

There Is Still Survival Out There



Fort McKay First Nations

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may be requested from
Fort McKay First Nations
Box 5360 Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 3G4

Study team members:

Gordon Armitage
Cecilia Boucher
Bertha Ganter
Terry Garvin
Gordon Hodgson
Fred MacDonald
Shirley Nelson
Mike Robinson

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There Is Still Survival Out There

A Traditional Land Use
and Occupancy Study
of the Fort McKay First Nations

October 1994

Fort McKay First Nations



Canada  **Alberta**

Partnership Agreement in Forestry
Entente d'association en foresterie





*Mel Grandjamb
Chief, Fort McKay First Nations
September 1994*

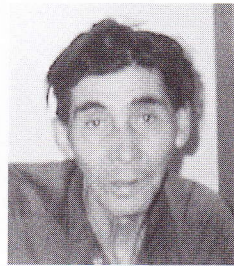
The Fort McKay First Nations are grateful to the many people who contributed to this study of traditional land use and occupancy, particularly to our elders who shared their recollections of their lives on the land and their love of the bush economy. It is their collective wish that this book and its associated maps be used in the school and in our families to keep this heritage alive and to ensure that it is available to all future generations. The educational value and use of our traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) is our highest priority for this project.

Our second priority is the use of this information for co-management of the Fort McKay First Nations' traditional land use and occupancy area. It is high time that our TEK is used to make better informed land use decisions about our homeland. We now seek the opportunity to put a new system of land use decision-making into practice. We believe that true co-management is one of the rights contemplated and guaranteed by Treaty 8 which we signed in 1899, before any of the resource developments that we must now contend with were even dreamt of.

Thanks are extended also to the agencies that funded the direct cost of this study — Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, and The Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada; and special thanks to the Alberta Ministry of Environmental Protection for substantial assistance in the preparation of this report.

We dedicate this book to both our elders and our children in the hope that it will bring them even closer together.

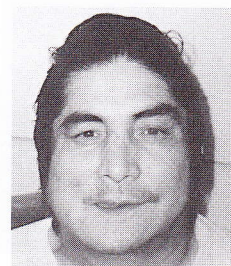
*Participants
in the
Fort McKay traditional land use study*



Dolphus Ahyasou



Isabel Ahyasou



Marcel Ahyasou



Melanie Ahyasou



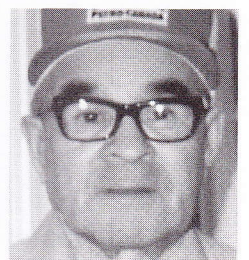
William Ahyasou



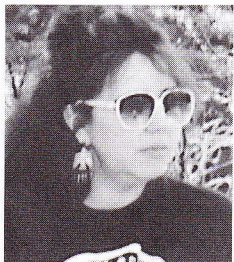
Alice Ahyasou



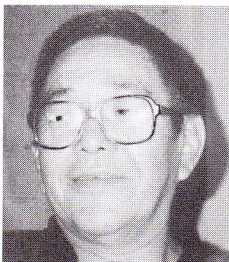
Alice Boucher



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Gina Boucher



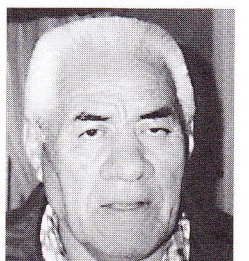
John Boucher



Mary Jane Boucher



Raymond Boucher



Willie Boucher

more...



Lawrence Courtoreille



Annie Ducharme



Emma Faichney



Ian Faichney



Alex Flett



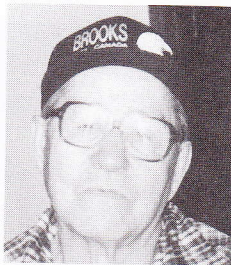
Cecil Flett



Bertha Ganter



Flora Grandjambe



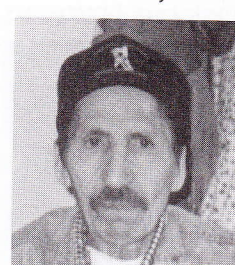
James Grandjambe



Mel Grandjamb



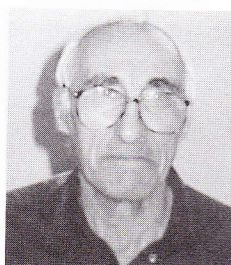
Wilfred Grandjambe



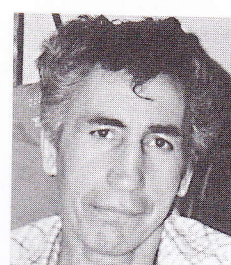
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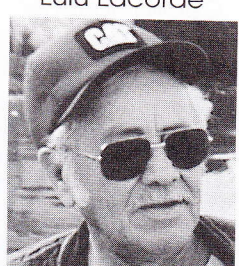
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Gilbert McDonald



Margaret McDonald



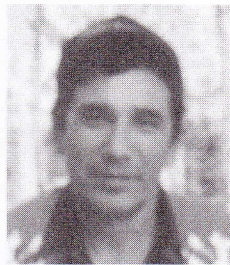
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Fred Marcel



Francis Orr



Johnny Orr



James Paquette



Eva Paquette



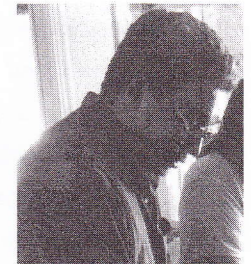
Maggie Paulin



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Mary Powder



Zachary Powder



Edward Rolland



Roy Rolland



Veronica Rolland



Clara Shott



Henry Shott



Mary Tourangeau



Boniface Tripp de Roche



Adeline Tripp de Roche

Foreword

I am very glad to be a part of this project. I think it is the best thing that could have happened for the young kids to know that there is important information on how to survive in the bush. I worked with very nice people in getting all these interviews organized and recorded. I really enjoyed meeting and talking to all the elders. They were very helpful and always willing to help. After I told them what this project was all about, and how it was going to help our young people, our kids and grandchildren, they saw the need to do the work. It describes how we made our living off the land. I feel very good knowing that we as elders have left some information for the youth, so they know that there is a living to be made out there. We also documented how we preserved our food and made our tools. We located a lot of graves that were not on the Forestry maps, and are thankful that they will now be marked.



Thanks again to all the elders that gave us the information contained in this book. It is the best yet. May all the trails you travel lead to happiness. Thank you.

*Fred MacDonald
Senior Interviewer*

Fort McKay First Nations Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Project

August 1994

Executive Summary

The Fort McKay First Nations undertook this study of traditional land use and occupancy on a broad area of boreal forest nearly 150 miles wide (east to west) along a 100-mile stretch of the Athabasca River downstream from Fort McMurray in northeastern Alberta. The Fort McKay First Nations comprise Treaty Indians, both Chipewyan and Cree, and the Metis and non-Status Indians who live in Fort McKay, approximately 60 kilometres north of Fort McMurray. The central focus for the study arose out of the Treaty 8 promise:

As long as the sun shines and the rivers flow and the hills don't move, no curtailment of any game regulation will be imposed, and you will be free to hunt, trap and fish as you wish.

The study was done using participatory research methods in which elders in the community were invited by local interviewers to share their stories about how they lived in the land. The people — the elders — who shared their knowledge in this project wish that it be shared both within the community and beyond. They hope that it will influence land use decisions and the choices young people make about their schooling and their eventual careers.

Recommendations at the basic level call for use of this book as an educational resource in the Fort McKay school and in all Fort McKay families. Secondly, they call for steps to enable the establishment of a co-management regime to promote conservation and sustainable development of the four major intensive use areas identified in the research.

Further recommendations are aimed at recovery of the First Nations' trapline land

base and the establishment of a local centre for traditional knowledge — a TEK centre.

The shared information — presented in detail in transcripts of the interviews and in organized ethnographic land-use data in the appendix to this report — made it possible to draw ten maps showing the extent and intensity of land use and occupancy in this area of about 38,000 square kilometres. The maps show the location of the peoples' trails and cabins, spiritual (grave) and historical sites, fur bearers, big game, fish, birds, berries, trees and plants, place names, and traplines. In the course of telling their stories, the elders indicated on field maps the actual location of their many activities, and these maps when finally completed after detailed conversations with 67 First Nations people living and working in the area were prepared for display in community centres and for inclusion in this report.

The shared information was organized at four levels: 1. basic (the maps themselves); 2. overlays (all maps superimposed) showing coherent organization of traditional environmental knowledge (TEK); 3. regional use patterns; and finally 4. the relationships for co-management and co-planning within the study area of about 15,000 square miles (38,400 square kilometres).

At the overlay level, it is recommended that the maps be distributed widely, not only in technical circles but in community posters and newspapers.

Finally, it is proposed, first, that all parties involved in land use planning in the area come together to jointly study key renewable and non-renewable resource uses. Secondly, it is proposed that the centre for traditional environmental knowledge — the TEK centre — be given the responsibility for building and maintaining an on-going capability for a regional geographic information system (GIS).

Syncrude-Fort McKay Bison Project

"There is still life out there"

In 1993, the International Year of Indigenous People, Syncrude Canada Ltd. embarked on one of its most challenging and innovative land reclamation plans: The reintroduction of wood bison to a region they once roamed freely in large numbers.

On Tuesday, February 16, Syncrude trucked a small herd of wood bison from Elk Island National Park 35 km east of Edmonton, to its oil sands plant 10 km south of Fort McKay.

The 30 bison were unloaded onto a 25-hectare fenced plot of reclaimed land that Syncrude had previously used in its mining operations. As the first hoof hit the still frozen ground, Syncrude stepped on the path towards saving an endangered species. Elder Peter Waskahat led a special homecoming ceremony on March 17 to welcome the return of the wood bison.

The bison relocation initiative, the first of its kind by a corporate citizen in Canada, started as a five-year test project undertaken by Syncrude, several federal agencies and the Fort McKay First Nation. Depending on how successfully the bison adapt to their new surroundings, the Fort McKay people could eventually get into bison ranching. Within a span of two years, the wood bison have become part of Syncrude's corporate image and a symbol of a cooperative relationship with the Fort McKay First Nation.

So far, this innovative step in land reclamation has not only placed Syncrude in the role as a saviour of an endangered species, but also as a provider of future economic benefits for the people of Fort McKay. As of November 1995, the herd has grown to 71 head. Raymond Ratfat of the Fort McKay First Nation tends the bison ranch with the assistance of Basil McDonald, also of Fort McKay. Eventually the Fort McKay First Nation will take over all aspects of the bison ranch.

On September 4, 1995, Syncrude opened the Wood Bison Trail, the newly named stretch of Highway 63 running past the Syncrude oil sands operation. The opening also marked the unveiling of the Wood Bison Gateway, an awe-inspiring monument constructed by Fort McMurray artist Brian Clark. Located at the south entrance of the Trail, the Wood Bison Gateway is one of Canada's largest installations of environmental art. The bas-relief sculptures depict a herd of seven wood bison crossing the highway.

In 1996, the Syncrude-Fort McKay initiative will open the Wood Bison Viewpoint. Syncrude will move 12 male bison from the herd to graze on 80 hectares of reclaimed pasture land beside the trail. The viewpoint will give visitors an excellent opportunity to see these powerful creatures in their natural environment.

Thanks to the cooperative relationship with the Fort McKay First Nation, Syncrude is becoming well known for its bison. This trend became increasingly evident as Fort McKay Chief Mel Grandjamb spoke at the Wood Bison Trail opening:

"If 20 years ago, you told me we would be here today celebrating the genesis of a buffalo herd, I would have said you were dreaming," Grandjamb said. "And now it is a dream of mine that in the future — when my grandchildren look out across what is now the mine site — they will see a vast herd of buffalo, and see it as a symbol of our shared prosperity."

As part of Syncrude's long-term land reclamation vision, Mel Grandjamb's dream of a vast herd roaming the land, is also Syncrude's.

Syncrude Canada Ltd: A Canadian Success Story

Syncrude Canada Ltd. is the world's largest producer of crude oil from the oil sands. Since operations began in 1978, the company has grown to become Canada's second largest upstream company, producing over 73 million barrels of high quality, light, sweet crude oil annually. This product is sent down a pipeline to three Edmonton area refineries and a petrochemical plant and to a terminal which ships the balance to refineries in eastern Canada and the United States.

At its Mildred Lake site, Syncrude mines the oil sands, extracts the bitumen (as the raw oil is called), and upgrades it into a high quality light crude oil it calls *Syncrude Sweet Blend*. Operating costs are now below \$14 Cdn /barrel and the company expects new technology and continuous improvements will drop that to \$12/barrel by the year 2000.

Syncrude shipped its 800 millionth barrel of *Syncrude Sweet Blend* in September 1995 — 17 years after starting up. The company expects to produce its billionth barrel in early 1998 and, even at that level, will still have produced only a fraction of the oil contained on its leases.

Today, Syncrude has over 3500 employees, and averages 1000 contractor employees at its Mildred Lake plant and in the city of Fort McMurray. This total includes 325 Aboriginal employees plus approximately 250 Aboriginal contractors. In addition, about 90 scientific personnel work at the company's Research Centre in Edmonton. (Syncrude's R&D operation is among the top 30 in Canada.) One of Syncrude's strengths is its solid technological base, which includes both construction and operating experience, along with a culture built around continuous improvement and innovation in research and development.

History

Syncrude Canada Ltd. was incorporated in December 1964, with the purpose of assuming the direction of a research and development project in the Athabasca oil sands. At that time under the management of Cities Service Athabasca, Inc., Syncrude made its first application to the Alberta Government, to produce crude oil from the oil sands, in 1968. Permission to proceed with construction was finally given by Order-in-Council in 1972.

Clearing of the construction site at Mildred Lake began in December 1973. A work force of more than 10,000 swarmed over the site during the peak construction periods in 1976 and 1977; 7,500 of them lived in the construction camp on site. In August 1978, construction of the base plant was completed on time and on budget, at a cost of more than \$2.3 billion, making Syncrude one of the largest single projects ever undertaken in Canada.

Since production began, the company has been a model corporate citizen, providing support to many community organizations in the region. Furthermore, in addition, Syncrude's environmental practices have been recognized by awards. Through careful management and creative programs, Syncrude is demonstrating that economic development doesn't always permanently scar the land, cloud the water and pollute the air. Indeed, the company operates in an environment regulated by more than a dozen government Acts, yet in 17 years of operation, it has never had a fine, sentence or control order imposed on it for noncompliance of environmental regulations.

Expanding capabilities

In July 1983, the company embarked on a six-year \$1.5 billion capital investment project. Part of this program was directed at replacement of worn-out equipment; part of it at "debottlenecking" of plant equipment to improve reliability; and part at the installation of new processing units to increase production by over 30,000 barrels to 160,000 barrels/day. The next major project will be the opening of the new North Mine in 1998, combined with additional debottlenecking of the extraction and upgrading plants to increase production.

In 1994, the company received notice of the successful resolution of its application to Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. The "green light" to proceed is a significant step forward in responsible, sustainable oil sands development. The same year, the company acquired two new leases which will form the basis for its new Aurora Mine, to enter production in 2001.

Taken together, Syncrude's various research and development programs, and its demonstrated abilities in plant operation and construction management, constitute a solid platform for future growth and expansion. ■

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1. Introduction

This traditional land use and occupancy study (TLUOS) describes the patterns of land use created by the Treaty Indians, both Chipewyan and Cree, and the Metis and non-Status Indians who live in Fort McKay, a small settlement on the Athabasca River, approximately 60 kilometres north of Fort McMurray, with a total population of about 450 people. The need for the TLUOS was determined locally, and the project was started in February 1994. Funding for the project was initially provided by the Alberta Ministry of Environmental Protection; additional funding for a broader distribution of the final report was provided by the Canadian Forest Service.

The current work builds on some previous research which was published by the Fort McKay Tribal Administration in 1982 under the title *From Where We Stand*. This document notes that Indian and Native people have lived in the area since time immemorial, and have always lived at the Fort McKay site as a part of the seasonal round characteristic of traditional hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering. Over the last fifty years, however, Fort McKay has become more of a permanent base as schools, government services and local industrial employment have gained in community acceptance and importance. The Fort McKay First Nations have several reserves within their TLUOS area including:

- Fort McKay No. 174 on the east bank of the Athabasca River, across from the current Fort McKay settlement;
- Namur Lake No. 174A on the southeastern shore of Gardiner Lakes; and
- Namur Lake No. 174B adjacent to the northeast shore of Namur Lake.

The choosing of reserve lands was one of the conditions of Treaty 8, which the Chipewyan and Cree Indians of the Fort McKay area signed on 4 August 1899. Besides the allocation of reserve lands, Treaty 8 also promised continued rights to hunting, trapping and fishing:

As long as the sun shines and the rivers flow and the hills don't move, that no curtailment of any game regulations would be imposed, you will be free to hunt, trap and fish as you wish. It should be written in the Treaty...

The commissioner was the one that said that.
(Elder Adam Boucher, 1982, p. 19).

When asked if that was the real reason why Treaty 8 was signed — because the people were given the right to hunt, trap and fish forever — Elder Boucher replied, "Yes."

The 1982 study, *From Where We Stand*, contains a discussion of the Fort McKay First Nations' bush economy prior to 1960 and post-1960. The year 1960 was chosen as a pivotal date "because it represents a major turning point in terms of the organization and accommodation of our Indian economy to industrial development" in the region (1982, p. 30). This TLUOS focuses on the collective memory of 67 living Fort McKay residents who have direct experience of bush economy life. We do not distinguish between periods of time; rather we seek to portray a well focused snapshot of the existing collective memory of bush use. Some of the people interviewed have retired permanently to town now (1994); others are still active bush economy participants.

All remember childhoods in the bush economy, and fondly recall trapline life. The term "trapline" as used in this study means more than just a place to harvest furs for sale on the commercial market. It means the territory where people hunted, fished, picked berries, gathered duck eggs and trapped fur for local domestic consumption and trade. The trapline was the community food supply for the people interviewed in this TLUOS; it was and is synonymous with meat for the table; with stewardship of all natural resources; with extended family sharing; with the socialization of children; with the role of the elders as carriers and teachers of traditional environmental knowledge; and with cultural sustainability.

The people who shared their knowledge in this project wish that it now be shared both within the community and beyond. They hope that it influences land use decisions and the choices young people make about their schooling and their eventual careers.

2. Methodology

The Fort McKay traditional land use and occupancy study (TLUOS) used a participatory action research methodology that stressed community control of the project, its conduct and its results. Overall the TLUOS included the participation of the Fort McKay First Nations Chief, Jimmy Boucher, who was succeeded in an election midway through the project by Mel Grandjamb; Lawrence Courtoreille, manager of the First Nation; Fred MacDonald, Cecilia Boucher and Bertha Canter, Fort McKay community trainees; the elders of the community; Alberta Environmental Protection, particularly Gordon Armitage, Forest Superintendent in Fort McMurray and Shirley Nelson, Project Leader, Resource Inventory Section, Edmonton; Canadian Forest Service, particularly Joseph De Franceschi, Chief, Development Coordination, Edmonton; and Terry Garvin, Gordon Hodgson and Mike Robinson of the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA), University of Calgary. Occasional employment was also provided for Raymond Boucher and Willie Grandjambe of Fort McKay who acted as guides to Athabasca River and Gardiner Lakes locations. Altogether the above team used funding from Alberta Environmental Protection and Canadian Forest Service to complete the work. The funding contract was negotiated between the two governments and the Fort McKay First Nations. The work management agreement was negotiated between Fort McKay and AINA, and fund administration was shared between Fort McKay and AINA.

