

Community liaison: engaging land-use perspectives from First Nation youth and land-use managers in Manitoba

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Summary

The Manitoba Geological Survey (MGS) community liaison program is designed to meet the MGS mandate to provide meaningful mineral information to First Nation communities. This summer, a new liaison initiative called What on Earth, in partnership with First Nation communities, brought together youth and land-use managers to consider the postsecondary education requirements needed to achieve Earth science-related and mineral-resource sector career opportunities. Community liaison through the MGS encourages a respectful, balanced communicative approach that bridges the perspectives of Manitoba First Nation communities and the mineral-resource sector.

Introduction

The community liaison program evolved from a mapping initiative that began in 2009, in which members from the Sayisi Dene First Nation at Tadoule Lake and MGS geologists exchanged scientific and indigenous knowledge and land-use perspectives (Murphy and Carlson, 2009, 2010a, b). The priorities of First Nation communities have often determined how the MGS liaison programming is delivered (Murphy, 2011a, b). For example, the First Nation communities of Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids are mostly concerned with understanding the mineral potential in the Horseshoe–Owl lakes area in the proposed Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage site in their traditional area. As a result, reconnaissance mapping by MGS geologists was undertaken in 2010, followed by more detailed mapping in 2012 (Corkery, et. al., 2010; Kremer et al., GS-2 this volume).

This summer, in partnership with the Cree Nation communities of Norway House and Bunibonibee, a new liaison initiative entitled What on Earth was specifically designed to promote the science of geology and the benefits of a postsecondary education to First Nation youth and land-use managers.

Methodology and success

The community liaison program mandate includes

- informing participants of the benefits of attaining postsecondary education;
- demonstrating how MGS staff geologists perform geological field mapping (e.g., mineral and rock identification, data recording, sampling and map components);

- providing opportunities for community discussion of land-use perspectives; and
- engaging community involvement in the creation of a poster that displays what is important to them (Murphy, 2009a, b, 2011a, b; Murphy and Carlson, 2010a, b).

Participants and First Nation leadership are provided with a contact person from the MGS who they have met with, and talked to, in their respective communities.

First Nation communities often request customized topographic and geological maps that include and, in some cases, surround their traditional area or Community Interest Zone. The MGS explains technical information (in the form of maps, reports, posters, presentations and summaries regarding mineral potential) at formal and informal meetings during the liaison process (Murphy, 2009b, 2011b; Murphy and Carlson, 2010b). Information provided by community members and representatives of the minerals industry during these meetings help program representatives advise government and community leaders about areas where mineral potential will impact land-use planning.

This summer, by invitation, the MGS took part in outreach at several events, including a career symposium booth and presentations at Helen Betty Osborne School in Norway House, and Black Island Days, where several communities including Hollow Water First Nation gather annually for community celebrations. During two days while camping on Black Island, children joined in outreach activities that included rock jewellery-making and posterboard painting. This was a fun-filled way to develop community relationships and inform participants about end-user products from the mining industry (Figure GS-19-1). Geological maps of the Hollow Water community and land-use area were displayed and First Nation members engaged in land-use discussions to better understand the geology of their region.

Information sharing in 2011–2012 occurred in the following communities:

- Sayisi Dene, Tadoule Lake
- Bunibonibee Cree Nation, Oxford Lake
- Hollow Water First Nation and Black Island Days, Wanipigow
- University College of the North, Training Division, Norway House Cree Nation



Figure GS-19-1: A posterboard mural painted by children attending outreach activities in Black Island Days with Hollow Water First Nation; Black Island, southeastern Manitoba.

- Frontier School Division Career Day at Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Education Resource Centre, Norway House
- Red Sucker Lake First Nation, Red Sucker Lake
- God's Lake First Nation, Gods Lake Narrows
- Sagkeeng First Nation, Fort Alexander

What on Earth initiative

The Cree Nations of Norway House and Bunibonibee participated in a new initiative developed in the liaison program called What on Earth, specifically designed to promote the science of geology and the benefits of attaining a postsecondary education (Figure GS-19-2). The program brought together potential future university-college students, land-use managers and First Nation leadership to better understand the geology in their area and how Earth sciences and mineral-resource potential can form a base for future land-use planning and future career development. Community representatives attended a land-use information sharing event that engendered positive discussions for future career-path development and potential future opportunities derived by partnering with the mineral-resource sector.

Community members and participants from Bunibonibee Cree Nation also had an opportunity to tour an MGS-led geological field camp and learn more about the geology in their area from the MGS staff field geologists who were mapping on Oxford Lake this summer (Anderson et al., GS-1 this volume).

Economic considerations

A proactive process that brings people together will generate respectful communication and minimize potential negative impacts for the mineral-resource sector and First Nation communities. Liaison programs through

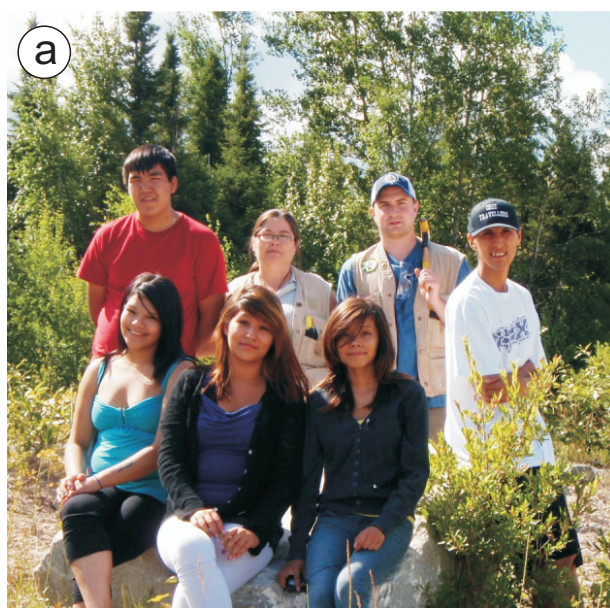


Figure GS-19-2: What on Earth participants in Norway House Cree Nation, Manitoba: **a)** from Norway House Cree Nation (from bottom right clockwise to top right): O. Muswagon, H. Muswagon, N. Ducharme, C. Balfour, L. Murphy and assistant E. Pietrus (from the Manitoba Geological Survey), and D. Cromarty; and **b)** from Bunibonibee Cree Nation: J. Chubb and P. Grieves.

government initiatives or within the mineral-resource sector help build successful relationships with First Nation communities based on understanding concerns and working together to bridge different land-use perspectives.

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