

Background

In 1999, the Muskwa Kechika Environmental Youth Camp was initiated to train youth, both First Nations and non-First Nations, in basic traditional and contemporary land management and wilderness survival with a view to supporting and maintaining the wildlife and wilderness resources of the Muskwa Kechika Management Area. The camp provided a selected group of youth with an opportunity to learn the skills needed to contribute to the long-term protection and sustainability of this complex wilderness system.

Base funding was provided through the MK trust fund, in the amount of fifty thousand dollars. Additional funds raised, up to twenty-five thousand dollars, were eligible for provincial matching. We were successful in obtaining these additional funds and therefore received the provincial matching.

This year the camp was held at Moose Lake, BC, which is located on the west toad river in the northeastern portion of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (Figure 1).

The support for this camp has been amazing and we are please to report that the camp has been a success in all six years that it has been offered.

Camp Personal and Participants

Youth Participants

There were 16 youth that took part in this years MK environmental youth camp, nine female and seven male. The communities that sent representatives included Liard, Ross River, Daylu, Kwadacha, Fort Nelson and Fort St. John. However, invitations were also sent out to Blueberry River First Nation, Doig River First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, Prophet River Band, Sauleau First Nation, West Moberly First Nation, Dease River Band Council and McLeod Lake. The youth participants were Jenelle Greenway, Adam Greenway, Tyler Porter, Ashley Shepherd, Alvin Stone, Cory Glada, Justin Stone, Robert McDonald, Wynter Davis, Sky Davis, Dione Lynch, Richard Atkinson, Alicia Colville, Leanne Seymour, Cynthia McCook and Allison Sorell

Elders

The teaching and guidance from our resident elders form the foundation of these camps. The elders are always very excited when we ask them to spend time with our youth. The elders shared their knowledge on drum making, moose skin boat building, tanning and fleshing hides, hunting and survival skills, traditional medicines, kaska language, storytelling, stick gambling, beading and sewing, ethnobotany and respect for the natural world.

Staff

The staff is the backbone of these camps, they are charged with site preparation, camp set up, camp operation and camp take down, travel logistics, acquisition of supplies and crisis management. This years staff included: Derek Loots, Program Director/Camp Director; Victor Kisoun, Program Coordinator/Councilor; Brittany Laverdure, Councilor; Tracey McKenzie, Councilor; Brian Ladue, Councilor; Chris Funk, First Aid; Melissa Sandhar, Counselor; Darlene Porter, Head Chef; Charlotte Boya, Assistant Chef; Monty Lynch, Camp Operations/Jet Boat Operator/Camp Setup; Brian McDonald, Camp Operations/Jet Boat Operator/Camp Setup; Josh Boya, Camp help; Alfred Stone, Horse Wrangler; Shian Wolf, Camera Operator; Joe Porter, Setup crew; Shane Stone, Setup crew; Melvin Tibbett, Setup crew; Walter Carlick, Setup crew; Wayne Shepherd, Setup crew and Shawn Loots, Setup crew.