In general terms the methodology followed the participatory action approach outlined in *Mapping How We Use Our Land* (1994) and built on the belief of the project supporters that the elders and current active bush economy participants in Fort McKay wanted to tell their story, to their people, in their own words. Rather than design an intensive interview questionnaire, the three project trainees, Fred MacDonald, Ce-

cilia Boucher, and Bertha Canter, and their trainer, Terry Garvin, conducted open-ended interviews based on a practical list of potential interview questions that suggested categories of traditional land use and occupancy. Special attention was paid to letting the interviewees tell their own stories. Rather than focusing on data the interviewers thought important at all costs, the interviewees were encouraged to tell all the related stories they desired, because this was felt to be more truly the Fort McKay way of passing on knowledge.

The Fort McKay TLUOS was launched with a community meeting on 10 February 1994, attended by the First Nations manager, Lawrence Courtorielle, fourteen community elders, and Terry Garvin of AINA. This meeting was held to attain project approval from the elders, the primary participants in the project. They agreed to share their knowledge and experience of bush life on the condition that their First Nations would retain unconditional rights to the use of the information. They desired two basic outcomes from the work:

First steps:

- to provide help with decisions concerning future land use, and
- to help educate future generations of their people, including their current children.

The elders also requested and received a promise of appropriate notice and time to prepare for interviews, a personal copy of the TLUOS final report and unrestricted access to the TLUOS findings. As well, the elders desired and received a modest gratuity for participating in the work, and the promise of a community feast at its conclusion to celebrate the project, view slides and maps, hear a verbal presentation of the findings, and receive their personal copy of the final report.

The second project meeting was held in Fort McKay on 14-15 March 1994, and it served to introduce the process of participatory action research in a workshop format. This gathering included the First Nations manager, Alberta Environmental Protection personnel, the three recently selected community trainee interviewers, trainer Terry Garvin and AINA computer consultant and project document specialist Gordon Hodgson. The meeting covered collection and recording of traditional land use and occupancy information, project management explanations, and roles of the participants. All of the participants acknowledged that they were in training. The responsi-

bility for interview scheduling and the style of interview was assigned to the First Nations trainee interviewers Fred MacDonald, Cecilia Boucher and Bertha Canter; the lead responsibility for project process and methodology was assigned to Terry Garvin. Technical assistance, focusing on map production, was assigned to Shirley Nelson of Alberta Environmental Protection. Lawrence Courtorielle agreed to monitor First Nations funding administration and Terry Garvin agreed to monitor AINA funding administration.

Each interviewer was supplied with maps at this meeting, and the different map scales and other cartographic issues were discussed. The trainee interviewers agreed to supply their own cameras and tape recorders, and paper, film and office supplies were provided out of the project budget. It was agreed that trainee salaries and expenses would be paid directly by the First Nations administration. Same-day reimbursement for local expenses was promised by the First Nations. AINA agreed to reimburse all AINA professional service staff assigned to the project on a monthly basis, and to invoice the First Nations for their work on a regular basis. Alberta Environmental Protection agreed to supply map materials and transportation to areas that were off the beaten track and unreachable by road or river travel.

At this meeting members of the Fort McKay First Nations suggested that the project should be expanded to include the production of 150 copies of the final project report for local distribution, and the expansion of the project area to include Chipewyan Lake interviews as well. Fort McKay assumed responsibility for this and applied to Forestry Canada for the needed additional funding. This request was later approved.

The TLUOS area was also agreed to at this meeting, and corresponded to the Birch Mountain-Firebag River map produced by Alberta Environmental Protection at a scale of 1:250,000 on a Universal Transverse Mercator Projection. It was decided to use 1:15,000 and 1:100,000 scale maps to record the interview data.

After the training workshop was completed, the TLUOS began in earnest. The following steps were undertaken by the trainer and the trainees:

- an initial interview list was drafted. This list began with the oldest people in the community;

Project implementation

- each trainee interviewer selected the persons he or she wished to interview, and added to that list as the project progressed. Two of the trainees had a preference for interviewing people who trapped, hunted, fished, and lived in the area of their own family trapline. One trainee and the trainer agreed to interview anyone else on the interview list;

- a revised interview question list (see pages 9-13) was prepared, giving species level detail for most categories of food, fur and hides. It was soon noticed in the interview process that instead of symbolizing twelve species of ducks on the maps, a single duck symbol would have to do. Different species information was instead recorded in the written interview notes. As far as possible local species names were used;

- all interviews were conducted by appointment with adequate notice. They were always held at the preferred location of the interviewee;

- interview duration was closely monitored at the start of the TLUOS. It was found that two to three hours was the maximum desired time limit by the elders. Additional interviews were scheduled as required;

- each interview (a total of 67 were conducted) was recorded in writing, on the maps, and on tape, and the majority of the interviews were completed by the trainees;

- each interviewee was photographed, if permission to do so was granted. As well, bush artifacts and property (cabins, canoes, trapline equipment) were photographed with permission;

- each interview was recorded as told, in long hand, by the interviewer after it was completed. There was no editing for spelling, grammar or crosschecking for accuracy at this point;

- the hand written record was next typed by the trainer and stored on computer disk. A copy of the word-processed interview was then returned to the trainee, along with a list of comments or questions which sought clarification on points raised in the interview;

- the trainee next determined if a second interview was necessary, and scheduled and conducted it to gain further information for the maps and written record;

- the trainee passed all additional information in writing to the trainer, and it was added by him to the original typed interview;

- the interviews were next edited for clarity, grammar and spelling, and processed in final form. A copy of these interviews was given to the Fort McKay First Nations for archiving;

- as the interviews progressed, ten categories of data were assembled on eight 1:250,000 mylar base maps from the original 1:15,000-1:100,000 interview maps. With each new interview the base maps became busier, and regional use and occupancy patterns more pronounced. The process of painstakingly transferring data from the interview maps to the 1:250,000 scale mylar base maps took four people 16 hours;

- by the time the mylar base maps were being assembled (May, 1994), Gordon Hodgson had prepared, on Shirley Nelson's suggestion and assistance, a varied array of sticky-backed silhouettes for all of the data types. The original interview maps relied on coloured dots, and in some cases (e.g., birds) segments of coloured dots, to indicate species, harvest areas, cabins, graves, historic sites and forest cover. The silhouettes greatly improved the appearance of the maps, and the elders especially liked seeing lynx and ducks at harvest areas instead of coloured dots;

- when the mylar base maps were finally ready and all interview data had been carefully stuck in place, they were displayed in the Fort McKay community hall. All of the interviewees were invited to come and review the maps to make corrections or additions, and generally verify the data collection process with their relatives and friends;

- during the period 30 May to 1 June, Fred MacDonald, Raymond Boucher, Cecilia Boucher, Terry Garvin and Mike Robinson made a verification and cabin site inventory trip on the Athabasca River from Fort McKay to Point Brule. This trip enabled the photographing of trapping communities and isolated cabins that fell into disuse after the opening of the Mission Residential School in Fort Chipewyan and the opening of the school at Fort McKay in 1948;

- on 2 July Terry Garvin, Gordon Armitage, Fred MacDonald and Willie Grandjambe conducted a helicopter spot check of the corridor from Fort McKay to Gardiner Lakes and associated cabin and grave sites. These sites were also photographed and recorded on the maps;

- all verification additions and corrections were next added to the mylar base maps, and these maps became the master copies for report preparation, which entailed their photographing, reduction and copying for the final report; and

- the final report was prepared by the AINA project members, with guidance and editorial review by the Fort McKay project administration and the trainees.

While the above process was underway, Terry Garvin drafted regular project progress reports for all participants. Phone, fax and written correspondence kept everyone in-

formed of what was happening and when. Because of the good relations amongst the project partners, political changes at Fort McKay, significant new additions to the project budget (by the Canadian Forest Service), and project staff changes were all handled with a minimum of confusion and a maximum of respect. This TLUOS demonstrated the benefits of teamwork, community desire and focus, and funding agency participation in more than just funding.

Project management

The partners agree that most of the TLUOS information available in Fort McKay is now recorded on the 1:250,000 mylar base maps. The elders stress, however, that the maps should still be treated as open, because inevitably someone will come forward with new information. The project trainees, who are now graduate mappers and interviewers have the skills to keep the process open and alive in the community.

Project conclusion

It is hoped that the final project report and the maps will now form the basis of the Fort McKay First Nations co-management process for dealing with regional development proponents. When regional land use patterns are understood, it is possible to begin to plan co-management strategies that provide protection for migratory species, conservation areas, heritage sites and rivers, and continued fur and country food harvests. When the TLUOS data are compared with scientific data (e.g., migration routes of big game determined with radio collars and satellite tracking) true co-management analysis is possible, and the best quality conservation decisions can be made in the combined spirit of partnership and stewardship.

Perhaps most important to the elders of Fort McKay is the use of these data for educational purposes in the Fort McKay school and amongst the families of the community. In these pages and maps are a living record of how the bush economy functioned and still functions in the Fort McKay First Nations' traditional land use and occupancy region. It is a proud record of traditional environmental knowledge, lives well lived in the bush and the ongoing presence of opportunity for a life away from cities, megaprojects and bosses. As elder Julian Powder noted, "There is still survival out there."

Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use
Big game, fur bearers, fish and waterfowl
 — guide for interviewers —

<p>Big Game</p> <p>moose _____</p> <p>deer: mule _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">whitetail _____</p> <p>elk _____</p> <p>caribou: woodland _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">barren land _____</p> <p>buffalo _____</p> <p>Fur bearers</p> <p>lynx _____</p> <p>bobcat _____</p> <p>hare _____</p> <p>rabbit _____</p> <p>wolf _____</p> <p>coyote _____</p> <p>marten _____</p> <p>fisher _____</p> <p>fox _____</p> <p>wolverine _____</p> <p>beaver _____</p> <p>muskrat _____</p> <p>otter _____</p> <p>skunk _____</p> <p>raccoon _____</p> <p>badger _____</p> <p>mink _____</p> <p>squirrel: gray _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">red _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">flying _____</p> <p>weasel least _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">short tailed _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">long-tailed _____</p>	<p>bear: black _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">grizzly _____</p> <p>Fish</p> <p>pickerel _____</p> <p>pike (jackfish) _____</p> <p>whitefish _____</p> <p>lake trout _____</p> <p>grayling _____</p> <p>perch _____</p> <p>ling cod _____</p> <p>sucker _____</p> <p>goldeye _____</p> <p>chub _____</p> <p>Waterfowl</p> <p>geese: Canada _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">blue _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ross _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">snow _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">white-fronted _____</p> <p>Ducks: black _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">canvasback _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">mallard _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">pintail _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">redhead _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">teal _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">greater scaup _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">lesser scaup _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">goldeneye _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">scoter _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">ruddy duck _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">merganser _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">grebe _____</p>
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Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use

Fruit plants and birds

— guide for interviewers —

Fruit Plants		Birds	
blueberry	_____		
huckleberry	_____	Migratory birds	
cranberry		loon	_____
bog	_____	pelican	_____
lowbush	_____	cormorant	_____
highbush	_____	swan	_____
saskatoon	_____	seagull	_____
pincherry	_____	owl	_____
chokecherry	_____	crane	_____
raspberry	_____	eagle	_____
dwarf raspberry	_____	great blue heron	_____
trailing raspberry	_____	_____	
red currant	_____		
black currant	_____	Upland birds	
strawberry	_____	grouse:	
gooseberry	_____	pintail	_____
rose hip	_____	fool hen	_____
twisted stalk	_____	ruffed	_____
kinnikinnick (bearberry)	_____	ptarmigan	_____
dogwood (bunchberry)	_____		
common juniper	_____		
buffaloberry	_____		
hazelnut	_____		

Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use

Herbs, roots and plants

— guide for interviewers —

Sweetgrass		
for decoration	_____	
for ceremony	_____	
for spiritual functions	_____	
Rat root		
medicine, sore throat	_____	
Mint — preserved or fresh		
for tea	_____	
condiments	_____	
headache relief	_____	
Balsam fir tree		
sap: poultice mix	_____	
needles: poultice mix	_____	
Seneca root		
medicine-cough	_____	
Mountain ash		
(roots and inner bark)		
medicine, muscles	_____	
for poultice	_____	
Muskeg plant		
medicine for colic, fever	_____	
Tree fungus		
transport fire lighter	_____	
smoke for a bug repellent	_____	
Ground fungus		
open sores, skin rash	_____	
Willow fungus		
air freshener	_____	
sponge, earache application	_____	
Wintergreen		
relief of cold and flu	_____	
Muskeg blackberry		
drink for heart ailment	_____	
Muskeg		
diaper absorbent	_____	
sanitary absorbent	_____	
Beaver castor (castoreum oil)		
medicine, cold-flu	_____	
commercial perfume	_____	
chewing gum	_____	
Skunk juice		
anaesthetic for toothache	_____	
Skunk sack or hide		
spiritual	_____	

Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use

Trees and shrubs

— guide for interviewers —

Birch:	
firewood	_____
bark for baskets	_____
bark for handicrafts	_____
bark for canoe cover	_____
snowshoe frame	_____
toboggan runners	_____
building material	_____
furniture	_____
firewood	_____
sap for syrup	_____
Tamarack-larch: (Indian hardwood)	
toboggan runners	_____
snowshoe frames	_____
firewood	_____
furniture	_____
fence post	_____
medicine-middle layer	_____
White and/or black spruce:	
logs-house building	_____
fence railing	_____
firewood	_____
Jackpine	
building material	_____
hard instruments-scraper	_____
Willow:	
basket weaving	_____
medicine	_____
root for smoke curing	_____
craft material	_____
material for trap sets	_____
mix bark with tobacco	_____
Dogwood and alder	
colour dyeing: hide crafts	_____
basket material	_____
White and black polar	
medicine -outer green	_____
Balsam Fir	
sap for glue	_____
sap for chewing gum	_____
General: spruce, fir, pine tamarack, birch, poplar	
firewood	_____
snowshoe frames	_____
sap for medicine	_____
sap for sealing	_____
roots for sewing	_____
bark for smoke curing	_____
bark for chinking roof	_____
poles for roofing	_____

Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use

Habitat, product location and places

— guide for interviewers —

Land products		spiritual	_____
ochre	_____	heritage	_____
medicine	_____	homes, old	_____
fruit berries	_____	homes, new	_____
rat root	_____	trapline stopover cabins	_____
sweetgrass	_____	trails	_____
sap, for glue	_____	spring camps	_____
sap, for sealing	_____	summer fishing camps	_____
tree fungus	_____	fall dry meat camps	_____
moss	_____	Fish:	
pine cones	_____	habitat by species	_____
craft supplies	_____	spawning areas	_____
hay	_____	dry meat camps	_____
artesian water	_____	Animals:	
building material	_____	moose pasture	_____
craft material	_____	deer pasture	_____
art material	_____	caribou range	_____
cooking and heating wood	_____	buffalo range	_____
Land, special areas		salt licks	_____
gardening	_____	calving range	_____
leisure	_____	fur bearer range	_____
farming	_____	dens: bear, wolf	_____
transportation routes	_____	Birds:	
First Nation reserved land	_____	nesting areas	_____
Places:		migration routes	_____
traditional place names	_____	habitat	_____
burial	_____		

3. Map analysis

The Fort McKay TLUOS produced ten maps:

- 4.1 trails and cabins
- 4.2 spiritual (grave) and historical sites
- 4.3 fur bearers
- 4.4 big game
- 4.5 fish
- 4.6 birds
- 4.7 berries
- 4.8 trees and plants
- 4.9 place names, and
- 4.10 traplines.

