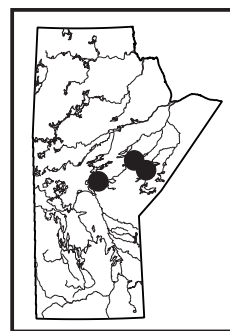


## Bridging land-use perspectives: understanding First Nations industrious participation in northern Manitoba's historical economy

by L.A. Murphy



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### Summary

The Manitoba Geological Survey (MGS) liaison program fulfills part of a departmental mandate to provide meaningful mineral-resource and land-use information exchange with Manitoba's First Nation and remote communities. By partnering to meet unique needs in each community in 2013, an inclusive communication liaison strategy has been developed with people from the Cree communities of Norway House, Gods Lake Narrows and Oxford House. The main aim of the liaison strategy is to ensure Indigenous peoples working in land-use management, recent and upcoming high-school graduates and community participants interested in furthering their studies or considering future career options are respectfully informed and engaged. Foundations for respectful communication bridges are established as Elder connections and positive role models in each community provide a perspective of First Nations industrious participation during historical shifts in northern Manitoba's economy.

### Introduction

The MGS liaison program in part fulfills the MGS' departmental mandate to provide meaningful geoscience information to the public. The program is designed to be flexible to the unique interests and priorities of each First Nation or remote community. How 'liaison', a diverse relationship-building and land-use information-sharing process between the MGS and First Nation members, will occur is determined on a community-by-community basis, through partnerships with First Nation representatives (Murphy, 2011a, b). The program began in 2009 with community-mapping projects in the Sayisi Dene land-use area in Tadoule Lake, followed by community mapping at Ryan Lake in the following year (Murphy and Carlson, 2009, 2010a, b.; Murphy, 2009a, b). The liaison process further evolved when First Nation communities located in the Fishing and Family lakes area, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, requested that MGS conduct a reconnaissance mapping project to assess the mineral potential of the Horseshoe–Night Owl lakes area in the proposed Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage site. Geological work began in the area in 2010 (Corkery et al., 2010) and was completed in 2012 (Kremer et al., 2012). Additionally, a program entitled 'What on Earth' was developed in 2012 to promote postsecondary education in natural sciences, including environment, ecology and geology. This initiative, which was requested by representatives from Oxford

House and Norway House, provides a framework to discuss land-use development (Murphy, 2012a, b).

In the summer of 2013, the liaison program included a focus on the differing requirements for participants to attain jobs or careers and to develop economic opportunities related to the mineral-resource sector. Youth, women, men, leadership, Elders and land-use representatives from Norway House, Gods Lake Narrows and Oxford House were encouraged to become part of the land-use and mineral discussion, which commonly took place on outcrops along lakeshores within their community-interest zone. At each outcrop, MGS staff demonstrated and explained the science of geology, including mineral and rock identification, record keeping and sampling methods. Through Elder and community participation in the program, the group gains awareness of the history of First Nation industriousness and the economic shifts in their land-use areas over time. Elders and role models within each community remind First Nation youth that this industrious history is a firm foundation for present and future economic development.

### Building communication bridges

The term 'bridging the gap' or 'building bridges' can be used as a visual analogy for the development of efficient lines of communication. The MGS liaison program encourages communication flow by acknowledging that each participant's land-use perspective is a unique and valued part of the engagement process. In partnership with each community, day-trip events are organized to develop connections between Elders, land-use community role models and participants.

Norway House participants (Figure GS-17-1a) were invited to attend land-use events funded by University College of the North (UCN) in collaboration with community representatives from the Norway House Environment, Lands and Resources Directorate, and Manitoba Conservation. For example, the release of 40 000 sturgeon fingerlings in the Nelson River (East Channel) at a location about 30 km northeast of Norway House was well attended. In addition, the group took part in a teaching session on the interpretations of ancient symbols found on a Precambrian granite called 'Painted Rock', located on Molson Lake. Gods Lake Narrows participants took part in a geological tour of the diverse volcanic rocks



**Figure GS-17-1:** Participants in the **a)** Norway House liaison program: [back row] Troy Ducharme, Kaitlin Chubb, [second row] Linda Murphy (MGS), Ashley Menow, Vincent Muswagon, Troy Ross, Percival York, Lucas Johnson (MGS), Larry Keam, [front row] Ocean Muswagon, Nichole Ducharme, Adelaide Clarke, Hanna Muswagon and Logan Muswagon; **b)** Gods Lake Narrows liaison program at Jowsey Island: (back row) Keith Peskoonas, Elder Steven Okemow, Martin Okemow, Raymond Trout, Talbot Nassie, Lucas Johnson (MGS), (front row) Brendon Hill, Jamie Mason, Nikki Watt, Jeffery Bland and Tommy Andrews.

surrounding the community, visited a rehabilitated mine located at Jowsey Island (Figure GS-17-1b) and learned about indigenous medicines found on the shores of Gods Lake.

The group from Oxford House participated in a historical-geological-ecological tour (Figure GS-17-2) of Oxford Lake, visiting the Treaty 5 adhesion signing site, pristine pillow-lava formations on shorelines, swallow nesting sites and the second annual MGS Oxford Lake

geological project camp tour (Anderson et al., 2012, GS-1, this volume).

Communication strategies built into the program encourage people from all demographics (youth, women, men, leadership, Elders and land-use management) to join in learning Earth science concepts, Elder knowledge-sharing and land-use community role-model information exchange.