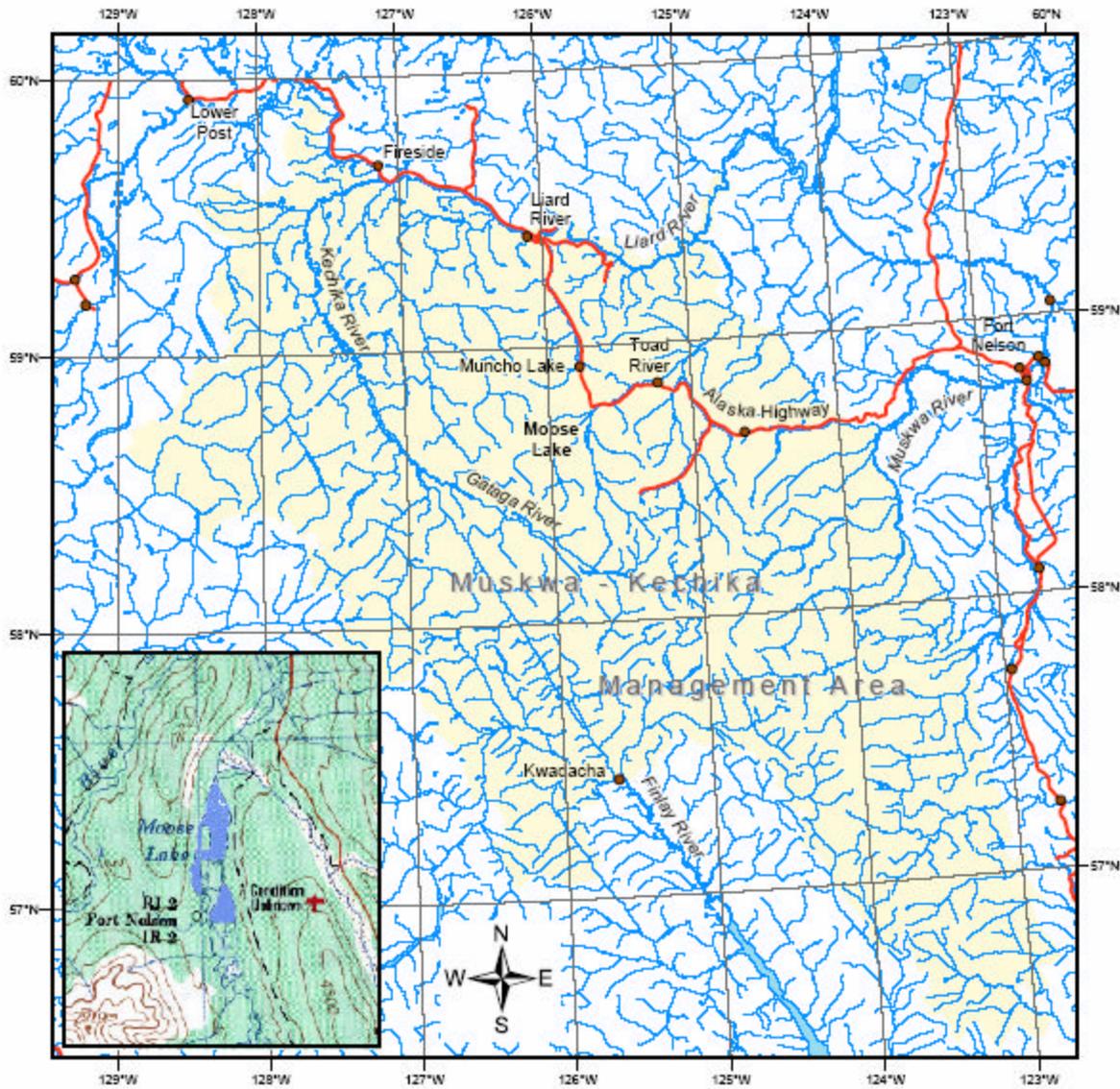


Figure 1. Location of Moose Lake within the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area

DAILY DIARY

July 25th

The first day of camp began with the participants traveling from local communities surrounding the Muskwa – Kechika management area. The youth and elders transported from the Liard, Ross River and Daylu were transported, by Danny Shepherd, via a 15 passenger van, donated by the Kaska and Canadian Parks and wilderness Society (Yukon Chapter). The participants from Fort St. John and Fort Nelson were picked up by Derek Loots in a rental vehicle; the youth from Kwadacha were flown in by Angus Air. When they arrived at mile 442 on the Alaska Highway, they loaded their gear into the jet boats and had an exhilarating half hour boat ride up the West Toad River. Upon reaching the camp, the youth had a 15 minute hike to their home away from home.

The first day in camp was very relaxing; the participants unpacked their gear and got settled in for the next eleven days.

July 26th

On the first morning, the youth awoke to a beautiful day. They started the day with a circle stretch and hug. This is where the participants stand in a circle together, and each individual takes turns stretching while the rest of the participants mimic their movements. They then stand in a tight circle and give the person in front of them a good morning massage and hug.

After the morning stretches the participant's proceeded to breakfast. Our cooks, Darlene Porter and Charlotte Boya had prepared a wonderful breakfast.