TEK

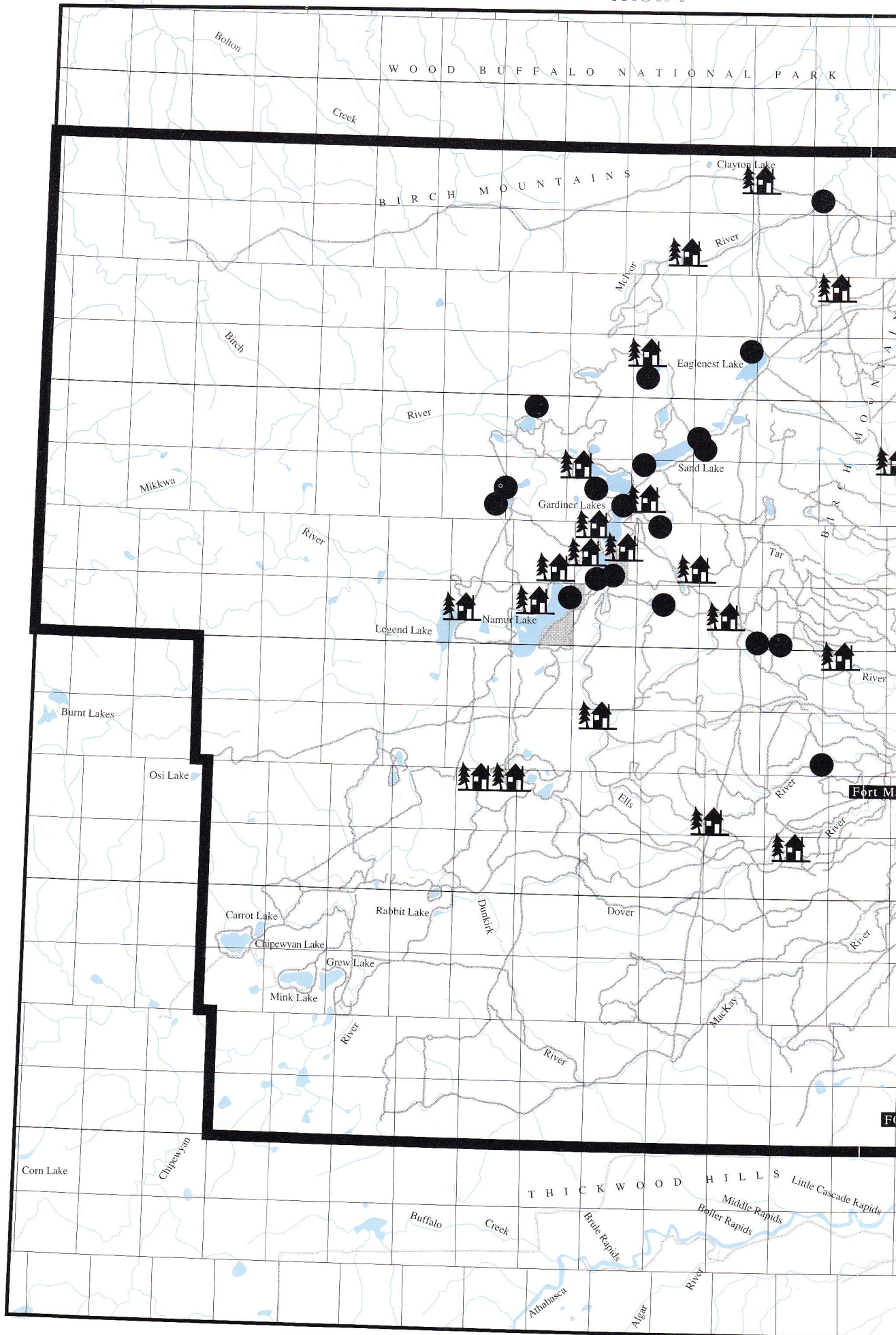
Traditional environmental knowledge

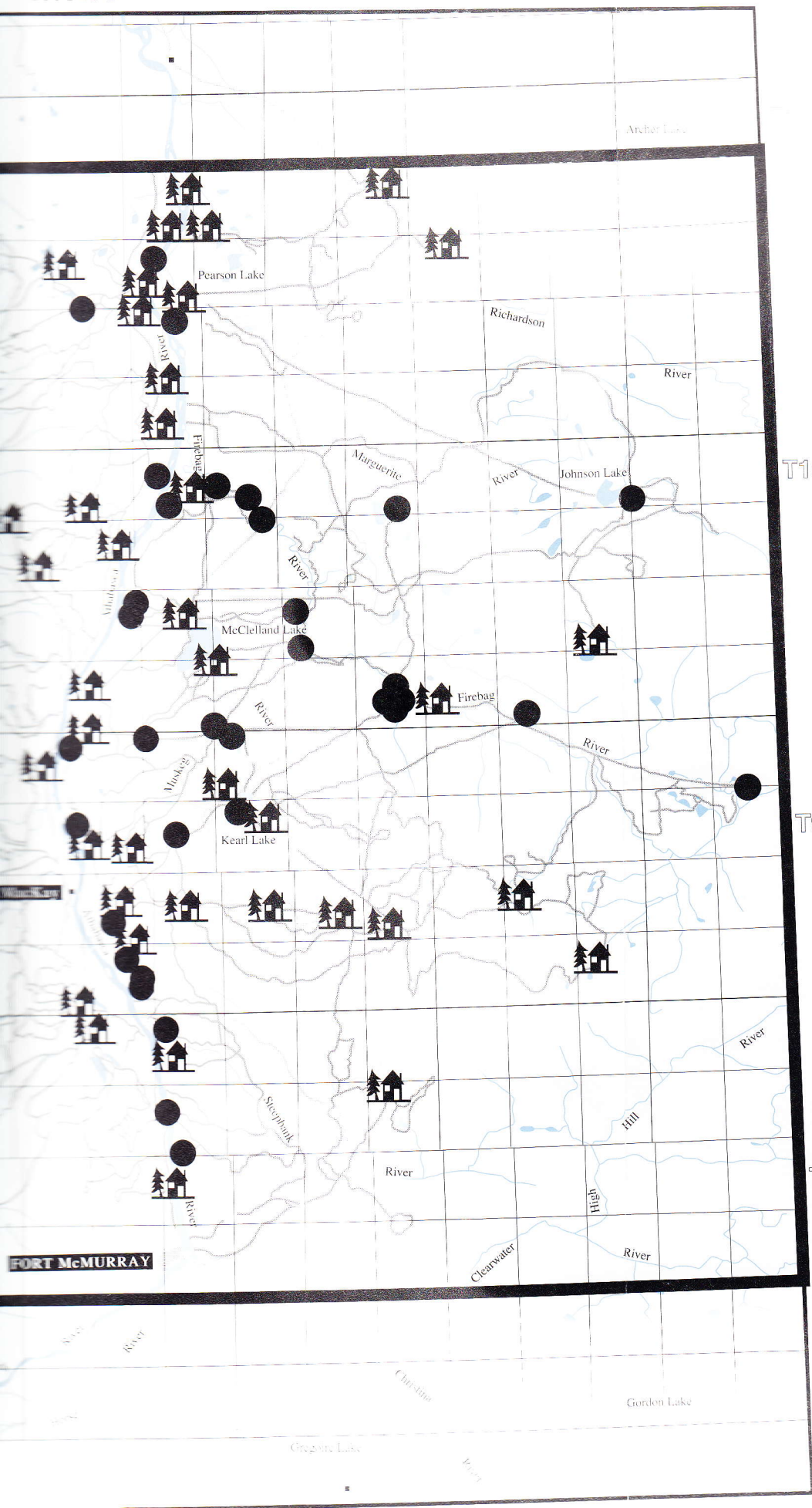
Individually these ten maps tell the basic stories of bush land use and occupancy; collectively overlaid, they tell the total story of the Fort McKay peoples' traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) of their functional land base. At a still closer level of scrutiny the maps reveal important regional land use patterns, providing for the first time a cartographic and written record of those areas and regions that experience the most intensive use. By carefully comparing the regional impacts of other resource users (e.g., Syncrude, Suncor, Northland Forest Products, sport hunters, eco-tourists and other industries) we can begin to understand where co-management negotiations should focus their efforts and achieve their most positive results. It is also worth noting that most non-aboriginal people will not be able to visualize all ten maps overlaid without actually physically overlaying all the maps; most Fort McKay First Nations elders will not have this problem. The collective impression of all ten maps overlaid together is a good approximation of the elders' "mental road maps." Bush land people rich in TEK, passed orally from generation to generation, know about their land base, its fur, game, fish, birds, fruits, trees, roots, shrubs and grasses. They also know how best to move about the land using hundreds of miles of trail and river routes, knowing where the graves of those who died on the trail or passed on in the many small bush land communities are located. These communities thrived in this part of Alberta until the early 1950s when the First Nations people moved in large numbers to Fort McKay, Fort Chipewyan and Fort McMurray to be closer to schools and industrial economy jobs. The following maps collectively reveal an intensive pattern of land use, and each one has an important element of TEK to add to the story.

The trails and cabins map illustrates an extensive trail system that ranged over the Birch Mountain-Firebag River region. Originally these trails were cut by hand and travelled on foot and by dog team. Today most of them are being replaced by nearby seismic lines. Dogs have been replaced by snow machines in winter; foot and horse-

Trails and cabins map

back travel continues in the spring, summer and fall. Only the upper northwest corner of the map is relatively "untravelling", and this is because the people who knew this area best died in the late 1970s and early 1980s before the TLUOS could begin. The trainee interviewers were told many times in the interviews that just because no





**BIRCH MOUNTAIN
FIREBAG RIVER
TRADITIONAL
LAND-USE MAP**

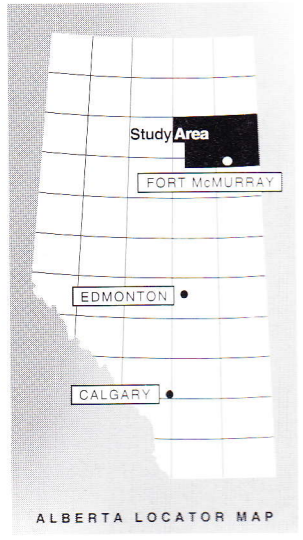
CABINS / TRAILS

Legend for Cabins / Trails:

- Cabin icon: House with trees
- Trail icon: Dashed line
- Abandoned Cabin icon: Solid black circle

SCALE

1 TOWNSHIP	0 KMS.	10	20
BLOCK =	[Scale bar]		
10 X 10 KMS.	0 MI.	6	12



one living could remember trails in that area did not mean it was not used (or was under-used). On the contrary, it was once the site of many productive traplines, and undoubtedly holds the remains of those for whom the area was home.

Major known and existing trails ran north-south along both banks of the Athabasca River; the main trunk trail followed the western bank. Another major trail ran from Birch Mountain south to the McKay River. A major trail also ran east-west, from what is now Saskatchewan, via Johnson Lake, the Chipewyan Indian Reserve 201G, Alice and Edra Creeks to and past the Birch River. A busy trail route also followed the Firebag River, from Wallace Creek to McClelland Lake and the Athabasca River. Fort McKay, Poplar Point and other smaller trapping communities on the east and west bank of the Athabasca were well connected to Namur Lake, an important trapping, fishing and hunting region. Chipewyan Lake, Mink Lake and Cree Lake to the south-west were also well tied in to the Athabasca River communities.

In general terms the trail systems followed the paths of least resistance, using creek and river valleys and lake shores wherever possible. Important cabin community sites included Namur Lake, Sand Lake, Firebag River, and the entire course of the Athabasca, where old and new cabin sites occur almost every 5 to 10 kilometres from Fort McMurray to Kenny Woods.

Twenty-three old cabins were located by memory west of the Athabasca River; thirty-four currently used cabins are located in this area. To the east of the Athabasca, the interviews revealed the location of thirty-one old cabins and twenty-seven new cabins. Favoured cabin locations (old and new) are river/creek confluences, good fishing spots (such as river eddies), favoured lake beaches with good drinking water and views, and ridges above the Athabasca River with good views, western exposures, and sandy hillocks where cemeteries could be developed.

A careful reconnaissance of the Athabasca River trapping communities conducted by the TLUOS team in May 1994 revealed that many of the old cabins were still standing in various stages of ongoing decay. Many could be stabilized and preserved with minimal effort. Several contained important artifacts of bush harvesting life from the 1940s and 1950s.

There are special spiritual and historical sites in the TLUOS area. There are four sites with over forty graves each: Point Brule (actually Chipewyan IR 201F), Poplar Point (Chipewyan IR 201G), Fort McKay Reserve (IR 174) and Namur Lake Reserve (IR 174A). There are also a number of grave sites with as few as

Spiritual (grave) and historical sites

one and as many as sixteen graves. The interviewees were not sure of the exact number of graves in some locations.

All graves are designated on the map with numbers indicating the approximate number of individuals buried at a given location. Most grave sites are located at places where someone or a family or a group of families once lived.

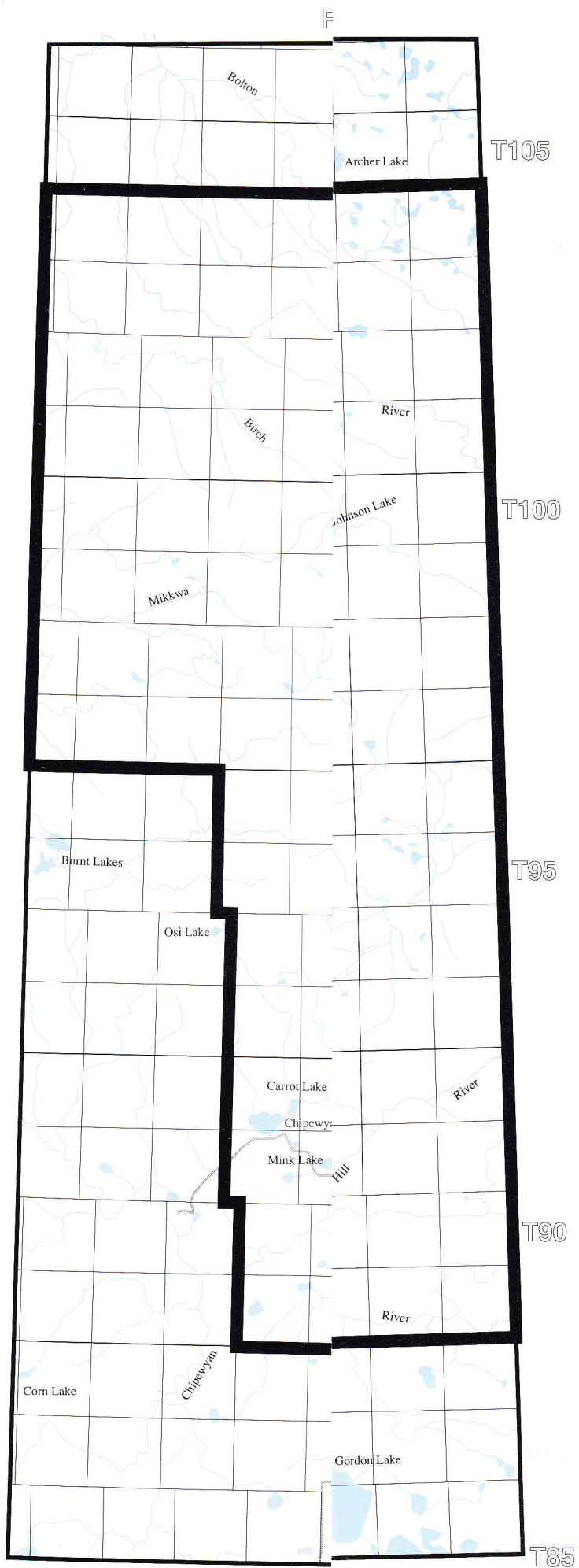
The May 1994 Athabasca River reconnaissance trip revealed that some graves have headstones or standing picket fence enclosures and wooden crosses. Many of the graves are known only to elders' memories now, however, and locating their physical remains is difficult and sometimes impossible. More than once on the May river trip, the only sign of a grave's presence was the mossy outline of a cross now fallen over and returning to nature on the forest floor.

Nine grave sites lie to the west of the Athabasca River with the majority being located near Namur and Gardiner lakes.

Ten grave sites lie to the east of the Athabasca River, ranging from the old Fort McKay reserve (IR 174) north to Point Brule (Chipewyan IR 201F). All of these graves lie in close proximity to established trapping homesteads, now vacant. Three graves were also located on the Firebag River, and two on a lake just west of the Muskeg River.

The Point Brule and Poplar Point cemeteries, their headstones, picket enclosures and wooden crosses are deserving of stabilization and ongoing maintenance. As the bush encroaches on these sites it will be harder to locate them easily and they may fall out of sight and out of mind.

In all, fourteen historical sites were mapped, north to south, in the interviews:

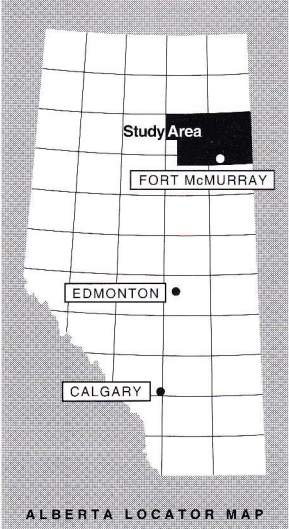
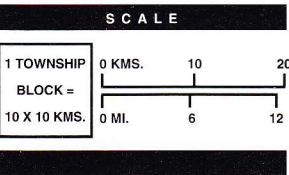


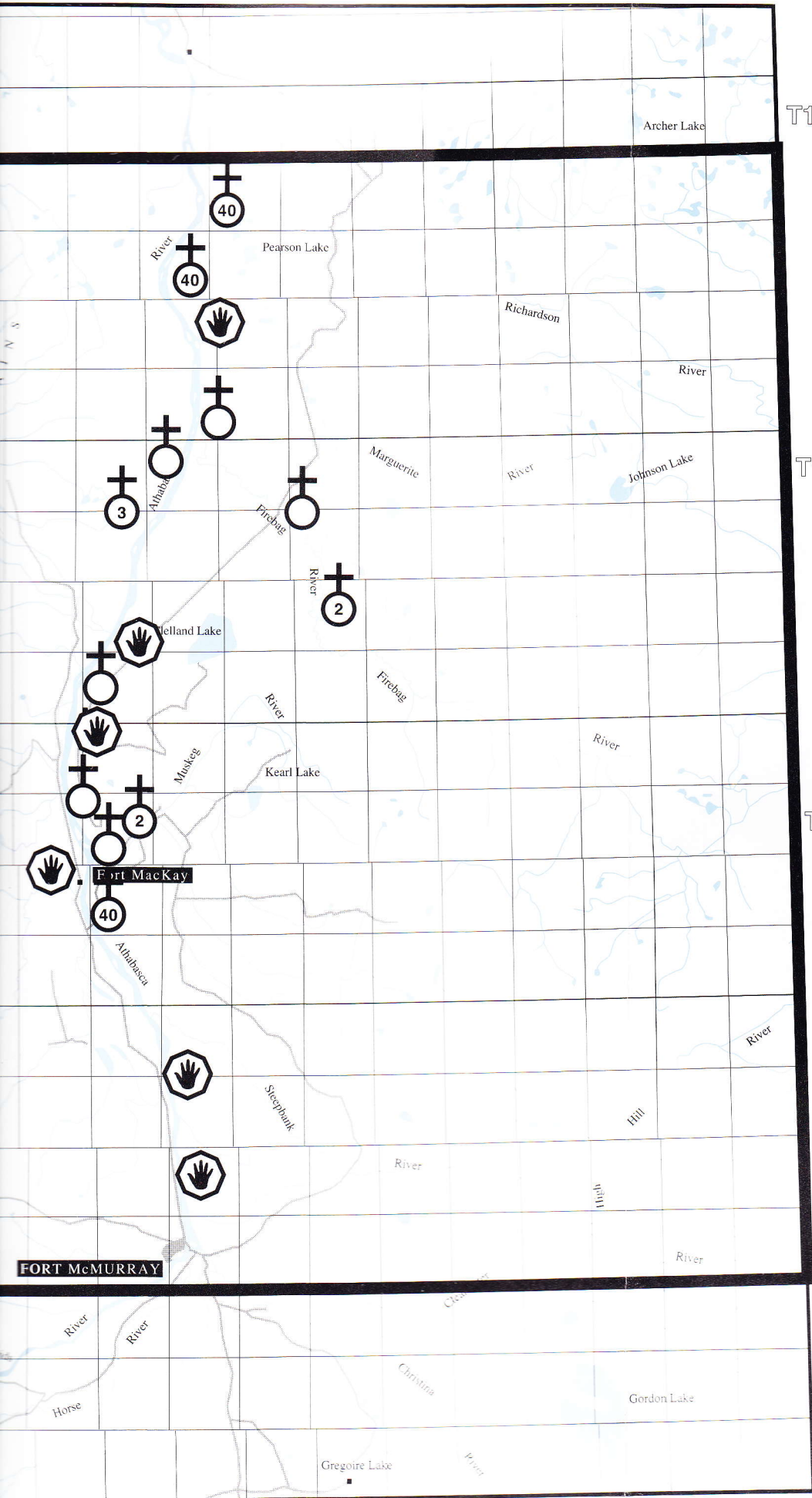
**BIRCH MOUNTAIN
FIREBAG RIVER
TRADITIONAL
LAND-USE MAP**

SPIRITUAL (Grave) & HISTORICAL SITES

Numbers within the circles indicate number of graves (if more than one) at those locations.

Historical site





T105


T100

T95


T90

**BIRCH MOUNTAIN
FIREBAG RIVER
TRADITIONAL
LAND-USE MAP**

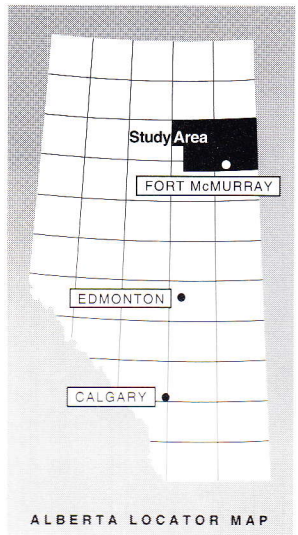
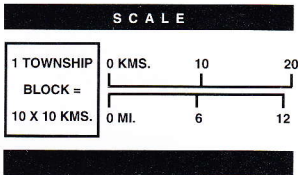
SPIRITUAL (Grave) & HISTORICAL SITES



Numbers within the circles indicate number of graves (if more than one) at those locations.



Historical site



1. Poplar Point — Billy Loutitt's store operated here in the 1920s and '30s;
2. Old Fort — an important fur trading location during the latter part of the 19th century;
3. Bitumount — the first producing oil sands plant in the region, with production commencing in the early 1930s;
4. Writing-on-Rock — origins uncertain. The rock is inscribed with the English initials H, P and U;
5. Fort McKay Reserve (IR 174) — grave sites and an old store reflect an earlier occupation of the Fort McKay people;
6. Old Hudson's Bay shipyard — the winter dry dock for the Athabasca steamship paddle wheelers;
7. Mile 12 fire sign — this landmark has existed since the 1940s;
8. Dan Letendre's store — located at Namur Lake on the south—east shore; it operated in the 1920s and 1930s;
9. Emil Shott's store — located on Long Lake east of Gardiner Lake; it operated in the 1920s and 1930s;
10. Copper Pail on a Post — located on the trail between Fort McKay and Gardiner Lakes; the pail was a trail marker;
11. Rope Hanging — located on the "copper pail on a post" trail; also a trail marker;
12. Arrowhead-Beaver Creek quarry — located south of Fort McKay near Mildred Lake; it operated in the 1940s and had prehistoric use as well;
13. Clear Lake — a wintering camp used for two hundred years in the fur trade; located north and east of Gardiner Lakes; and
14. Charlie Evan's fishery — a business located at Gardiner Lakes during the 1920s and 1930s.

