productive to see the young people gain a sense of self and pride to find out about their ancestors, their roots and how their family members were integral to the foundation of this Nation.
4. This project has taken on a life of its own. It will continually develop and evolve – it is a living document and can be as limited or as extensive as required. It is important to keep the end product in mind when working on a phase as it could get out of hand and beyond the projected scope.
5. Having the training in project management and higher level planning along with an integral understanding of First Nation sensibilities has provided me an ability to take this project's methodology beyond that found in existing models of Traditional Land Use Studies, while still meeting the needs of our funding source and the Nation's Land's Department.

6. RECCOMENDATIONS

1. Interviews are in raw form; they require proof reading and corrections
2. Make back-ups of all recorded tapes (cassette, video and cd)
3. Complete as many interviews with remaining Knowledge Holders as possible
4. Interviews that were not extensive need to be continued with knowledge holder for full information to be gathered: Jackie and Rose Needlay, David McCarthy, Larry Burke and Antoine Kotchea. Include Harry Rusk in further research in Khantah/Ekwan Lake area
5. Do not limit the questionnaire, keep it as extensive as possible, you get more information that way
6. Follow-up with Jackie Badine for old photos
7. Continually update inventory list
8. Research the 1913-1914 Surveyor maps to find journals of field notes
9. Develop code of ethics (for sharing of information) – internship with Lana Lowe and/or Sarah Dickie (University of Victoria has internship program, need to find out details, will pay their costs, FNFN may have to provide travel costs)
10. Field work on selected sites
11. Include archaeologists on field visits – to include archaeological component
12. Continue archival research (including Fort Nelson Museum)
13. Include retrieval of archival documents or materials (especially if it of historical or cultural relevance)
14. Develop library of resources that can be signed out to community members
15. Make Elder's Editions (books of the Elder's story and pictures)
16. Secure funding from companies who have expressed interest [SCEK (GIS envelope), Petro Canada (Don Armitage), Ministry of Environment (Ken Howes), Talisman (Julie Hindbo)]
17. Work with schools, i.e. incorporate interviews with Knowledge Holders into curriculum, history into social studies curriculum, environmental knowledge into science program, interactive computer tools

- Appendix 1 – Science and Community Environmental Knowledge Fund Proposal, 2004, FNFN OHP.
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- Appendix 8 - The Gutah Research Project, March 2004, Heritage North Consulting.
- Appendix 9 - Communities and Natural Resources in Transition: Linking Social Science, Decision Makers, and Practitioners for a Sustainable Future, 2004, Forrex.
- Appendix 10 – 1:600,000 map of collective interests, Sept 2005, FNFN OHP.

APPENDIX 1

Science and Community Environmental
Knowledge Fund Proposal, 2004,
FNFN OHP.
16 pages

APPENDIX 2

Quartech Records Management System (Qrms)

Oral History Project list

5 pages

APPENDIX 3

Preliminary Archival Research Findings
And Recommendations for the
FNFN Oral History Project
Lana Lowe. July 2005.

19 pages

APPENDIX 4

Uses and Applications of Project Data
Sept 2005, Ken Howes.

26 pages

APPENDIX 5

Interview Audit, May 2005
Ken Howes

11 pages

APPENDIX 6

Traditional Ecological Knowledge
Research Methodologies – A Literature Review
Dec 2004, Ken Howes.

16 pages

APPENDIX 7

Methodologies for Data Analysis
Sept 2005, Ken Howes.

61 pages

APPENDIX 8

The Gutah Research Project
March 2004, Heritage North Consulting.

54 pages

APPENDIX 9

Communities and Natural Resources in Transition:
Linking Social Science, Decision Makers
and Practitioners for a Sustainable
Future, 2004, Forrex.

65 pages

APPENDIX 10

Listing of Knowledge Holders

-INTERNAL TO THE NATION-