The day began with the participants finishing the final setup of camp. The youth broke into work groups and built a dinning area, council fire, and a couple of picnic tables.



While we were getting the camp finished, Mida Donnessy spotted a moose in the water. After that, she kept wishing for fresh moose meat.

After the work for the day was done, the youth played a couple of bonding games, allowing them to integrate more with each other.

Following dinner we had our first council fire, this is where the participants sit around a sacred fire and pass an eagle feather. The person holding the feather is the only one allowed to speak. While holding the feather the person can talk about whatever they feel. The first round the feather made was very quick

because some of the youth were still a bit shy.

That night Amos Dick told us a traditional story about how an eagle helped a lost man get back to his village.

We then played a traditional native hand game called stick gambling. Charlie Boya's team won the bragging rights of the night.



Before bed, we sat around the fire and sang songs while Brian Ladue played the guitar.



July 27th

The youth awoke this morning to a beautiful day, the sun was shining and the horses in the valley were enjoying their morning meal.

The participants were supposed to start traditional workshops like carving with Willy Atkinson and making drums with Amos Dick but Grandma Mida had moose on the mind. She and Elsie had spotted a nice bull feeding a kilometer away, just north of camp.



With the elders wanting fresh moose meat, we decided that this would be a good day to teach the participants how to skin and butcher a moose.

The hunting party consisted of seven individuals, the guides were Amos Dick and Alfred Stone, Monty Lynch was the jet boat driver, Josh Boya was the shooter, Shian Wolf was the camera operator, and Justin Stone, Allison Sorell, and Derek Loots were the observers.

The hunting party gathered their gear and set out on their journey. The hunting trip was a success, with Josh dropping the moose in one amazing shot, while standing in a moving boat.



Meanwhile back at camp the rest of the participants observed the hunt from the top of the hill. Once the moose had been shot, they boated over and Amos Dick proceeded to teach the participants how a moose was traditionally butchered.



The real work in hunting begins when the participants return to camp with the moose meat. All the meat has to be hung over a lightly smoking fire and then has to be butchered into meal size portions. Amos, Mida, and Elsie then taught the participants what each part of the moose was used for and which parts they enjoyed the most.

While the meat was being brought up from the lake, Willy and Amos boiled up some ribs for a snack before dinner.

Once all the meat was cut from the bones and into smaller portions, Mida

and Elsie taught the participants how to cut dry meat. The Kaska traditionally did this in order to preserve the meat.



After enjoying a fresh traditional meal, the participants had some free time to take a shower and relax while all the teachings they had been taught that day sank in.

That night the participants sat around the council fire and Brian Ladue taught the participants some traditional Kaska songs. They then decided to have a singing competition between the girls and boys. The loudest singer from each group would win a prize. Sky Davis and Alvin Stone were the big winners of the night.

July 28th

The day began with the participants and elders finishing the dry meat and wrapping the rest of the meat. The elders were really impressed with how hard Brittany Laverdure, one of the female councilors, worked.

While finishing the work, Mida told the participants what it was like when she learned how to cut dry meat. She said that one was not allowed to speak while working, because you had to

concentrate on what you were doing, so that you would not cut yourself.

After lunch Angus McDonald, Amos Dick, Brian McDonald, and Charlie Boya began building the Moose skin boat. While the young guns were starting on the frame for the boat, Mida began fleshing and cleaning the moose hide.



Mida said that the hide would be used on the moose skin boat and the hair was traditionally used for making blankets and pillows.

Theresa Gulliver working for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Yukon chapter, arrived today.



The participants had been in camp for a couple of days, so the staff decided that they needed some time out of camp. Half the group would go on a canoe trip and the other half would go horseback riding.

Victor Kisoun, Tracey McKenzie, and Chris Funk guided the canoe trip to the north end of the lake. The trip was filled with lots of fun and a whole lot of singing.



Amos McDonald and Alfred Stone guided the second group on horseback. The participants learned how to saddle and ride a horse. They rode up to the West Toad look out.

After dinner, Mida taught the participants how to make babiche out of caribou hide. The participants then had some free time to hang out with each other and tell some stories about their home communities.

July 29th

The morning began with the traditional circle hug and stretch.