All of the above listed historical sites can be located on the map by identifying the appropriate number next to the historical site symbol.

A total of sixteen fur bearers were found to be part of the TEK base of the Fort McKay First Nations interviewees. The fur bearers included: beaver, wolf, coyote, marten, lynx, wolverine, weasel, rabbit, fox, bear, otter, skunk, fisher, squirrel, muskrat and mink. At first glance the fur bearers map indicates comprehensive utilization

of the Birch Mountain-Firebag River TLUOS area. Upon close examination we can once again see intensive utilization zones, for instance: the Athabasca River corridor, Namur and Gardiner Lakes, Chipewyan Lakes, the Clearwater River corridor, Muskeg Mountain, the Firebag River, Johnson Lake and Richardson River. To the north-west we see

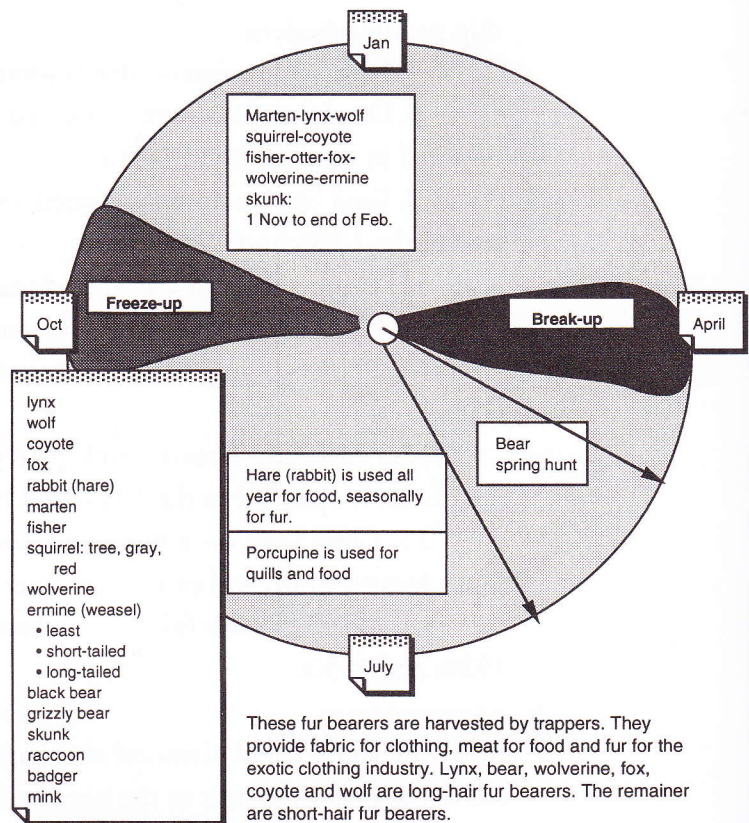
Fur bearer map

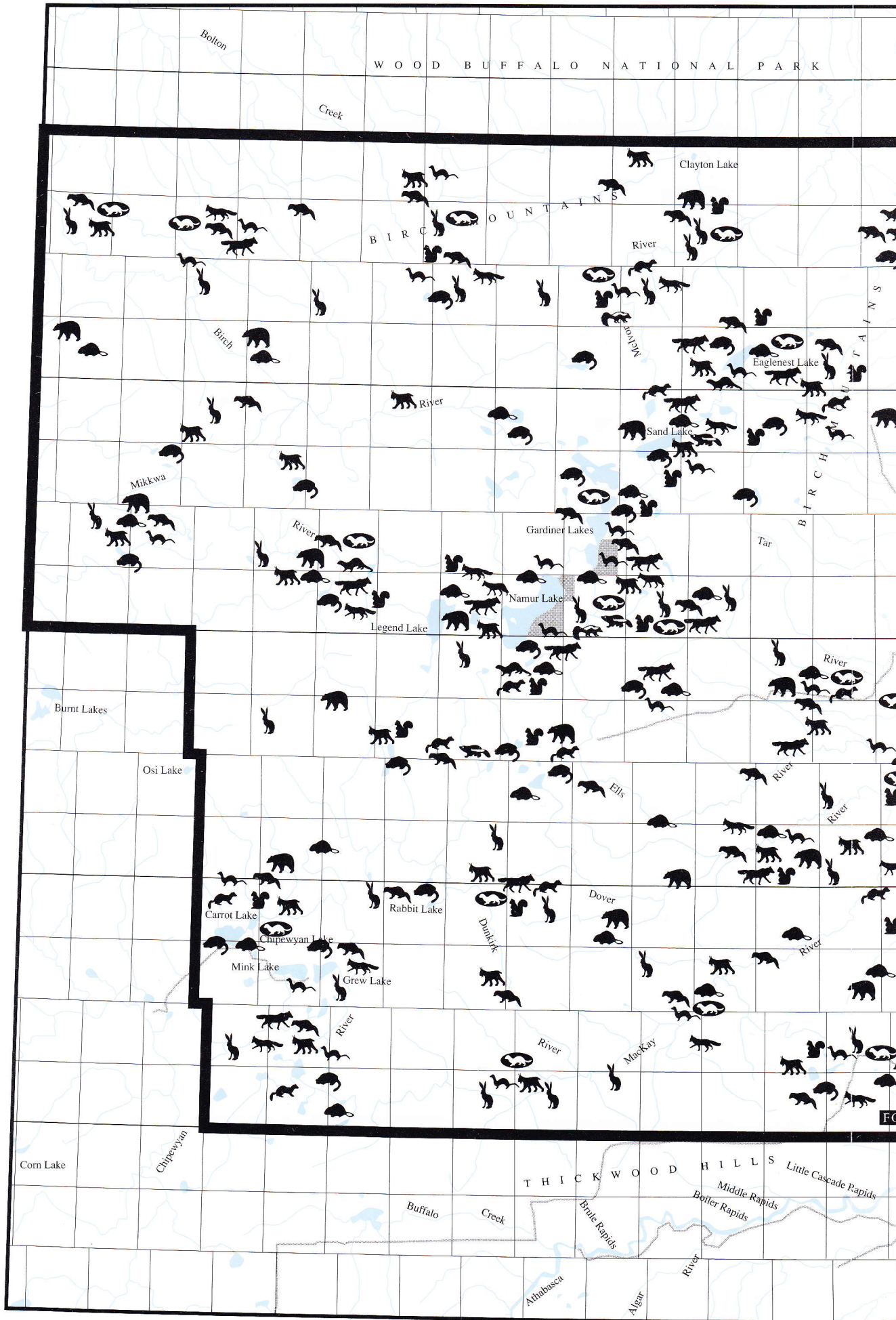
important fur harvest areas south of the Birch Mountains, and in the Jean Lake-Mikkwa River area.

It is interesting to note that all of the above mentioned fur harvest areas are also associated with trapping homesteads, with the exception of the far western verge of the TLUOS area, namely the Alice Creek, Bolton Creek, Edra Creek component of the major east-west northern trail system, and the Jean Lake, Mikkwa River and Chipewyan Lakes areas. We note again that much of this area is an untold story because of the deaths of its last residents, some ten to fifteen years ago.

Of the sixteen fur bearers whose known harvest sites were plotted, wolverine is said to be in the shortest supply. Only five harvest sites were located: one east of Namur Lake, one east of Sand Lake, two between the Birch Mountains and the Athabasca River, south of Redclay Creek, and one on the eastern bank of the Steepbank River (the only recorded harvest site east of the Athabasca River). Conversely, rabbits are notable in the TLUOS area for their presence in every quadrant, and for their often close association with lynx. Beaver, mink, muskrat and otter also appear in all quadrants, and predictably in all

Figure 1
Seasonal round for terrestrial fur bearers
 Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use





R10W4

R5W4



T105

**BIRCH MOUNTAIN
FIREBAG RIVER
TRADITIONAL
LAND-USE MAP**

T100

T95

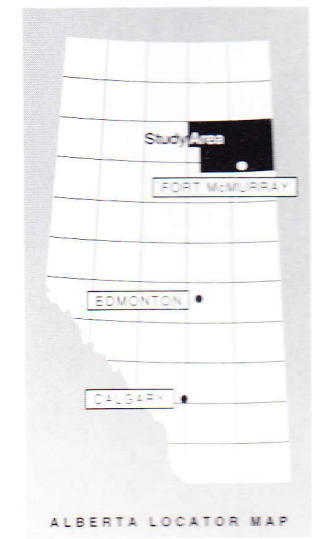
T90

FUR BEARERS

bear	fisher	marten
fox	mink	muskrat
otter	rabbit	skunk
squirrel	weasel	wolf
wolverine		

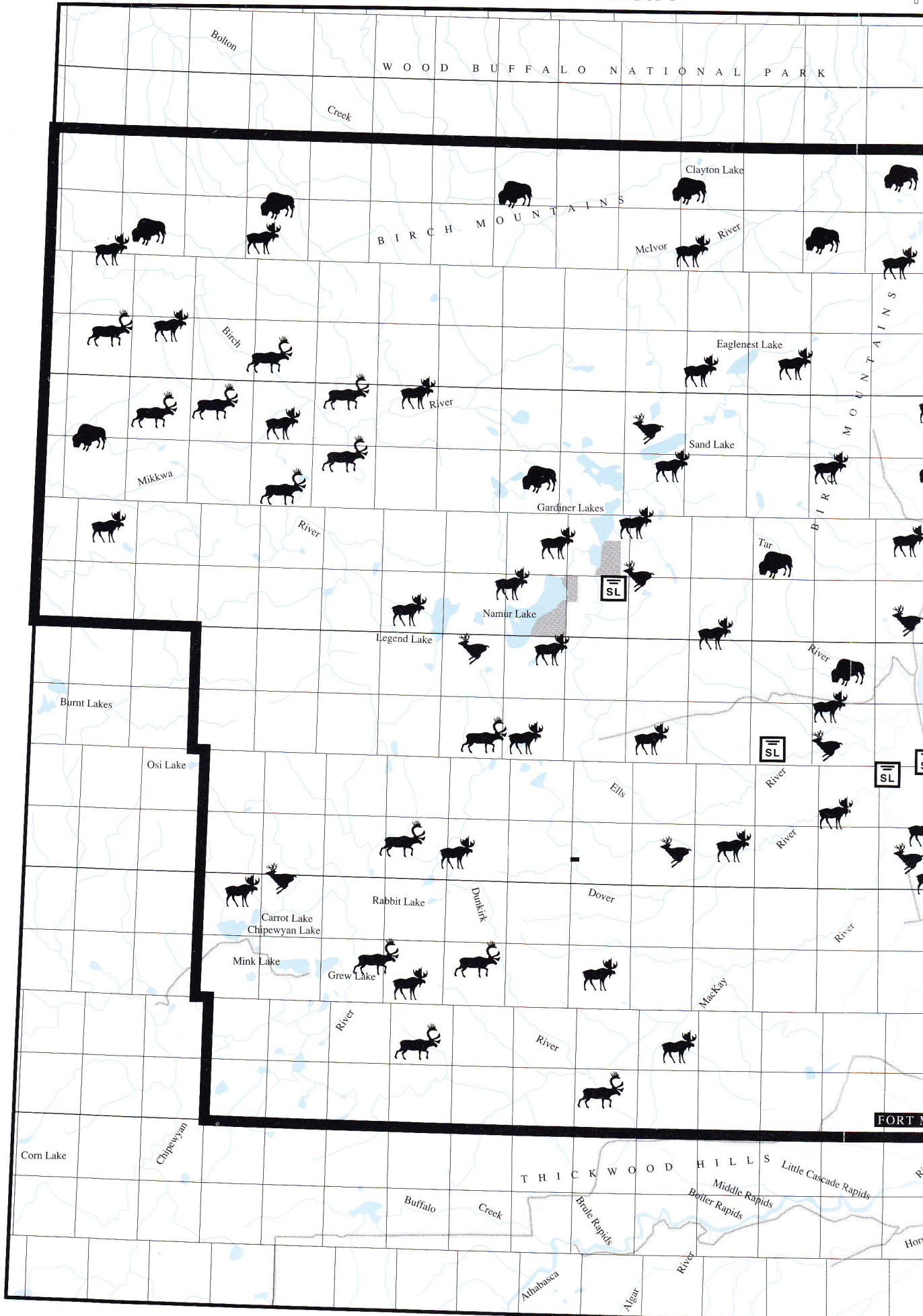
SCALE

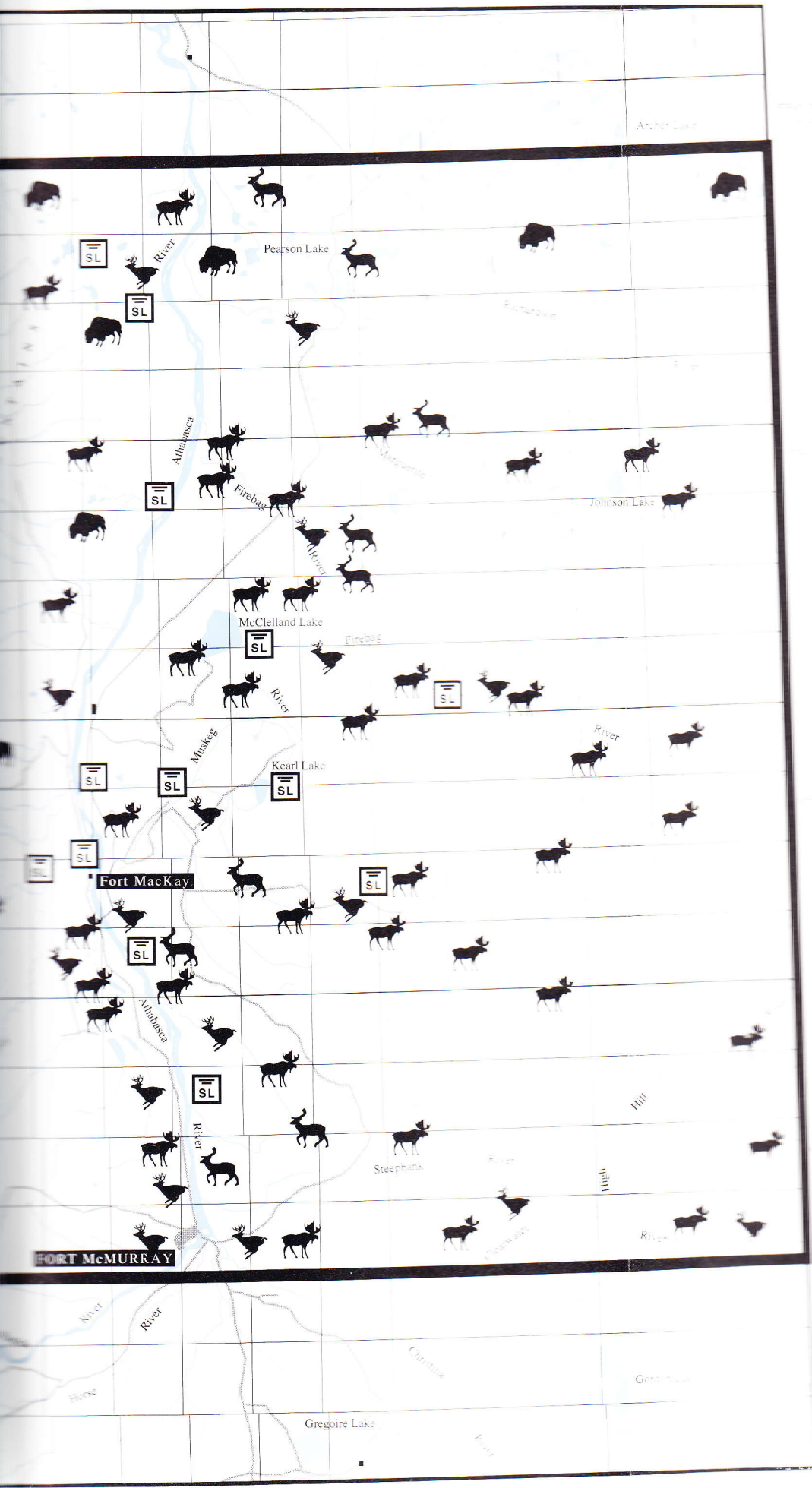
1 TOWNSHIP	0 KMS.	10	20
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R20W4

R15W4





BIRCH MOUNTAIN FIREBAG RIVER TRADITIONAL LAND-USE MAP

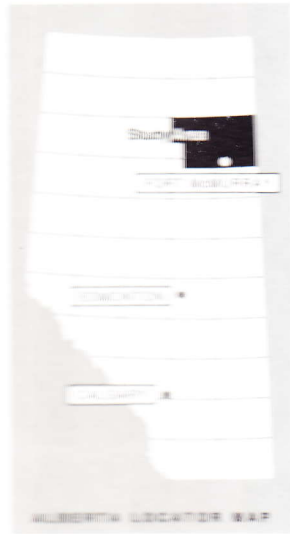
BIG GAME

Legend for Big Game icons:

- Western caribou
- Summer and caribou
- Moose
- Bison
- Sheep
- Wolf

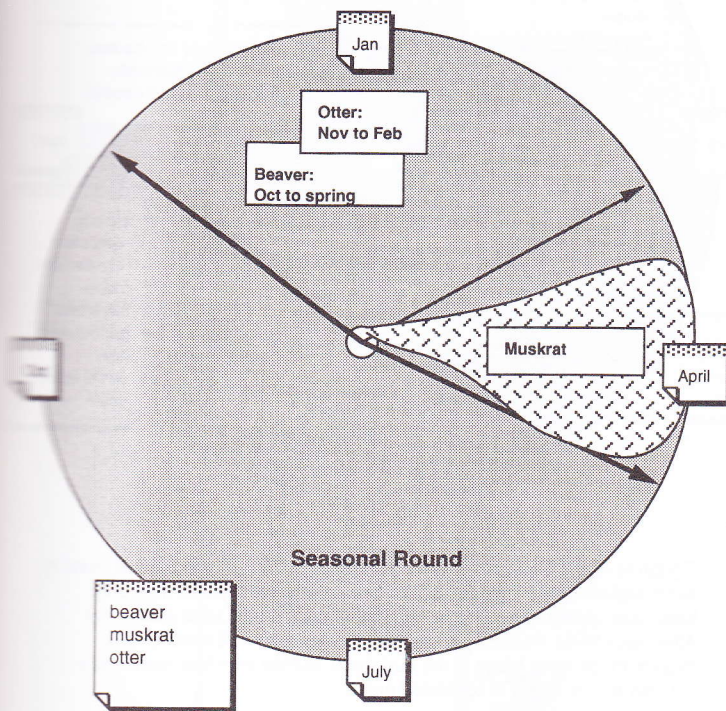
SCALE

TOWNSHIP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
SECTION	[Scale bar]											
1/4 SECTION	[Scale bar]											



the major lake systems and rivers. Bear, too, appear all across the map, and the known harvest sites are distinct areas most often separated by fifteen to thirty kilometres from the next nearest bear harvest site, suggesting territoriality. Bear and beaver also often occur together suggesting a predator-prey relationship.