**Figure GS-17-2:** Oxford House liaison program at Hayes Falls: [from top to bottom and left to right]: Elder Roy Weenusk (in the background), Delaney Monroe (white T-shirt), Keithan North (life jacket), Daryl Stinson, Horace Crane, Howard Grieves, Jr., Samuel Robinson, Luke Muskego, Hanna Weenusk and Travis Bradburn.

### **Liaison strategy**

The strategies employed during the 2013 liaison program included

- presenting job, career and economic-development opportunities that exist in the mineral-resource sector, allowing participants to consider these options when determining their unique path;
- demonstrating how MGS geologists perform geological field mapping (mineral and rock identification, record keeping, rock sampling, safety and emergency equipment usage);
- encouraging mutual sharing of community land-use perspectives that promote equal value for indigenous-knowledge holders, community role models and postsecondary education; and
- involving all participants in the creation of a poster that describes the program, displays local geological features and showcases their community interests.

The liaison program achieves a more rounded understanding of First Nation land-use perspectives by encouraging active skill-set partnering within each community. Each participant group is provided with an understanding of how MGS staff geologists map the bedrock, discusses how attaining postsecondary education can benefit

themselves and their communities, and is encouraged to consider diverse economic partnering, careers and job options within the minerals industry. Throughout the liaison program, an MGS geologist resides in the community and is readily available to address questions or concerns regarding land use and the mineral-resource sector. By providing a contact person with whom people have met and become familiar, an important and efficient line of communication is established for use in any subsequent discussions.

### ***Liaison activities***

Additional MGS liaison activities in 2012–2013, in co-operation with other departments and educational institutions, occurred through

- collaboration with J. Young at the University of Manitoba in the development of a new workshop held at the Geological Association of Canada–Mineralogical Association of Canada (GAC-MAC) 2013 Joint Annual Meeting in Winnipeg. This initiative, called ‘First Nations Geoscience’, brought together outreach workers, teachers, geological scientists and industry representatives with First Nation Midewiwin Elders to help each other better understand the indigenous perspective of geological sciences and to look at examples of how industry-led programs currently engage First Nation youth.
- technical assistance by explaining geological information provided during the consultation process with First Nations in Fort Alexander (Sagkeeng), Wanipigow (Hollow Water), Nelson House (Nisichawayasihk), Oxford House (Bunibonbee), Gods Lake Narrows (Gods Lake) and Tadoule Lake (Sayisi Dene). During formal and informal discussions, information shared by community members and representatives of the minerals industry can assist government and community leaders in finding solutions when mineral potential may impact land-use planning.
- outreach presentations, field trips and information booths, provided at several events, that promoted a greater awareness of geological sciences and careers in the mineral-resource industry. These included
  - a collaboration with the MGS, the Boreal Forest Nature Centre in the Pine Falls area and several Hutterite communities in southwestern Manitoba;
  - the First Annual Career Fair in Hollow Water First Nation at Wanipigow School, and the Ninth Annual Youth Conference in Gods Lake Narrows; and
  - career symposiums and expositions in Thompson and Norway House (Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Education Resource Centre), in collaboration with S. Michaels, MGS Outreach Co-ordinator.

### **Connecting perspectives**

Indigenous Elder knowledge and a respectful understanding of the history of industrious peoples in the communities of Norway House, Gods Lake Narrows and Oxford House became an underlying foundation for participants to build upon this summer. From a very basic perspective, northern Manitoba’s economic base has historically shifted from the early fur trade and York boat water-transportation system to more recent commercial fishing and mineral-resource exploration and extraction. First Nation and Métis people in Norway House, Gods Lake Narrows and Oxford House actively participated and engaged within each economic shift (Tough, 1996). Indigenous peoples trapped the furs, transported goods by York boat to and from the trading posts and sold the furs for profit (Ray, 1990, 1998). As the fur trade shifted to a commercial fisheries-based economy, communities located near larger lakes prospered through industrious efforts in a fishery economy (Tough, 1996). Mineral extraction may have continued close by in traditional land-use areas, as in the case of the Gods Lake gold mine, which operated on Elk Island from 1935 to 1943 (Bamburak, 1990; Mineral Inventory File 338, Manitoba Innovation, Energy and Mines, Winnipeg), yet this economic activity historically would not have engaged nearby communities by today’s standards. Acknowledging communities’ oral and written history associated with previous economic shifts is a first step toward understanding the First Nations perspectives when potentially lucrative mineral industries consider working in traditional land-use areas.

### **Economic considerations**

Successful relationships are developed by bridging different stakeholder interests and perspectives, and by working together to create positive solutions. Encouragement and active participation from First Nations leadership, community representatives in education and training institutions, and land-use management ensured successful completion of the liaison program, which involved more than 30 participants from three communities in 2013. First Nation youth are the most quickly growing demographic group and, as employment and education options are pursued, will form a positive role in the future of Manitoba’s mineral-resource economy (Mining Industry Human Resource Council, 2013). Long-term communication bridges that provide solutions for each First Nation and the mineral industry are built by engaging early, encouraging Elder-youth dialogue, acknowledging historical land-use trends and participating in respectful discussions in each community. Liaison programs, through government initiatives and industry partnerships, build upon proactive processes to bring stakeholders together, help improve respectful communication and minimize impact potential by developing communication bridges that mutually benefit First Nation communities, the mineral-resource sector and all Manitobans.

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