After breakfast Theresa and Mida took the group on a walk to a little lake behind the camp. Mida taught the youth some traditional names for the local plants while Theresa taught them the scientific names.

Theresa then did a workshop on the biodiversity of the area, and the type of ecosystem found within the Moose Lake area. She then went on to teach the youth about the boreal forest and the current issues it is facing.

After the workshop was over, we played a game of Predator and Prey. One participant is chosen as the predator and the rest of the group is the prey. The predator stands in the middle of the forest while the prey visibly hides around him. The predator then tries to spot the prey while standing in one spot. The winner of the game was Robert McDonald.

After lunch, Victor got the old washing machine working, so that the participants could do some laundry. The youth spent the afternoon working on crafts, doing laundry, showering, and watching the elders finish the frame for the moose skin boat.

Bob Barradell from the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management arrived today.

After dinner, the youth went to their spirit spots. This is where the youth go and spend some time all by themselves, writing in their journals, reading, drawing, or sitting and reminiscing about their time in camp.

That evening we sat around the fire while the elders told stories about a long time ago when the animals were very large. Mida told a story of how Denetia made the animals small so that they could not hurt humans anymore. Amos told a story of how Skokum Jim found all of his gold with the help of a frog.

When the elders had gone to sleep we had a game of stick-gambling. We found out that Tyler Porter, Ashley Shepherd, and Richard Atkinson were very good as the teams' pointers. Justin Stone learned that he was quite the drummer while Cory Glada was trying to learn how to slow his drum beat down.

July 30th

We awoke this morning to the sound of rain. It was our first rainy day and gave us the chance to try on our rain gear.

Today we broke the youth up into four groups. The groups had the chance to listen to stories and learn how to carve with Willy Atkinson, work on caribou and moose hides with Mida Donnelly, make a drum with Amos Dick, or work on the moose skin boat with Charlie Boya and Angus McDonald.

The moose-skin boat crew sewed three moose-hides together to wrap around the frame. The boat was going to be seventeen feet long.



The participants and workers were amazed at how hard the elders worked. They would work from sun up to sun down, only stopping to eat and have a cup of tea.

Bill Lux., Desiree Jones, Maureen Garrity, and George Smith arrived to do workshops on public and private interests in the Muskwa Kechika area.

In the afternoon there were two workshops. Theresa Gulliver held her workshop on natural and human disturbances, and Bob Barradell did a workshop on how traditional and western knowledge could be incorporated together in land use planning.

The youth started designing their own Muskwa Kechika Youth Environment Camp tee shirts. The participants were given a tee shirt and some paints to come up with a logo for this year's camp.

That night we had a council fire and sang Rediscovery songs around the campfire.



July 31st

The day began with some of the participants sleeping in. When this happens, the sleepy heads have to do the hula before entering into the morning stretches. Cory, Shian, Cynthia, Leanne, Sky, Wynter, and Alicia are now interested in traveling to Hawaii.

The morning began with a series of workshops in each representative's fields.

Bill Lux talked about the history of the Muskwa Kechika board, interested parties involved, and how it is an advisory board to the government.

George Smith, representing CPAWS (National chapter), talked about the relationship between CPAWS and indigenous peoples, and how the "MK is the jewel of the universe".



Desiree Jones spoke on how the oil and gas industry is pushing north-westward and how they have interests in the local area. She also spoke on how economic benefits agreements needed to be in place before we can push forward into the future.

Maureen Garrity represented the recreation industry. She spoke about recreation in the MK area, Chee Ventures, commercial recreation, and jobs and opportunities in the field.

Josh Boya gave spoke on respect for the elders, and how they are the ones that deserve compensation for the development of their lands, before they are too old to enjoy it

In the afternoon we broke into our groups, some of the youth went horseback riding, while others stayed around camp and learned traditional skills with the elders. Amos and some of the participants finished seven drums today.

The elders finished wrapping the hide around the frame and started making paddles.



That night after dinner, we had a council fire with the youth and all of our special guests.

We then played a game of pictionary, it was the girls versus the boys. It ended up being a tie game. The best drawing was of a picture of Monty on his four-wheeler. The name of the movie was The Count of Montycristo.