Figure 2
Seasonal round for aquatic fur bearers
 Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use



These fur bearers are harvested by trappers for fur for clothing for themselves, and as a cash crop for furs sold to the international fur clothing industry.

vest sites are near the Maybelle River, Chipewyan IR 201G, the Range 10 western base line, Alice Creek, Raymond Creek and Edra Creek, Elliot River and near the twin lakes equidistant between Gardiner Lakes and Clausens Landing. This last spot was always a good place for buffalo, but not necessarily the first one that local hunters chose during a hunt.

It is worth noting that none of the interviewees identified species extinctions, and all sixteen fur bearers can still be trapped in the noted harvest areas today. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the seasonal availability of both territorial and aquatic fur bearers. As elder Julian Powder noted in his interview, "There is still survival out there."

A total of five species, woodland caribou and barren land caribou, moose, buffalo and deer, were noted in the big game TEK

Big game map

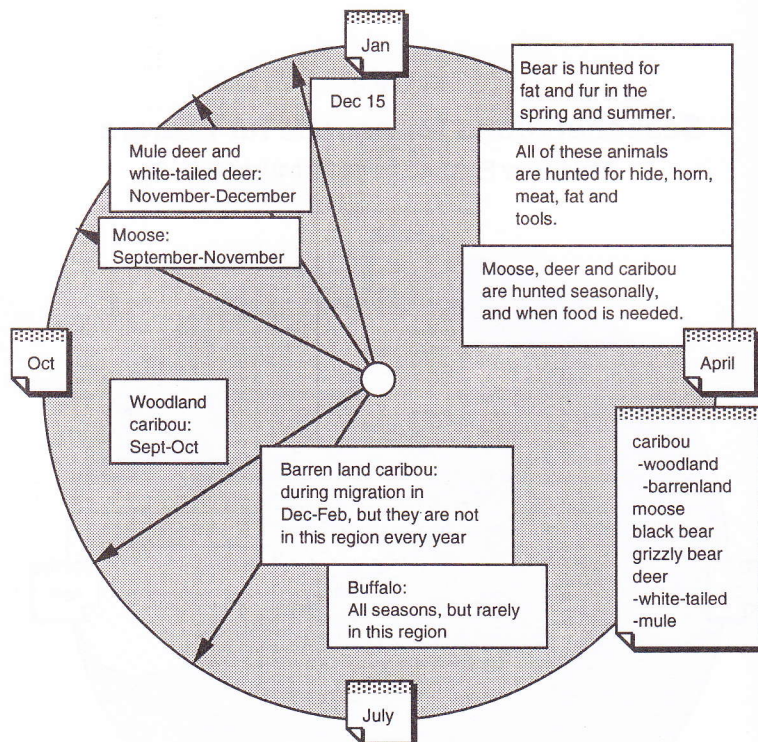
base of the Fort McKay First Nations interviewees. Once again the Birch Mountain-Firebag River TLUOS area map is comprehensively filled with known harvest sites, and some discernable patterns are evident. To begin with, there are no buffalo harvest sites south of Fort McKay and the Township 96 southern base line. Noted buffalo har-

There are no woodland caribou harvest sites east of the Athabasca River. In 1948 several interviewees noted an atypical southern migration of barren land caribou east of the Athabasca River to Fort McMurray. This is remembered as a one-time occurrence. No barren land caribou are known in the TLUOS area today. Today moose predominate east of the Athabasca River, and deer harvest sites are also well established. Productive moose hunts have typically occurred on the Clearwater River, the Firebag River, around Muskeg Mountain, McClelland Lake, and Marguerite River.

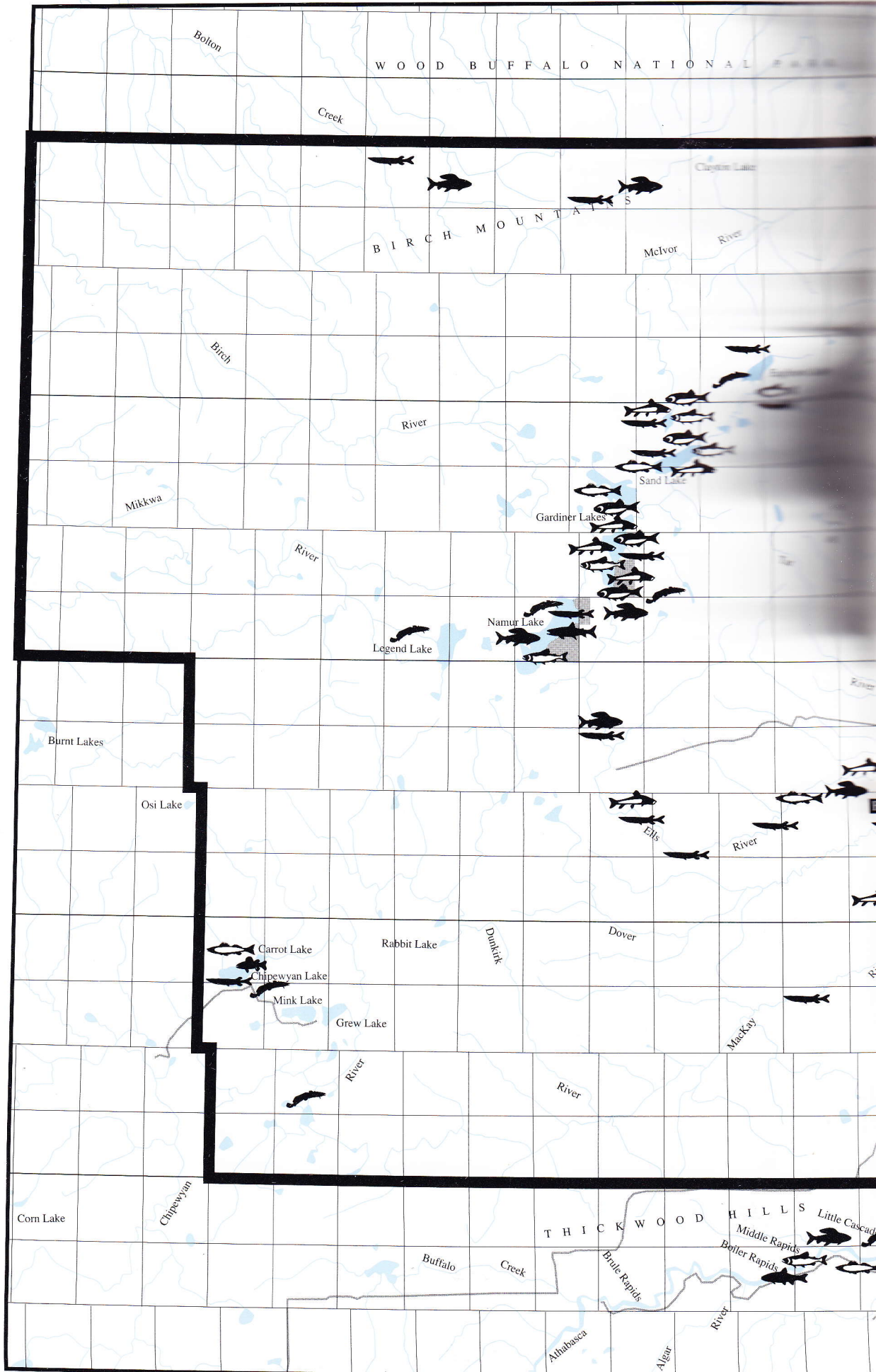
West of the Athabasca River the caribou range extends from the Thickwood Hills and Dunkirk River to the south, to the Chipewyan River, Snipe Creek and Mikkwa River in the north. Moose also frequent this range, but deer are reported only in its southern extremes, for instance along the McKay River. Moose and deer are well established in the vicinity of Namur and Gardiner Lakes.

Salt licks, important naturally occurring game harvest locations, were reported at Saline Lake, just north of Fort McKay on the Athabasca's west bank, near Muskeg Mountain, on the east shore of McClelland Lake, near Dalkin on the west bank of the Athabasca, and at Ronald Lake. The seasonal round in Figure 3 illustrates the dates of big game harvesting in the TLUOS area.

Figure 3
Seasonal round for harvesting big game
 Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use



Big game range throughout the TLUOS area, but not all species are found in every region. Some regions have moose only, or moose and deer only. Woodland caribou range in pockets of the bush, on the west side of the Athabasca River. Barren land caribou are migratory and occasionally migrate to the north fringe of the bush land. Buffalo may free roam freely but they are generally in controlled areas.



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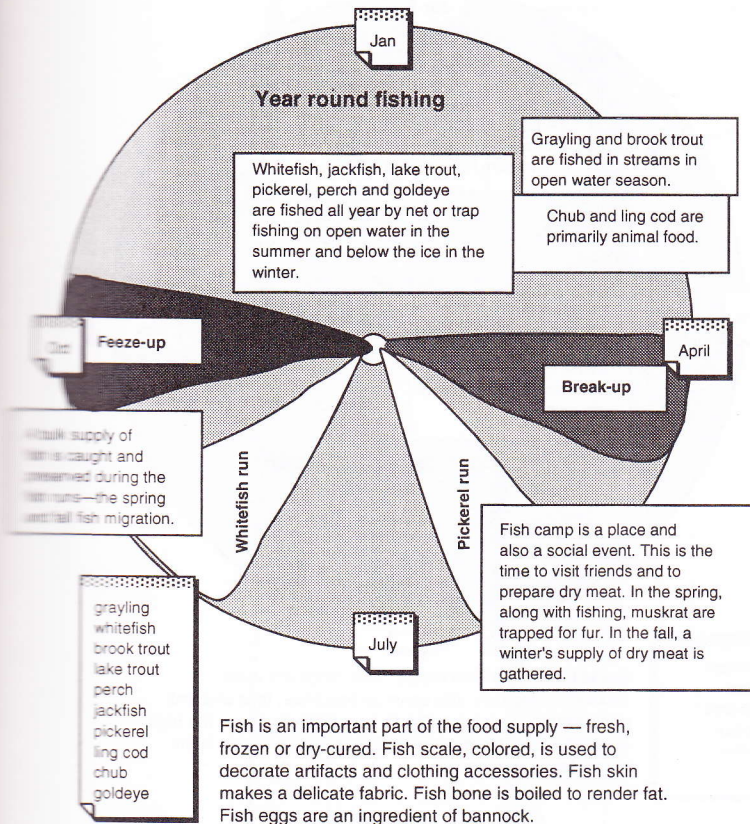
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Figure 4

Seasonal round for harvesting fish

Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use



Fish map

Ten fish categories form the fish TEK base of the Fort McKay First Nations people, including: goldeye, whitefish, grayling, pickerel, chub, sucker, ling cod, pike (jackfish), trout and perch. The interviewees know of more than one kind of trout, but generally note that lake trout predominate. The trout symbol on the fish map may also denote brook trout. Generally, the fish map illustrates the ongoing importance of the Athabasca River corridor, the Clearwater River, the Firebag River, the Richardson River, Namur, Gardiner, Sand and Eaglenest Lakes, the Chelsea River and Chipewyan Lakes. Very few fish harvesting locations were noted west of the Range 18 eastern baseline, perhaps indicating again the lack of a living memory for this area. (It is interesting to note that the cultural memory of big game and fur bearing harvest sites is much more complete and comprehensive for this area.) It may also be the

case that fishing was simply a more specialized activity that centred on defined areas of known harvest value.

From the fish map it can be seen that whitefish and pike (jackfish) have the broadest range of availability. Pickerel are known to spawn in the Richardson Lakes, in the northeast corner of the TLUOS area. Goldeye are caught in the north of the TLUOS area. Locally it is thought that there are no perch in the Athabasca River, but they are caught in Chipewyan Lake and the Richardson River system. Grayling are caught in feeder streams of the Athabasca River. Trout live in the larger lakes, like Namur Lake,

properly known as Buffalo Lake, which is classified as an Alberta trophy lake for trout. Ling cod live in lakes and are also caught in the Athabasca River. The seasonal round of Figure 4 illustrates when different species are caught.

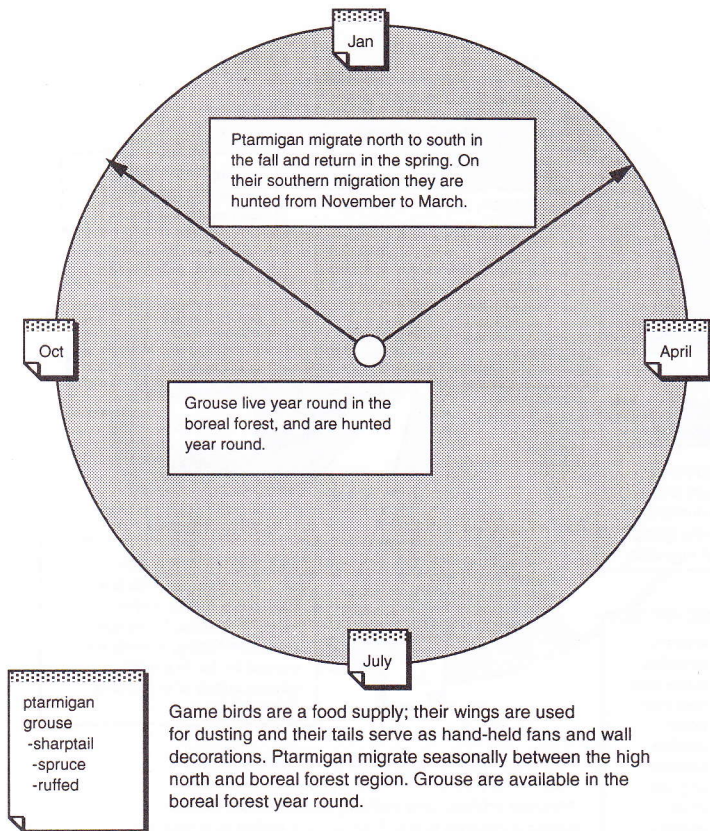
Ten categories of birds were mapped in the TLUOS area:

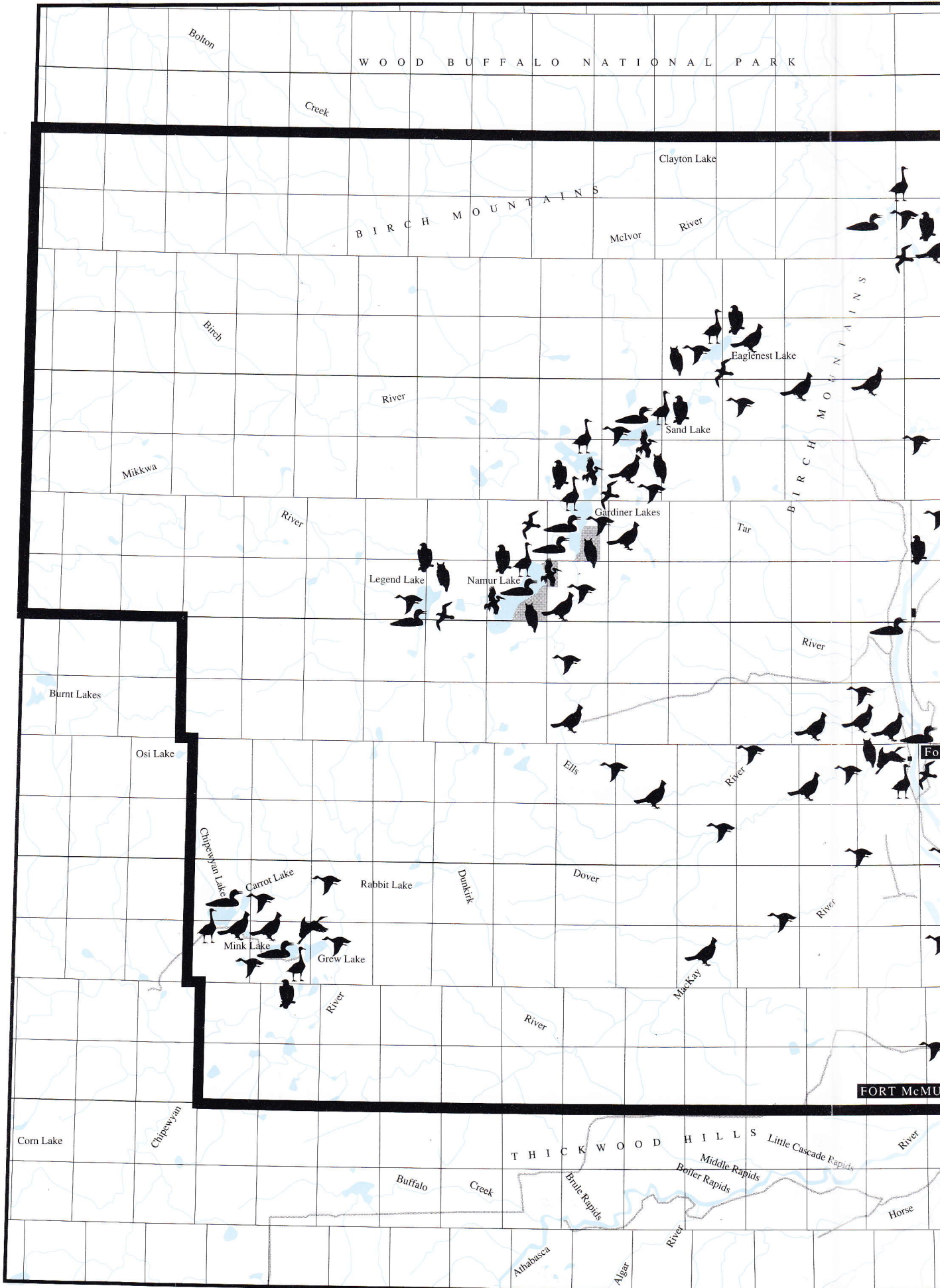
Bird map

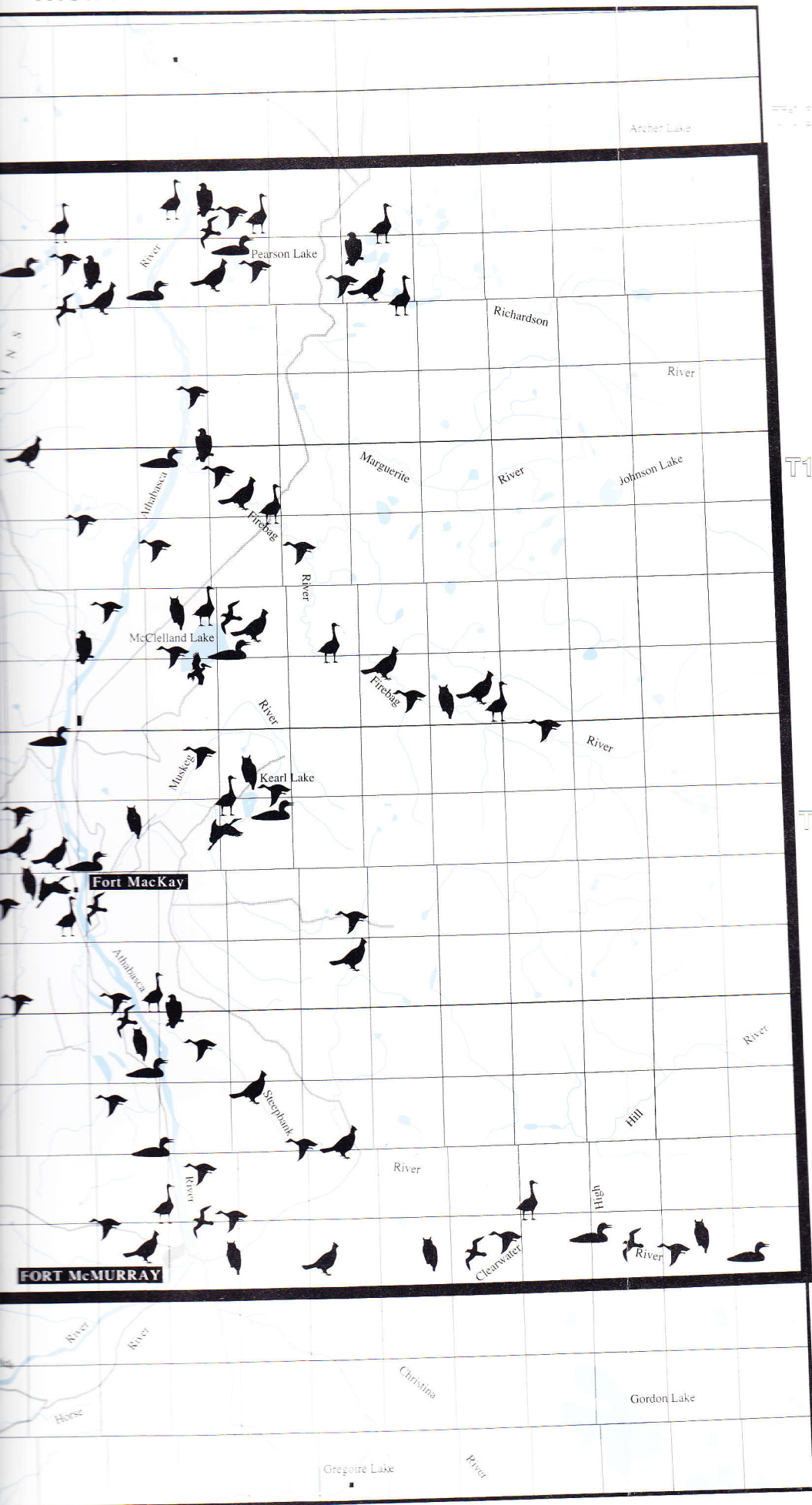
Canada goose, duck, loon, pelican, swan, grouse, eagle, gull, owl and crane. It is, of course, recognized that these are in all cases generic terms, but species level detail was recorded in the interview notes. For the purposes of placing a sticker on the map, it was decided to use one generic duck symbol rather than a different symbol for each of thirteen duck species noted in the interview check list.

