

**11th ANNUAL
MUSKWA-KECHIKA
ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH CAMP**



**30 MILE FLATS, LIARD RIVER, BC
AUGUST 14-24, 2009**

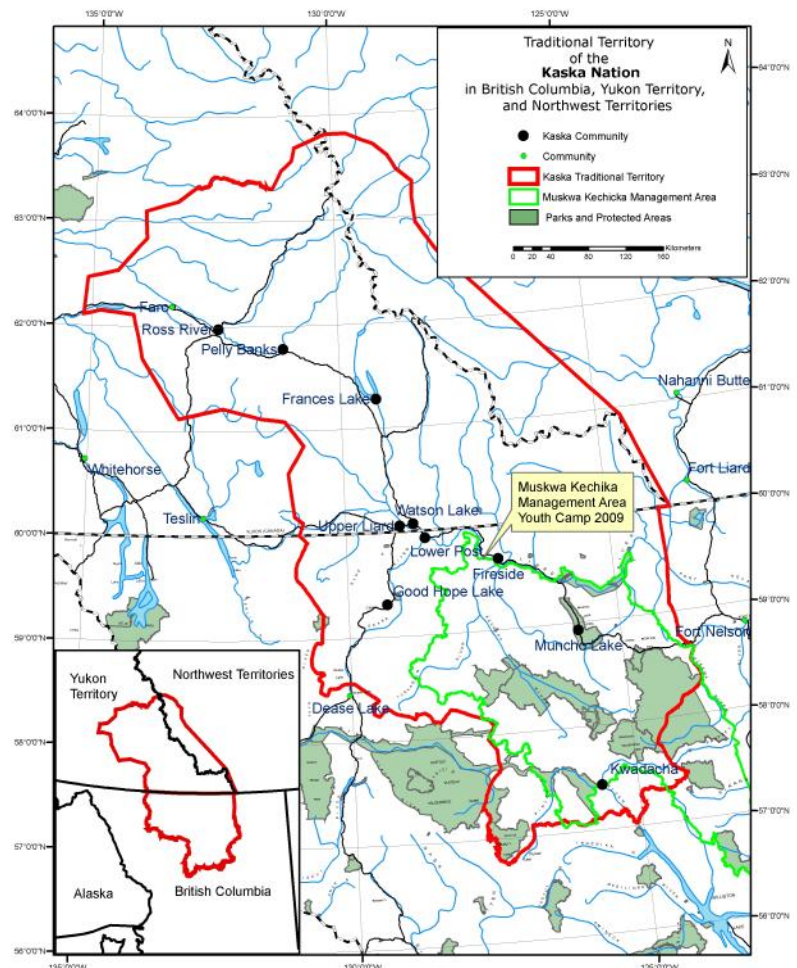
The 11th Annual Muskwa Kechika Environmental Youth camp brought together, an energetic group of youth, in a remote part of the Muskwa Kechika Management Area, known as 30 Mile Flats on the Liard River, in the Traditional Territory of the Kaska Nation in northern British Columbia.

Youth from Daylu, Kwadacha, West Moberly First Nation, Fort St. John, and Ross River came together to experience and learn the traditions and culture of the Kaska Dena while learning about the globally significant wildness area called the Muskwa Kechika. With hosts John and Malcolm Groat, Red River Outfitters

, Kaska Elder Mida Donnessey and guest speakers Bill Lux, Kaska Dena and Muskwa Kechika Advisory Board member, Emilia Hurd, CPAWS-BC and Norm Maclean, Biologist with LGL Environmental Ltd, Blandon Donnessey, Dena Kayeh Institute and Brian Ladue, Ross River Drummer and Ladue Productions, the youth participated in activities that included learning team building skills, problem solving in a land use planning context within the MK and cultural activities, such as beading, tanning hide, drum making and traditional Kaska songs.

Following is a day by day snap shot of the experience; I hope you enjoy it as much as the youth did!

Bailey Hayes, Camp Director.



Day One

The first day started out a bit slow, we woke up a little late and missed our stretches. Everyone did an introduction about themselves and then we were off washing up for breakfast.

After breakfast we broke into groups of three, every group was given a daily chore and everyday the groups switched which chore they had to do. The chores consisted of hauling firewood, doing dishes and hauling water. When we finished the group chores everyone helped collect rotten wood to smoke the moose hides.



We had a little free time before lunch so the youth all went fishing and we played a few bonding games to get to know one another.





After lunch we all went to work helping Grandma Mida scrape the hides and cut babiche.

It was very exciting to see all the youth getting involved and learning new things.



After dinner the youth were asked to go find their spirit spots. A Spirit spot is a place where the youth can reflect on the day and just relax by themselves.



While the youth were at their spots the councilors got ready for the first council fire.



We were honored to have Mida teach us how to make a traditional council fire and at every fire she said a prayer for

us. The council fire was



great, we all told a few stories and got to know one another a little bit better. After council fire everybody were sent to their cabins or tents for a good night sleep.



Day 2

Today was another great day, we woke up, did our morning stretches, washed up and then went for breaky. After breakfast Blandon gathered everyone together to start making drums.

First, we started soaking the caribou hides so they would be ready for us when we were finished drilling holes in the wooden frames. While the hides were soaking some of the youth also started beading.



One of the youth, Lauren, was beading something for her secret friend when she accidentally dropped a whole bag of beads on the ground, there were little blue beads everywhere. We all thought this was a little funny but grandma Mida thought differently. When she saw the beads all over the ground she looked at Lauren and said, “Well you better get busy on those beads.” And she wasn’t kidding either. Lauren

sat there right till lunch picking up all the beads.