August 1st

The morning began with a very interesting game which mimicked a land and resource-planning table. The youth were broken into five groups. Each group represented one of the following organizations – oil and gas, environmentalists, first nations, forestry, and outdoor recreation.

Each group had a consultant to which would help in the negotiations and was the lead for their selected organization. Each group had the chance to meet with each other organization. They met to try and come up with an understanding on what should be done with the local area. Each group then had to represent their

industry in front of a board, who would decide the future use of the area. The game taught the youth a lot about what the MK board goes through in their meetings.

In the afternoon, we went on a canoe trip down the Toad River to Sheep Creek. Josh, Cory, and Richard canoed within forty feet of a huge bull moose. Leanne and Cynthia tipped their canoe in the lake and ended up going back to camp for some warm clothes.



The trip was a lot of fun. The youth had the chance to get out of camp and enjoy a beautiful day on the river. Brian McDonald showed the youth an old raft which had been hand built by his grandfather.



Back at camp Charlie Boya gathered some spruce pitch for the moose skin boat. He then melted the pitch down

and used it to seal the stitches between the hides. The boat was finally completed.

After dinner, we played a game of stick gambling. Tyler Porter was being coached by Amos Dick and was the victorious pointer for his team.

That night we sat around the fire and told scary ghost stories. Victor was a little scared to go to his tent that night.

August 2nd

All the participants were allowed to sleep in this morning. When they awoke we gave them some free time to have a shower and do some laundry.

In the afternoon we taught the youth some bush survival skills. We showed them how to build a shelter from the materials found in their surroundings. We then gave them one matchstick and watched to see if they could build a fire on limited supplies. We also did a bear awareness workshop to show them what to do in difficult situations involving bears. We also taught them how to use bear bangers and flares.



That night we had a council fire and talked about all of the experiences we had enjoyed over the past week.



August 3rd

It rained all night while we slept and we awoke to Victor sleeping in a little lake. We had to start the stoves in the morning and dry out some gear from the canoe trip the day before.

We worked on our drums and crafts while we waited for the rain to stop. There were seven more drums completed today.

Dave Porter arrived today to spend time with the youth.

When it finally stopped raining we started our annual Muskwa Kechika Olympics. It is made up of traditional native games like stick gambling, stretch, muscox push, leg wrestling, balance beams, and the infamous relay race.



The relay race is a game where two participants have to run, barefoot, around a bat for five full rotations, then run to a barrel filled with water and bob for an apple. Once the apple is eaten they then have to do a two man wheel barrel race to a tub that is filled full of flour and bob for a candy at the bottom. Then they race to their shoes put them on and race back to the start line.



After dinner, we finished the MK Olympics; the race was very tight between all teams. It came down to the final event stick gambling. The championship match was between the wolves and moose. The wolves were eventually victorious with Tyler Porter leading them.

The gifts were then handed out to all the participants for the awesome job they had done in the MK Olympics.

That night the participants played their last game of pictionary, the girls came out victorious and would not let the boys forget it for the rest of camp.

August 4th

This morning the youth were very excited to be going on a day hike up Wokpash River. Kelly and Kevin Knight of Main Current Expeditions were guiding the trip.

After breakfast, while the participants were getting ready for the hike, Brian Ladue and Derek Loots had a traditional singing session with Amos Dick. Amos showed the youth how they traditionally danced to customary music.

After the jam session, the youth jumped in the jet boats and went down to the highway to meet the Knight brothers.

Wokpash River is located 50 km south of Toad River, in the heart of the northern Rockies. It is a world famous hike, made up of stunning landscapes and pristine wilderness.



The Knight brothers guided the participants about five miles up the valley, teaching them about the natural

ecology of the area along the way. The hike was slow at times due to the abundance of wild blue berries and cranberries found along the trails edge.



We stopped for lunch at a jagged creek, which flowed off the mountain in terraces, crashing into the large boulders along the way.



While eating, the youth enjoyed the Knight brother's stories on some of the rafting and hiking adventures they had been on. This interested some of the youth, and they began asking questions

on how they might be able to start a career in guiding recreational tours.