All of the birds recorded are migratory with the exception of three of the upland game birds (sharptail, spruce and ruffed grouse). It is thought that representatives of all ten bird categories nest in the TLUOS area. It is acknowledged that the ten bird categories are the ones mentioned in the 67 interviews; there may be more bird species in the region, but they were not talked about. The project trainer knows that snowbirds and blackbirds pass through the region in flocks, and that barn swallows nest on the Athabasca River. These birds were not mentioned. No whooping cranes were mentioned in the interviews; the sandhill crane was the main crane described by the interviewees.

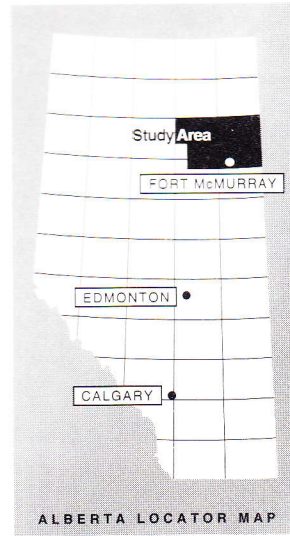
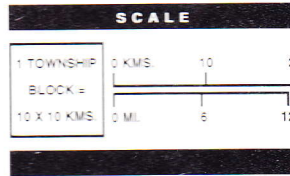
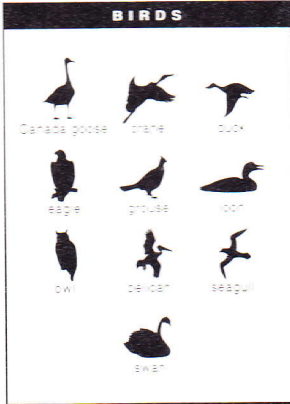
Figure 5
Seasonal round for harvesting game birds
 Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use







**BIRCH MOUNTAIN
FIREBAG RIVER
TRADITIONAL
LAND-USE MAP**

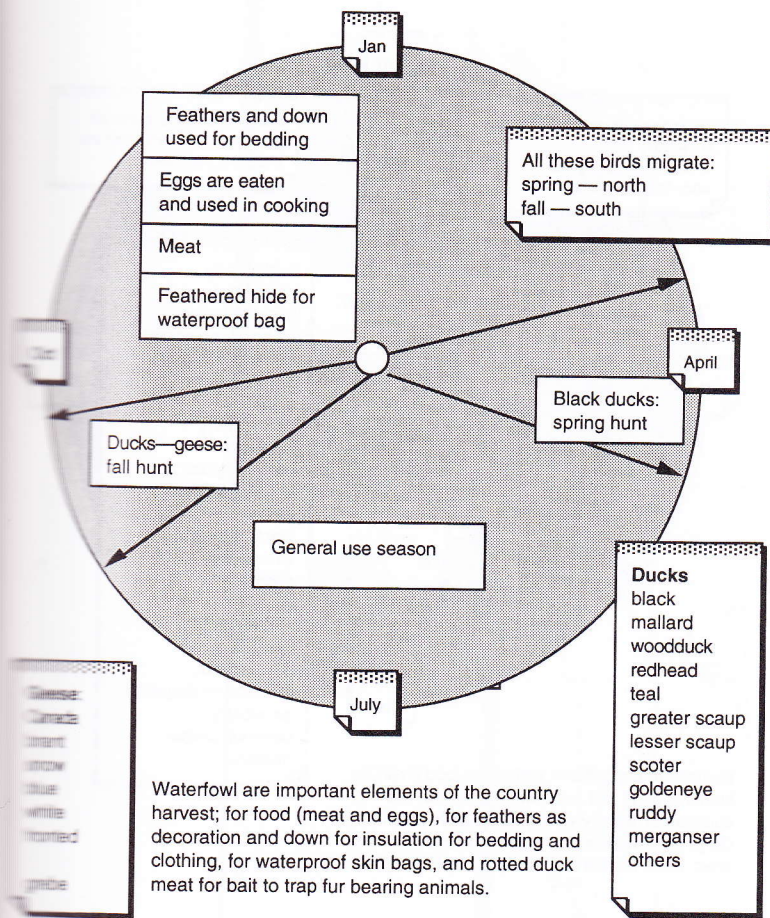


T100

T85

T85

Figure 6
Seasonal round for harvesting waterfowl
 Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use



Generally, the bird map reveals intensive bird habitat and harvest sites on the Athabasca River corridor, the Clearwater River, the lower reaches of the Steepbank and Muskeg rivers, the Firebag River, the Richardson Lakes, the Legend-Namur-Gardiner-Sand-Eaglenest lakes corridor, and the Chipewyan, Mink and Green lakes area. No bird habitat/harvest areas are reported in the northwest corner of the TLUOS area, once again reflecting the passing of the people who once lived there some ten to fifteen years ago.

The interviews revealed that owl can be stuffed and eaten "like turkey"; gull, duck and geese eggs are prime delicacies; eagles, pelicans, swans and cranes are excellent feather sources; pelican pouches are waterproof and good for keeping tobacco fresh; loons supply practical and beautiful skin and feather carrying bags when skinned; and the best feather ticking or down comes from geese.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate when different categories of waterfowl and game birds are harvested.

Eleven berry plants are listed on this map: cranberry, blueberry, strawberry, raspberry, chokecherry, bunchberry, rose hip, pincherry, saskatoon, hazelnut and kinnikinnick. Once again we note that these are locally used names or categories for berries in Fort McKay. We acknowledge that there are in fact three kinds of raspberry and cranberry on the interview check list,

Berry map

but for the purpose of mapping harvest locations we have used one generic berry symbol. Species level detail is available in the interview notes. Twisted stalk, a known bush fruit is not listed because it was not used on a regular basis by the Fort McKay First Nations people.

At the general level of detail we note that berries ripen and are basically harvested in late July, August and early September, so the berry map is also a travel map for these months. It is interesting to note that the eastern edge of the map is sparsely symbolled, especially on the upper reaches of the Firebag and Steep-bank rivers. The Athabasca River corridor and the Legend-Namur-Gardiner-Sand-Eaglenest corridor reveal intensive berry use (and we assume, therefore, trail travel), as does the McKay River. For the first time other than on the trails, cabins, and historical sites maps a well defined travel route appears between Clausens Landing and Gardiner Lakes. We know this to be the main route to the trophy lakes.

Figure 7
Seasonal round for harvesting fruit berries
 Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use

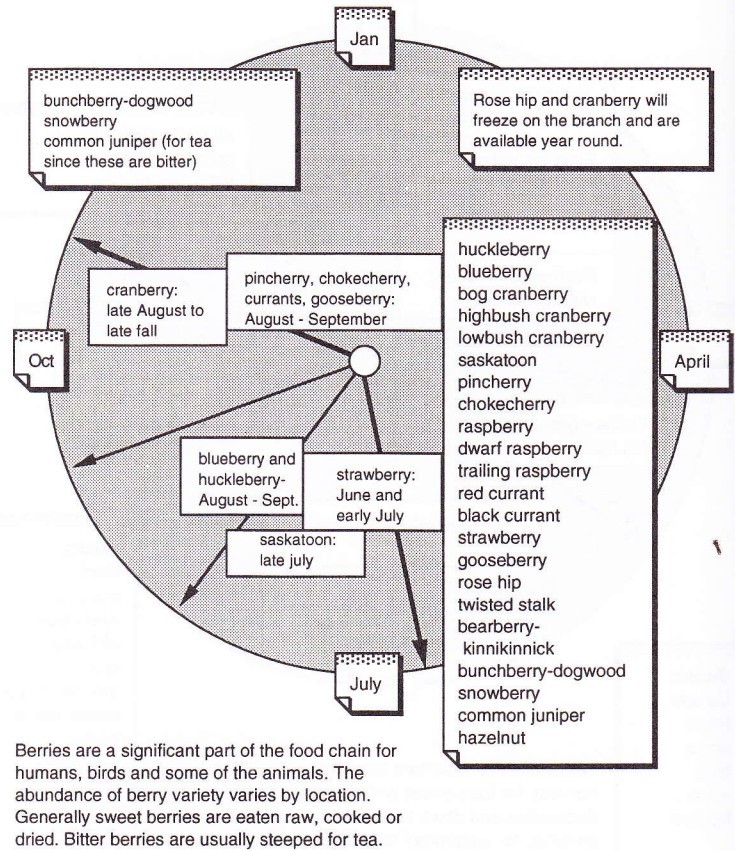
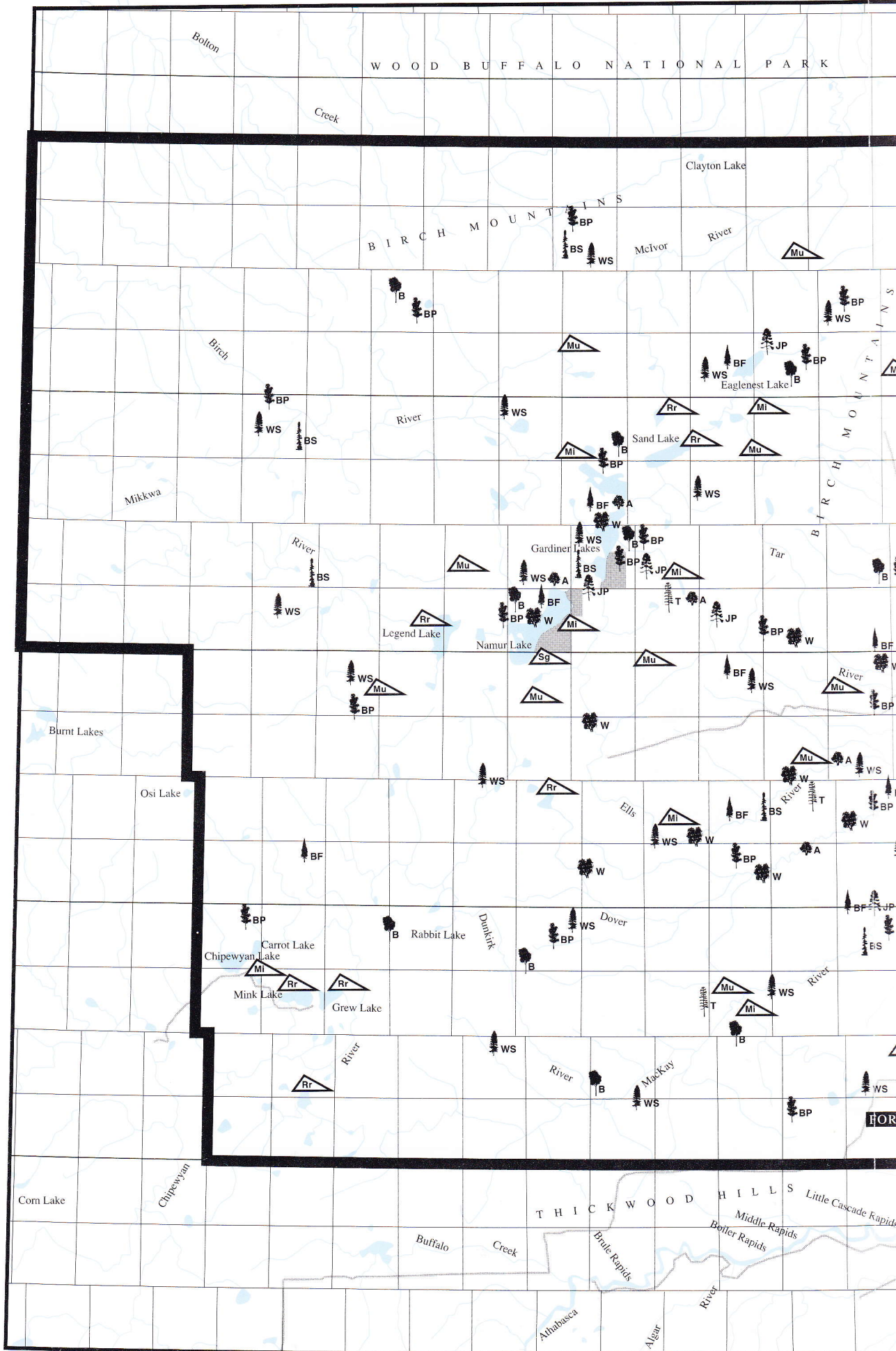


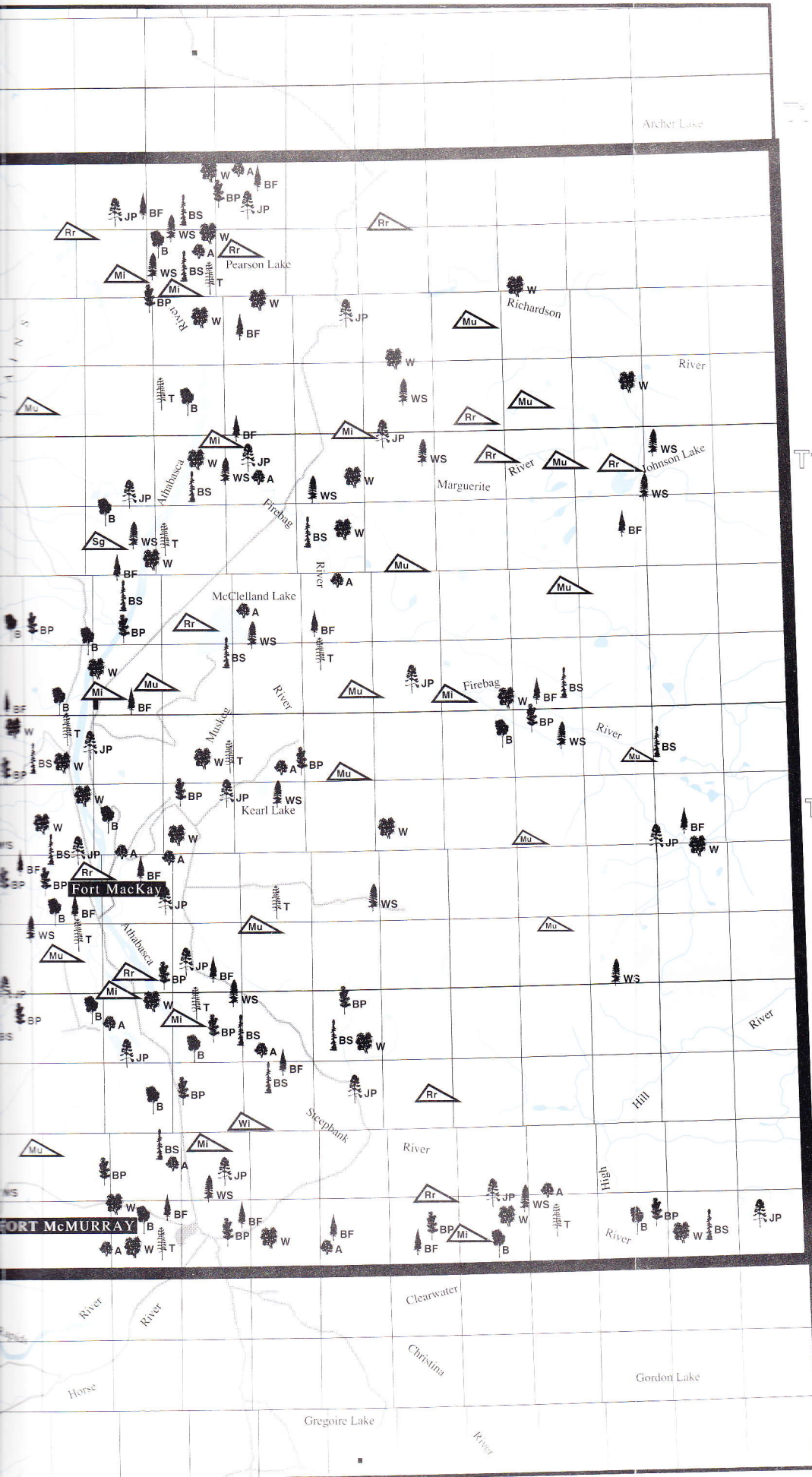
Figure 7 illustrates when the Fort McKay First Nations' berry harvest occurs.