After lunch Blandon helped everyone cut out pieces of caribou hide for their drums, and we started putting them together. We worked on the drums for the rest of the afternoon, then had dinner. After dinner everybody went to their spirit spots for an hour and then had free time before we headed to council fire.



Day Three

Today we embarked upon a hike to Egnell Lakes. We woke up a little earlier today to be able to get our morning stretches and chores completed before we started to get ready for the hike. The hike was an overnight trip so we needed to pack up all of our sleeping gear, food and anything else we wanted to bring.

Kenny Porter and Trevor Groat were our guides. We packed everything on to the back of the quad and Kenny drove the stuff down to the boat. Malcolm took us about ten minutes up river and dropped us off. By that time it was raining. The beginning of the hike was a little challenging because everyone was a little cranky from being wet and the terrain was crazy but we all pulled through and found a spot to set up camp by the river.

Derrick caught the only fish on the trip, he cleaned it and cooked it on the fire for us to share.

It rained the whole time we were there. Lauren and Angel were collecting wood for the fire and they decided to go across the river to find it. On their way

back they found some quicksand. Angel was covered from head to toe in mud.



Day Four

Everyone woke up from sleeping in the rain all night and there weren't very many happy campers. But luckily it had stopped raining so we started to pack up camp. While we were packing up camp some of the girls were talking amongst themselves about a birthday. It was Katelyn's birthday!!! We

headed back to camp as we had to get organized for our guests there were coming to visit us.

We got back to camp and cleaned the cabin for Bill Lux and Emilia, the first guests to come out. They joined us for dinner and we all got to know them a little.

After dinner we went across the slough and played doxen eye and capture the flag, a couple of games where everyone could just let loose.



Following the games all the youth went to their spirit spots

for an hour than we went to council fire. Emilia joins us at the fire. After everyone had their turn saying something around the fire we played a game called two truths and a lie. We went around the fire and every person told two



truths and one lie about themselves and everybody else had to guess which statement was the lie. It was a good game to get to know more about each other. After council fire we all went to bed.

Day Five

We awoke and did our normal morning activities and then set out to finish our beading and drums while we waited for the other guests to arrive. Norm Maclean and Brian Ladue arrived just in time for lunch. It was a beautiful day. We had planned to hear Norm, Bill and Emilias presentations, however,

it was such a beautiful day we decided to enjoy it in a less formal setting. Some went swimming and others painted drums.



We had a few extra drum frames so we put the guests to work on making their own drums. Bandon and a few of the youth sat and helped the guests make their drums right up until dinner.



After we ate, the youth had some free time while we saddled up the horses to go for a ride. Kenny and Trevor had been looking for the horses all week and they had finally found them. The youth were pretty excited as they were waiting patiently all week to go riding.





After horseback riding we went to council fire and our guests joined us too. Brian Ladue is part of the Ross River Drummers and shared a few Kaska songs with us.



Today was a full day for everyone. We started off with stretches and breakfast. After breakfast Norm, Bill and Emilia sat down with us to talk about land use planning and Kaska cultural values in the Muskwa Kechika Management Area.



Day Six

We talked about what the land would be like years from now when the climate changes and when more and more land is used for resource development. We were split into groups and asked to draw a map of the area then explain what that area would possibly look like in another ten years with all the different land uses.



After the presentation everyone did some sewing, beading and horseback riding till dinner. It started to rain after dinner so we decided to just have a fun night out of the rain, so some of the youth played cards and others went inside to make some jiffy pop and watch a movie. It was to wet for council fire so we just hung out inside until it was time for bed.

Day Seven

It was raining again today but that wasn't going to stop us from having a great day. We started the day with a nice

hearty breakfast then started to clean up the camp a bit so we didn't have as much to do before we left. After we cleaned camp we decided to give out gifts to all the participants. The youth each received a water bottle, a book and a hat. Everyone sat around for a while signing each others books and hats while the rest of the gifts were presented to the camp crew.

After lunch we helped Grandma Mida scrape the last two hides that were left. Everyone pitched in a little to get the job done quick.



Then it was time for the Muskwa Kechika Olympics. The first game was the one arm pull; two people stand in the middle of the circle holding each others forearms, when the whistle blows they have to try and pull the other person out of the circle with that one arm. Derrick was the winner of that challenge.



Next was Indian leg wrestling, all the youth really enjoyed this one. Being able to make the

other person go flying just by using the power in ones leg was quite exhilarating to them. Katherine was the smallest girl there but she managed to leg wrestle her way to first place.



After the leg wrestle we did the stump pull; one person stands

on one stump and the other on another stump and they each have to hold on to opposite ends of a rope and try to pull one another off their stump. Rene was the winner of that round.



Next we had the muskox push; the point of this one is to push the other person out of the circle by using just one shoulder to do it. Derrick was the winner of this one.





After dinner we split up into two teams and had a game

We had one more challenge before dinner and that was the egg toss so we split into teams of two and got started. We had quite a few rounds of tossing the egg before the last one broke. The winners were Derrick and Bailey.

of stick gambling to complete the MK Olympics. We finished the games and headed off to our last council fire.

Day Eight

Today was the last day of camp so we let everyone sleep in a bit. There wasn't much for chores left to do so we helped Kenny with firewood. We all packed and said our good byes to the youth that had to head south. The youth that were from around Lower Post area stayed till the next day. They helped clean the rest of camp.



Back row: Malcolm Groat, Ashley Shepherd, Katherine Atkinson, Katelyn Sterriah, Angel Stone.

Middle Row: Rene McCook, Keisha McCook, Deanna Dennis, Lauren Dos Santos, Bailey Hayes, Trevor Groat, Mida Donnessey, Freida Dennis, John Groat.

Front Row: Bacon the dog, Derrick Cryingman, Kenny Porter.