After lunch, the youth hiked up the mountain to get a beautiful view of the valley. The guides wanted to hike up to the hoodoos, located ten miles off the old mining road. This was not possible because there was not enough time to make it back to the boats before dark.



On the way back to camp, the youth stopped off at Poppulus to have a frozen yogurt. This was quite the treat after living in the bush for the last 10 days.

Everyone arrived back in camp just before nightfall, to enjoy a wonderful dinner. Dave Porter had cooked up a traditional snack for the elders and youth made up of moose head and tongue.

The youth were exhausted after their day hiking and went straight to bed.

August 5th

Today was the last day of camp, usually it is the saddest day, but today the participants were going rafting down the Toad River with the Knight brothers, and were very excited.

The morning began with a wonderful breakfast and an exhilarating jet boat ride down the West Toad River.

The Knight brother's met the youth along the Alaska highway and did an hour long training session on rafting safety and procedures. They then climbed in the boats and where off on their adventure.



The morning was cold so the youth had to paddle to keep warm. The first part of the trip the participants learned the basic paddling techniques for river rafting and how to guide the boat away from dangerous situations.

The scenery of the folding mountains was stunning and there were many animals along the trip including elk and martin.

Just before stopping for lunch, the participants hiked up a creek to a cave in the bottom of the mountain. There was cold fresh ground water running

straight out of the mountain into a little pond inside the cave.



All the youth gathered and each individual made a wish on a nickel. They then threw the nickel into the pond.

The youth then settled down on an island to make a fire and have lunch.

After lunch the sun had come out and this meant that water fighting season was now open. The youth spent most of their time making alliances and breaking them while splashing water as they negotiated.



The trip had been very successful, with not one participants falling into the river, until, our fearless leader, Derek Loots fell off the boat, and the youth rescued him and laughed the whole time doing it.

The group then stopped at a mineral lick and the knight brothers described why the minerals were so important to the local wildlife.



After the trip was over, they traveled back to camp for a special turkey dinner.

Earlier that day Angus McDonald and Charlie Boya took the moose skin boat for its first test run. It was a success; Charlie described the boat as a feather in the water.

That night was the final council fire. The participants made a giant bomb fire, and cuddled with each other around it. Jenelle Greenway had started a blanket cult, to which each participant was slowly becoming a groupie.

The night was filled with laughter and stories of all of the experiences they had gone through in the last twelve days. The night was completed with the participants singing songs around the fire.

August 6th

On the last day, all the participants helped take down camp and clean up

the area. They then had a final circle hug and promised to write and keep in touch with each other in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to prepare for a successful youth camp the monies must be made available from the funding agencies at least two month before the first day of camp.
2. A member of the MK board should attend the camp for a couple of days.
3. Advertisements for Youth Participants should be sent out in early May.
4. Identification of individuals to send for training as camp counselors should be done by May 1, 2004.

APPENDIX A. PHOTOS



Alvin Stone, Cory Glada and Richard Atkinson



Angus McDonald's yard at Moose Lake, BC.



Chris Funk after the annual Muskwa – Kechika Olympics relay race.



Robert McDonald building a shelter.



Wynter and Sky Davis.



Brittane Laverdure and Tracey McKenzie.



Dione Lynch and Allison Sorell.





Beautiful sunrise over the cook shack.



Moose Lake.



Looking up the valley at Moose Lake.



Josh Boya and Shian Wolfe.
Photo courtesy of Therese Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Tyler Porter, Josh Boya, Allison Sorrell.
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Friendly game of Stickgambling.
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Alicia Colville, Kwadacha First Nation
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Cynthia McCook, Kwadacha First Nation
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



**Derek Loots, Leanne Seymour, Cynthia McCook
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.**



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Justin Stone and Sas.
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT



**Amos Dick making the frame for the moose skin boat.
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT**



Richard Atkinson and Amos Dick shaping the frame.
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Amos Dick, Ross River, YT.
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Angus MacDonald, Muncho Lake, BC.
Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



Photo courtesy of Theresa Gulliver, CPAWS-YT.



2004 MK Environmental Youth Camp Participants.