The trees and plants map illustrates TEK about eleven tree types and six plants. The

Trees and plants map

overall picture presented is very similar to that of the berry map, but the interviewees noted that trees and plants see much more year-





BIRCH MOUNTAIN FIREBAG RIVER TRADITIONAL LAND-USE MAP

TREES & PLANTS

WS	B	BF
white spruce	birch	balsam fir
A	BS	JP
alder	black spruce	jack pine
BP	T	WP
balsam poplar	tamarack	white poplar
W	LP	
willow	lodgepole pine	
Rr	Sg	Mi
rat root	sweet grass	mint
Sr	Mu	Wi
seneca root	muskeg moss	wintergreen

SCALE

1 TOWNSHIP	0 KMS.	10	20
BLOCK =			
10 X 10 KMS.	0 MI.	6	12

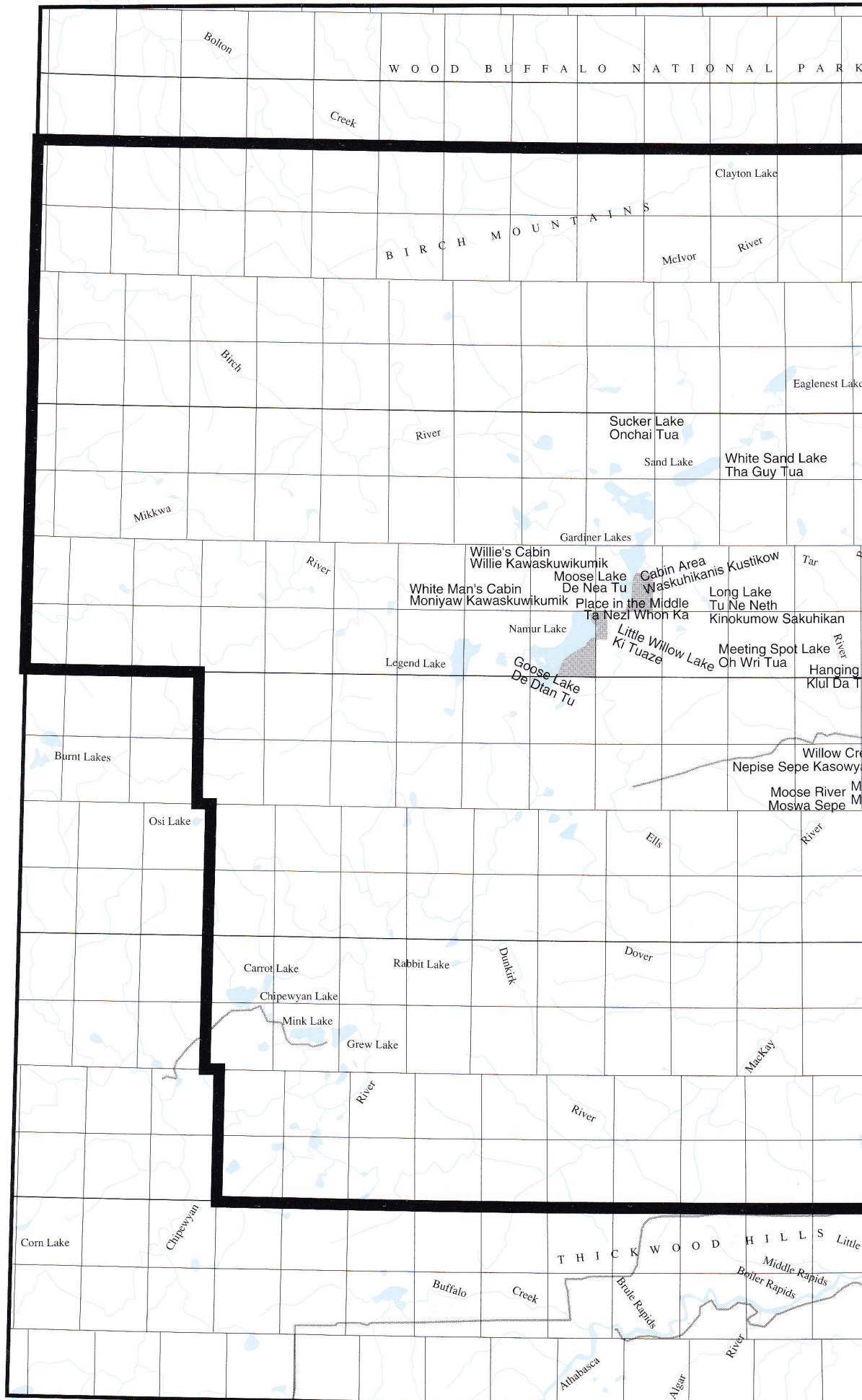


T100

T95

T90

T85

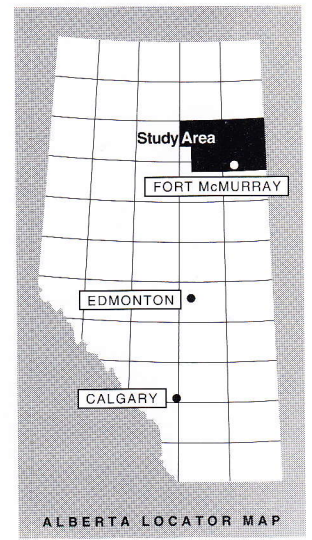
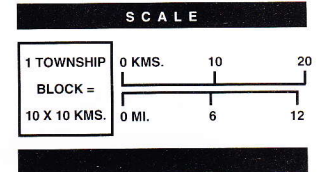
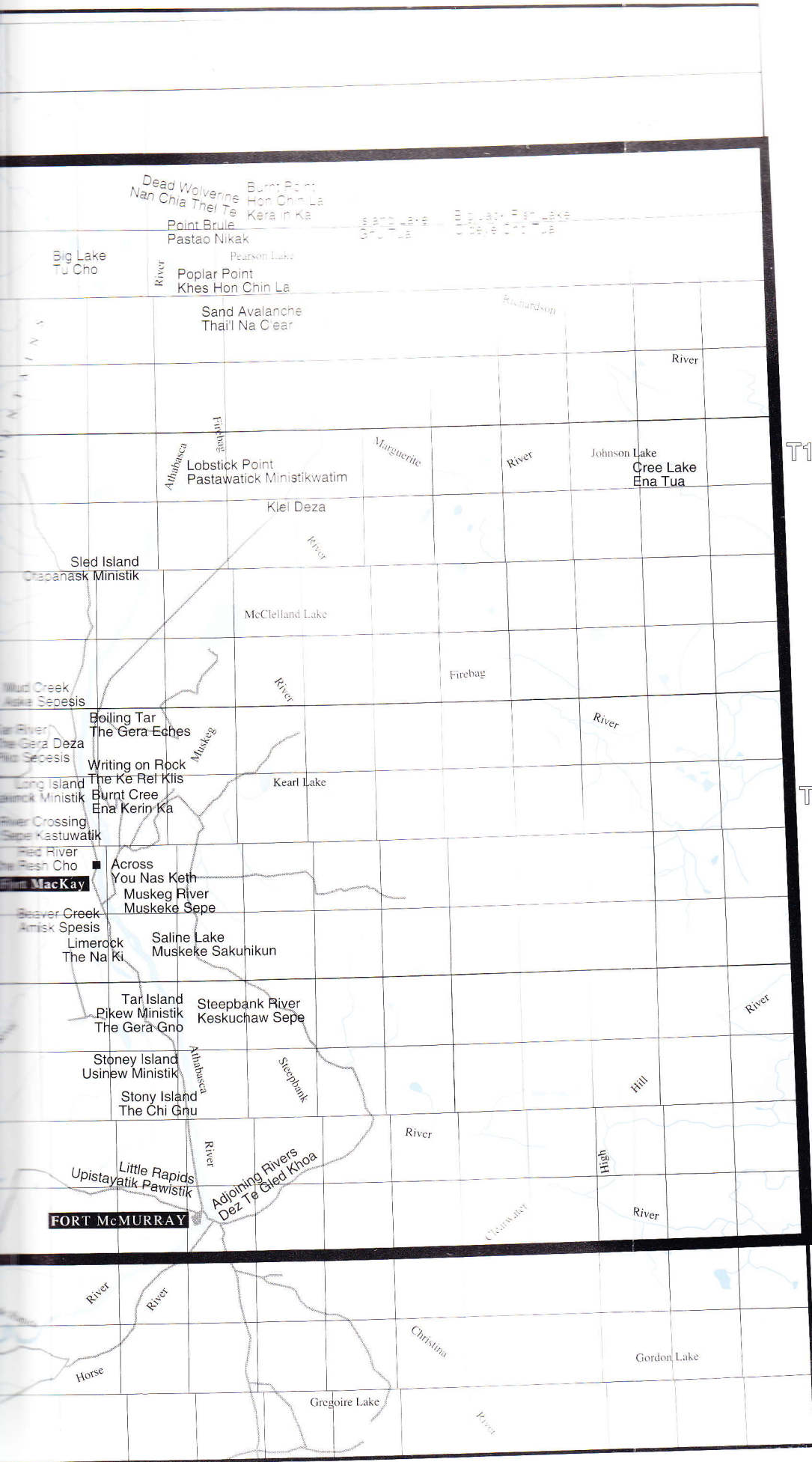


**BIRCH MOUNTAIN
FIREBAG RIVER
TRADITIONAL
LAND-USE MAP**

PLACE NAMES

Cree Lake
Ena Tua

Names showing multiple languages



T100

T95

T90

T85

round use, relatively unrestricted by the season. The trees noted include balsam fir, alder, birch, lodgepole pine, jack pine, tamarack, white and black poplar, and white and black spruce. The plants mapped are rat root, sweet grass, seneca root, mint, wintergreen and moss.

The interviewees noted that fir, pine and spruce were often used for building cabins, out-buildings, posts and railings. Balsam fir sap was used as a poultice mix. Seneca root was a popular cough medicine, and wintergreen was a good medicine for colds and influenza.

General areas of high use include the Athabasca River corridor, all major tributary creeks and rivers, and the Legend-Namur-Gardiner-Sand-Eaglenest lakes corridor. The northwest quadrant of the TLUOS area and Chipewyan Lake exhibits less intensive use on the tree and plants map.

The basic message of the place names map is that the major intensive use areas of the overall TLUOS area are well known in both the Cree and Chipewyan languages. The Athabasca River corridor, the Richardson Lakes, and the Legend-Namur-Gardiner-Sand-Eaglenest lakes corridor are covered with place names that reflect the original occupants' vision of the land, rivers and lakes. In this map the names of white explorers are erased in favour of TEK names which reveal the presence of geese, moose, little willows, suckers, boiling tar, limestone, dead wolverines, big jackfish and equally big whitefish. In most cases one wonders how such descriptive and apt place names were ever replaced by the ones officially on the map today.

Place names map

It is important to note that many of the Cree and Chipewyan place names are still in local use by hunters, trappers and berry gatherers within the TLUOS area. Over the next few years it will be important to pass these names on in family discussions and in the Fort McKay school so that their continued use is assured.

The traplines map shows the traplines currently registered to the named Fort McKay First Nations people. It portrays an Alberta government bureaucratic licensing

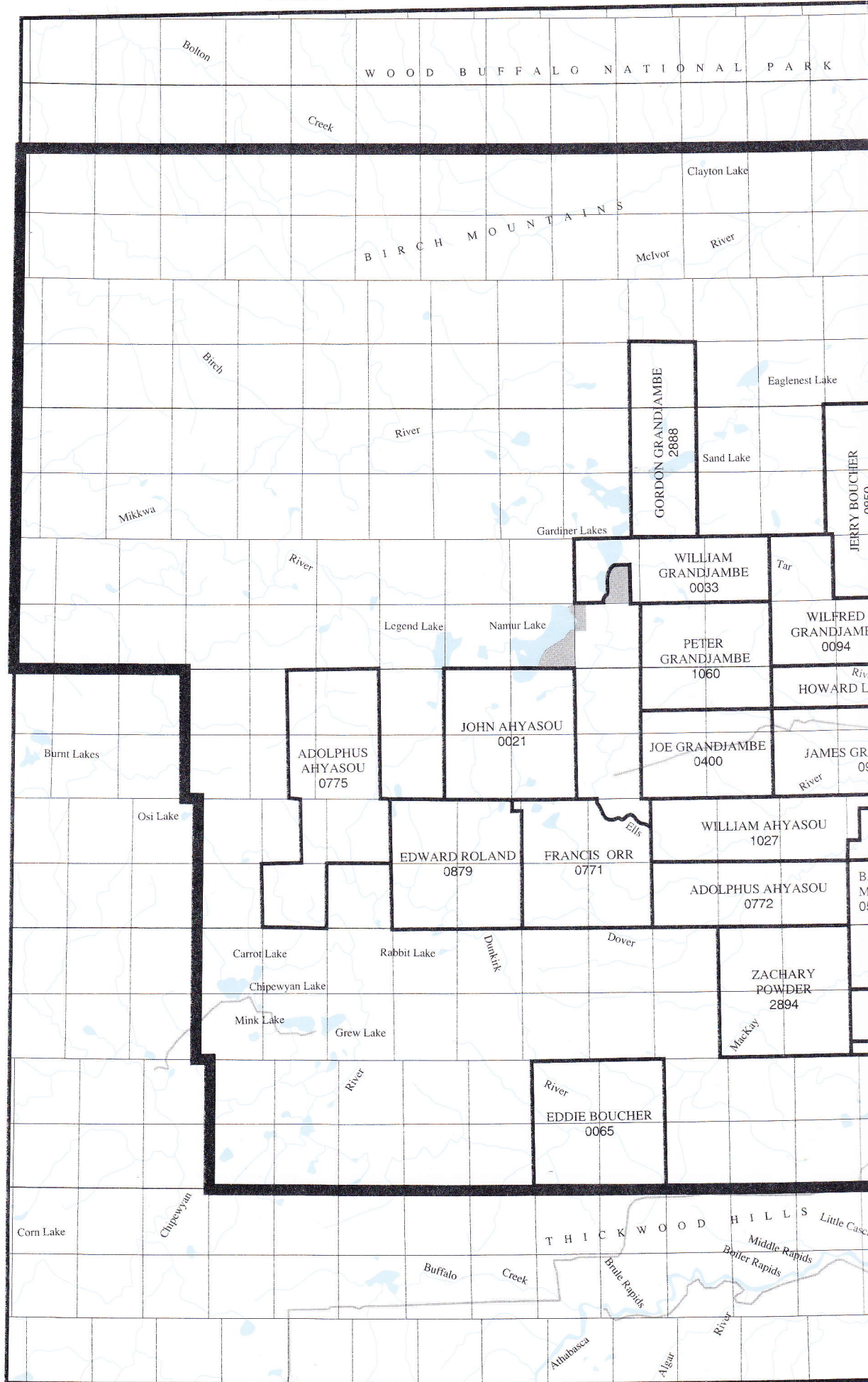
Traplines map

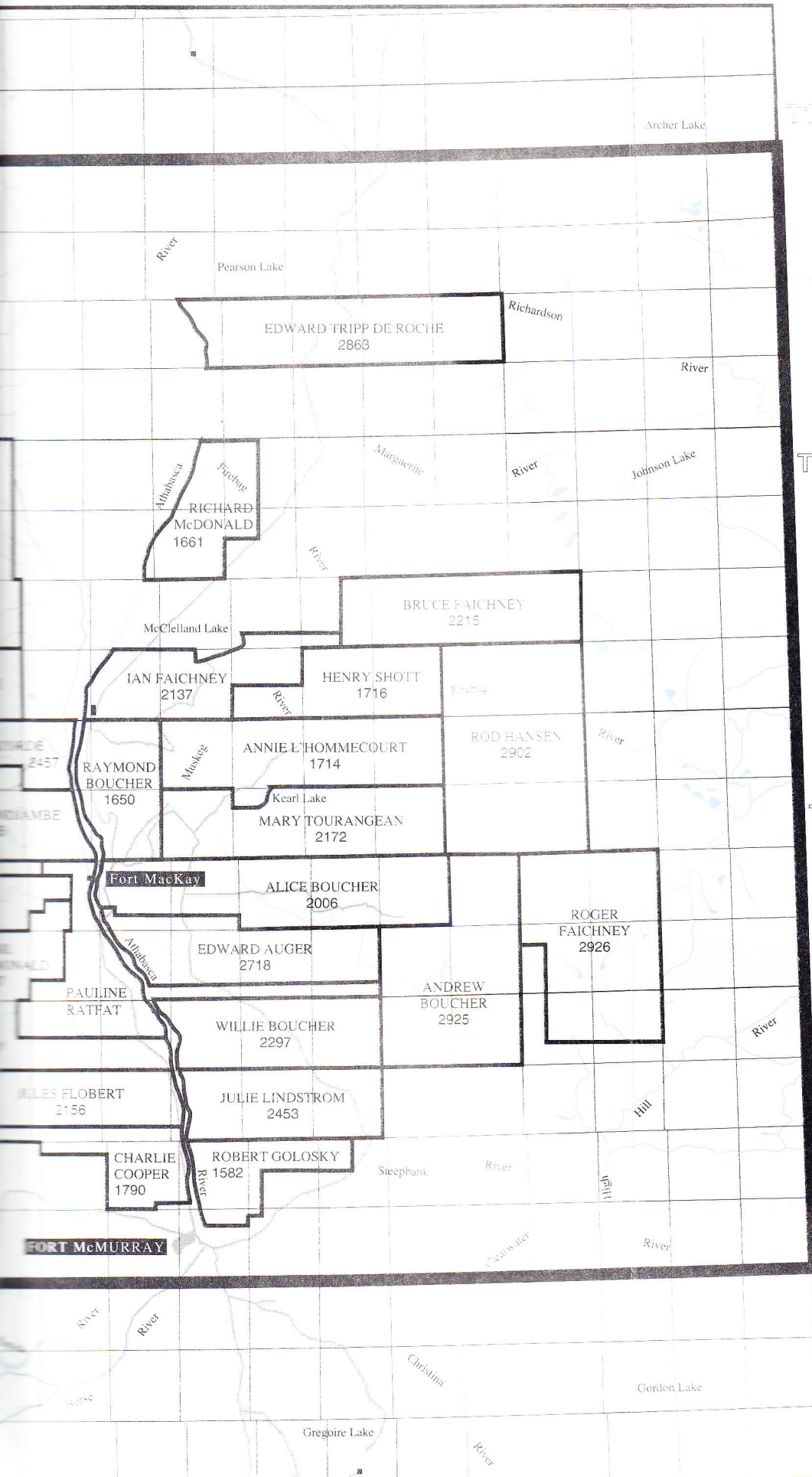
system first begun in the early 1930s when registration was introduced in the TLUOS area. The 1930s registration efforts focused on licensing "lines of traps" along creeks and rivers, which ranged up to 40 miles in length (1982, p. 26). In the 1960s, the registration system was changed to an area licensing concept. These areas are the numbered blocks on this map. In both forms of trapline registration, the Alberta government sought to regulate fur production for the commercial market. The concept of "trapline" as discussed in the introduction of this study, an all-encompassing term for TEK about a given harvest area, is not broadly understood outside of Fort McKay and communities like it which still maintain an active participation in the bush economy.

Looking at the traplines map it is apparent that Fort McKay First Nations' trappers/hunters/fishers/gatherers hold licences to about one-third of the TLUOS area. The registered areas centre on Fort McKay, and radiate outwards to Namur and Gardiner lakes to the west, south to the northern boundary of Fort McMurray, east as far as the headwaters of the Firebag River, and north to the vicinity of Poplar Point. While the TLUOS reveals a far greater extent of traditional land use, the traplines held today confirm a provincially registered licence to a much smaller area. The current registered area also reveals that trapline licence areas 2901, 2885, 2911 and 2900 have been lost to Fort McKay First Nations' trappers since 1982 (1982, p 65A). To be fair, 2863, 2718, 2297, 2453, and 1790 appear to have been acquired since 1982 to offset the noted erosion of the trapping land base.

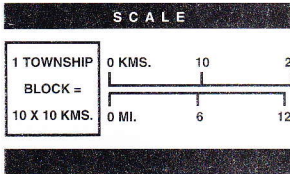
It must also be noted that the current TLUOS area still extends beyond the trapline boundaries noted on the map. The community memory of the full extent of the TLUOS area in 1994 corresponds well with the Birch Mountain-Firebag River base map, allowing for the noted loss of TEK in the northwest quadrant because of the recent deaths of its traditional occupants.

Finally, the data for all of the maps are shown overlaid together in the form of a large composite map folded into a map pocket inside the back cover of this book.





**BIRCH MOUNTAIN
FIREBAG RIVER
TRADITIONAL
LAND-USE MAP**



T100

T100

T95

T90

1:50,000

4. Issue analysis and recommendations

This section of the book considers the results of the TLUOS in terms of issues that it has raised for education in the community of Fort McKay and beyond, for the practice

of integrated land use co-management and co-planning, and for further research. *There is Still Survival Out There* contains a wealth of information for use in the Fort McKay school system and as a reference for all Fort McKay families. As a conse-

Recommendation

1

Copies of this book *There is Still Survival Out There* should be given to each class in the Fort McKay school and to each Fort McKay family.

quence, our first recommendation formalizes that fact. The Fort McKay elders who participated in the study have stressed all along that preserving the legacy of the bush economy and passing it on to the children of the community is their first priority.

The TLUOS has produced at least four levels of data and therefore four levels of analysis of which **co-management and co-planning relationships** are most urgent:

4.1 **basic** — the ten maps with their individual assemblies of data on cabins and trails, spiritual (grave) and historical sites, fur bearers, big game, fish, birds, berries, trees and plants, place names and traplines;

4.2 **overlays** — the ten maps when overlaid one upon another show a great deal of traditional resource use all at once. Suddenly they reveal a snapshot of the Fort McKay First Nations' TEK in the form of an “elders’ roadmap”;

4.3 **regional use patterns** — once the overlays are assembled it is possible to focus on heavy use patterns in specific areas. These areas tend to occur in river valleys, along shores of lakes and in key meadow and gathering areas; and

4.4 **co-management and co-planning relationships** — when the regional use patterns are understood, it is possible to plan for the management of migratory species, conservation areas, heritage sites and rivers, continued fur and country food harvests, and to see possible trade-off areas that will enable resource development to occur.

Issue analysis and action

Issue analysis proceeds from the particular to the general (as in the foregoing outline), but the principle of action proceeds from the general to the particular. Accordingly, it is our purpose here, first, to affirm the principle of co-management and then to present specific recommendations for implementing co-management in the Fort McKay homelands.

Co-management and co-planning

The terms "co-management" and "co-planning" refer to the combination of TEK and western science data to take management decisions about land and resource use, and to plan for development using co-management processes and data. While still relatively new terms in Al-

berta, they are already being implemented by the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in in the eastern Yukon, Mackenzie Delta and Beaufort Sea region of the western Arctic. Both the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in have enshrined the

principles of co-management and co-planning in their comprehensive land claims agreements with the federal government. These documents (1984 and 1992) are essentially modern treaties that accommodate aboriginal rights in the Constitution, and they entrench co-management and co-planning as key land and resource use management tools.

The proposal in recommendation 2 would see Fort McKay First Nations TEK experts sit jointly with Alberta government scientific specialists in the overall planning and management of the Fort McKay TLUOS area. Models for co-management committee structure are given in both the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit final agreements, and training in co-management and co-planning is potentially available from the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board and/or the Inuvialuit Game Council, both of which are in Inuvik, NWT. An unwieldy co-management hierarchy and bureaucracy could be avoided by the appointment of TEK experts to environmental screening and review

Recommendation

2

The Fort McKay First Nations should prepare and present to the Alberta government ministries of Environment, and Forestry, Lands and Wildlife a proposal to co-manage conservation and sustainable development of their major intensive use areas.

committees that meet on an as-needed basis. Participants would earn a reasonable per diem fee, but their involvement would not constitute a full time job away from the bush or industrial economy. The ideal co-management committee members would have active involvement in the bush economy and a good understanding of the industrial economy, perhaps gained through seasonal employment.

Regional land use

The goal of both co-planning and co-management would be true integrated resource use planning at the regional level, where every needed decision would be informed by both TEK and western scientific knowledge. At the root of this system's success else-

where is the understanding that two types of wisdom and knowledge about a given set of natural phenomena combine to produce better quality resource use decisions. Central to the protection of the bush

Recommendation

3

The Fort McKay First Nations should make it a priority to recover their lost trapline land base, and to expand their registered licence area within the TLUOS area. The goal should be total registration of the TLUOS area.

economy resources in the TLUOS area is the preservation of Fort McKay First Nations' traplines. We have noted that the 1994 registered trapline area covers about one-third of the TLUOS area. We have also noted that trapline licence areas 2901, 2885, 2911 and 2900 have been lost since 1982.

Recommendation

4

A community-based strategic planning session should be convened by the Fort McKay First Nations to create a "roadmap" for the recapture of the lost traplines and the expansion of new registrations within the TLUOS area.

While four major intensive use areas of the Fort McKay First Nations are graphically evident in the master overlay map described in the next section, many underlying resource use relationships are much more

subtle. For instance, why do woodland caribou not cross to the east bank of the Athabasca River in the TLUOS area? Why are goldeye caught only in the north of the TLUOS area, and why are perch seldom, if ever, caught in the Athabasca? Do

pickerel only spawn in the Richardson Lakes? Why are wolverine harvest sites so infrequent? Has more than one ever been trapped on the east side of the Athabasca? How vulnerable (or receptive) are berry patches to forest fires or clear cuts? Are the four major intensive use areas capable of sustaining their bush food and fur harvests if they are separated by intensive forest management units?

All of the above questions are currently unanswered, although plenty of working hypotheses exist for testing.

Overlay data analysis

When the ten maps are overlaid together it is clear that the TLUOS area was intensively used and that a strong collective memory persists of that usage. The area's lakes, creeks, rivers and mountains are extremely busy with traditional land use and occupancy data. The presence of 34 currently used cabins west of the Athabasca River, and a further 27 to the east indicates a strong ongoing commitment to local resource harvesting. While the 67 interviewees for this study had a good sense of the total resource use picture prior to the creation of the master overlay map, many local people, companies, and especially students, do not.

Recommendation

5

The Fort McKay First Nations should reproduce the master overlay map (with all ten maps overlaid) in poster format and distribute it widely to all regionally active non-renewable and renewable resource developers and project proponents. The master map should be placed permanently in every Fort McKay classroom, and be incorporated into as many community reports as possible on an ongoing basis. Local newspapers should be encouraged to run the map with an accompanying story as soon as this study is released.

The major regional use patterns are very evident from the master overlay map. They include:

- the entire Athabasca River corridor, including upstream sections of all major tributaries, namely the Clearwater, Steepbank, Muskeg, Firebag, Marguerite, Grayling and Richardson creeks and rivers on the east bank, and the McKay, Dover, Ells, Pierre and Redclay creeks and rivers on the west bank;

- the Legend-Namur-Gardiner-Sand-Eaglenest lakes corridor;
- the Chipewyan-Mink-Grew lakes corridor; and
- the Mikkwa river corridor.

In an ideal world these intensive use areas would be conserved to protect the bush economy in the region, and to preserve options for future bush economy employment and family food supply for the Fort McKay First Nations.

It should be noted that the above areas support local big game, fur, fish, berry and bird populations that are used today by the Fort McKay people. No one denies that the current level of bush food and fur harvest is less than it was prior to the 1960s,

when industrial economy job opportunities became available in large numbers for local workers. The elders do note, however, that their young people must be made aware that economic depressions occur, that megaprojects come to an end and that the bush economy option must be preserved. In this sense it is seen as a form of "depression insurance" for people who have TEK and know how to use it.

Recommendation

6

The Fort McKay First Nations should train a small, efficient staff and create a TEK centre to house and add to the basic data maps, develop annual harvest inventories of key bush food resources, track migratory progress of key species, monitor known predator-prey cycles (e.g., lynx and hare), monitor community hunts, evaluate the importance of bush food in monetary replacement terms (e.g., the cost of replacement of bush food on community tables with store-bought food of equivalent nutritional value and taste), teach TEK in the school, and undertake TEK research for community co-management and co-planning projects.

Recommendation

7

The TEK centre, the proposed co-planning and co-management committees, the appropriate sections of the ministries of Environment and Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, and regionally active industrial proponents should jointly begin to study key renewable and non-renewable resource use relationships in the TLUOS area.

In the light of the foregoing, it is obvious that steps must be taken to organize, interpret and extend the Fort McKay bush knowledge — something that could be done through the creation of a centre for traditional environmental knowl-

edge in the community itself. And this could be usefully supported by encouraging joint research programs with Alberta universities.

The TEK centre could become involved in an adjunct teaching and support capacity with college and university students who wish to write theses on aspects of co-management and traditional environmental knowledge. There are many TEK experts with "bush PhDs" in Fort McKay to act as thesis committee external members.

Basic data analysis

Both the TEK centre and the GIS could derive revenues from regionally active industry and government departments, in the form of contracts for both data entry and analysis, preparation of custom bibliographies, and search fees.

In addition, the TEK centre could set up and operate a regional research library and document delivery service. In this way the Fort McKay First Nations would become leaders in the field of TEK teaching,

promotion and archiving. Several sustainable community jobs could be created in this endeavour, and the bush economy would take on a new significance in the community. The Fort McKay First Nations TEK centre could also provide the secretariat to the proposed co-management process.

Recommendation

8

The TEK centre should be given the responsibility for establishing and maintaining a regional geographic information system (GIS) capability, and for setting up and operating a TLUOS area research abstract data base.

5. Appendix: Ethnographic notes

[The following comments have been edited to present them in everyday English — in many cases the original language was Cree or Chipewyan.]

5.1 Medicine in Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use

The following data were recorded during the present traditional land use research project during the period March to June of 1994. These data, which are specific to bush medicine, are drawn from the interview transcripts of Fort McKay residents (see the accompanying appendix for further details). The persons listed here collectively provided detailed information about 'bush medicine'. These people want their knowledge to be recorded, but it is important to them that it be done out of respect for an historical lifestyle involving custom, traditional practice and the sharing of information. The traditional custom of orally passing knowledge from one generation to the next is no longer as well accepted by the younger people as it once was. The First Nations elders in the Fort McKay community believe that if their knowledge, and that of their parents and grandparents, is to be preserved it has to be recorded in writing. They hope that the younger generation will become knowledgeable through schooling and through the interest that may be created with the written records of elders' knowledge.

Melanie Ahyasou:

- We almost never got sick but if we did we got medicine from the bush. We used roots from plants, willows and trees. We had medicine for heart, kidneys, colds, stomach, burns and even toothache. We could cure just about any sickness that came. Rat root was the most important root; it was good for everything.

Edward Rolland:

- We used a lot of roots and willow plants for our medicine. We got all our medicine from roots, herbs and plants. Mint grass is for tea. It is found by small creeks or small lakes. Bearberry (kinnikinnick) [for tea] is found mostly in the same areas as blueberries. Rat root comes from shallow lakes. Rat root is very bitter; it does not taste very good but it's healthful. Muskeg [for tea] comes from a plant in wet spongy ground. We used dried muskeg for baby diapers to keep the baby dry overnight or for a long time. Some people used skunk hide to keep sickness away by nailing it on the side of the door outside of their home.
- We got all our medicine from the bush — roots, grass, herbs and bark from different trees, and some from the lakes.

Julian Powder:

- Before the railroad and the highway came to McMurray everybody lived off the land. The land provided meat, fish, berries, timber for their cabins, and roots and herbs for the sick.

Victoria McDonald:

- The moss medicines found in frog ponds could be used for making tea to relieve many sicknesses.
- The green frog plant looks like a banana; it is a good heart medicine.
- Medicine from frog ponds could be found near the Syncrude muskeg area; there were lots of medicines around the Syncrude lease.

Alice Boucher:

- The middle layer of peeled tamarack tree bark pounded to a powder and then boiled to make a juice was used for healing cuts.
- The outer green bark of a poplar tree, squeezed or chewed, made a juice to stop bleeding.
- Wild strawberry roots were boiled to make a drink for controlling high blood pressure.
- Muskeg tea cleans the stomach. There are two kinds of muskeg tea.
- Some kind of boiled spruce bark peeling was good for stomach pain; so was mixed muskeg tea and rat root.
- Peppermint tea was good to sweat out a cold.
- There was medicine for kidney problems from plants growing beside a lake.
- Rat root medicine was used to treat colds. For liver ailments chew or shave the root and mix it with hot water to make a drink.
- To make a medicine for cleaning the stomach — use peelings of a balsam tree cut about four inches wide and mixed with muskeg tea and rat root.
- The frying pan plant grows in muskeg. Shaped like a little cup it has buttercup yellow flowers with green leaves. Drink the tea that the whole plant has been boiled in. It cleans the system, gall bladder, etc. This grew in a slough on my trapline.
- To make diapers take moss from dry muskeg. Red moss is best. Pick enough in the fall to last the whole winter. Dry the moss on trees that have been cut and laid on a slant (leaves still on). Remove all stems and roots before storing in a bag. Babies never got a rash when this moss diaper was used.

Arthur Boucher:

- Heart medicine was available from a flowering plant that grows near muskegs and smelled good. It grew in only a certain area and it flaked like tea.

- Muskeg tea was used to clean the stomach. It tasted good.
- Squeeses, my auntie, a medicine woman, had lots of bags of herbs in her house.
- Beaver castor was good for lots of different needs.

Anne L'Hommecourt:

- Rat root, found everywhere, was useful. Spruce gum was good for cuts and sores.

Willie Grandjambe:

- There are a lot of roots and herbs for every kind of sickness. My dad showed me all the different kinds of roots and what they were used for. My dad never charged money when he gave his medicine. All you had to do was to offer him something like tobacco, a cup or a shirt. And when you gave him this, he would take the tobacco into the bush from which he had taken the roots, and put some of the tobacco back into the ground. That was the Indian way of thanking the spirits for the roots. You have to believe in this Indian medicine for it to help you.

Raymond Boucher:

- Beaver castor gum was used for toothache; it killed the pain the same as rat root. I last used beaver castors about 28 years ago but I still use rat root for colds and stomachache.

Flora Grandjambe:

- Father knew all the roots and herbs but he never passed his knowledge on to me; he used birch bark, saskatoon trees, roots of all kinds, evergreen flat-needled trees, sharp highbush cranberries, roots of chokecherry and saskatoon trees — all were good for medicine.
- Boiled rat root was used for a sore chest.
- Mushroom (fungi) growing on willows was smoked for incense. It was used before you touched medicine.

Emma Faichney:

- There were medicines of all kinds. There were roots for heart medicine — (apsis sagewaskoos) for women menstruating — (mistisagewas), and for sores — balsam tree gum boiled with lard or grease.
- For infections, tamarack bark was boiled and the white part peeled off and used as a poultice. This “drew out” the infection.
- There was penicillin for the bad disease, syphilis. The penicillin came from the root of nettles which were boiled to make a tea.
- Father made the medicines. He boiled little bundles of minty flowers for treating kids' fever and bad colds.
- A tea (la tea) was made from peppermint growing in wet areas; when mixed and boiled with muskeg leaves it made the patient sweat. This was as good as drugstore

medicine.

- The old days were healthier days — tough but healthy.

Mary Tourangeau:

- In bush medicine spruce gum and bear grease were used for sores, cuts and infection. Powder from a dry dark mushroom (a puff ball) was rubbed on open sores and cuts to reduce infection.
- Chewing rat root was good for a cough and cold.
- A moose womb has potato-sized, round knobs. You could take them out and cover your eyes with them to prevent snow blindness. Johnny Orr did this after his dad told him about them.

Mary Jane Boucher:

Rat root was good for all kinds of ailments but I don't know much about medicine.

Johnny Orr:

- Rat root was used for colds and coughs.
- A drink of one drop of skunk juice in hot water was used for the flu. We would add a bit of sugar or mint tea to enhance the taste and sweat out the cold. Skunk juice comes from the sack of the skunk. We would put some of this juice in a can and hang it outside the house to stop sickness from coming inside.

Gilbert McDonald:

- Muskeg medicine was found in a dry muskeg site. It looks like alfalfa sprouts.
- Use the roots when they are dry and chew them. I used muskeg medicine myself. Raphael Cree gave me some. You have to pay for these medicines with tobacco or some other gift.
- Rat root was used for colds.
- Muskeg willow medicine was for weight lost. It looks like saskatoon willow but is shorter — about four feet high. Boil the willow and drink the tea for weight loss. I have never tried it. I know from Billy Joe Tucarro that skunk oil is good for colds.
- A mixture of roots is used for different ailments. For a bad cold, orange and green leaves from a muskeg area were used, and so was rat root and peppermint.
- Bark from four spruce trees with blisters (balsam fir and others) was boiled to make a drink to treat colds.
- The dry powder from puff balls was used to stop bleeding. They are found in a spruce area along the McKay River.
- For a diabetes tea, take the first layer off a red birch tree and cut it three or four inches long, boil and steep. Red birch doesn't grow just any where. It is scarce.
- All medicine plants are hard to find. They are protected by spirits. I learned about medicines from different elders from all over.

Ernie Lacorde:

- There is medicine in trees. To heal an open sore we would take some bark off a black poplar, scrape off the next layer, chew that material and then apply it to the sore. After three or four days the skin would go brown and the sore would heal without leaving much of a scar.
- For a bad cold or itchy skin, mix skunk oil with water. [Drink it and/or apply it.]
- My auntie, Mrs. Shott, used to nail a skunk hide on the door to keep germs out.

Viola Lacorde:

- Peppermint (stored in a sugar sack) smelled good in homemade tea.
- For cuts or sores mother applied spruce gum — the leaky, soft gum. She always kept some in a can.
- For toothache she used boiled rat root. The longer you boiled it the stronger it got.
- The fungus that grew on willow branches was good for an earache.
- For colds we would boil water, sugar and beaver castor. People never got colds except at New Year's dances when they would sweat and go outside to cool off, and get a chill.

Annie Ducharme:

- I got my medicine from the bush and from around rivers and lakes.
- We never went to see a doctor when we were sick.
- The most common medicine was rat root.
- For heart trouble we would pick a certain small plant in the fall after all the leaves fell. This plant grew in sandy areas — about fourteen inches high. It had light blue flowers.
- For appendix problems, we used a plant that grew along the river banks. It was about twelve inches high and was brown in the fall when we picked it.
- For a chest cold I used to get some balsam bark and mix it with rat root, boil it, and drink the tea. It was also good for asthma [or difficult breathing].

William and Alice Ahyasou:

- We got all our medicine from the bush. Nobody was sick very much but sometimes we needed a rest.

5.2 Products and practices in Fort McKay traditional land use

Ashes: Ashes were mixed with bear or moose fat in the preparation of soap. Ash was sometimes used to trace design lines on material on which fancy work was applied.

Feathers: From ducks and geese, washed and dried feathers were used for insulation, stuffing for pillows, blankets and sleeping robes.

Red ochre: Red ochre is native earth consisting of hydrated peroxide of iron in clay. It was used to paint designs of artwork on equipment, e.g., on a canoe. Mixed with grass it was used to chink log houses and add colour to the building (*Victoria McDonald*).

Moose bladder: The bladder was removed from the body of a moose. It was cleaned by being filled and rinsed with water and then left overnight filled with clean water. Then it was turned inside out and filled with water again. It was used as a container for bear fat in particular, and other greases as well. Grease rendered by boiling was cooled, and still in a liquid stage was poured into the bladder bag. Hot fat would melt the bladder and cause it to shrink. The opening was squeezed closed and tied shut with a rawhide thong or sinew. Tallow — rendered fat — was made in the fall or early winter and was preserved and stored in the bladder over winter. Solid tallow could be taken out as needed using a bone knife. In warm weather, it was soft and could be spooned out. Katy Sanderson of Fort McMurray remembered her mother, Mary Rose Powder using a moose bladder to store tallow at House River, when Katy was a child four to ten years old, 1916 to 1922. James Grandjambe of Fort McKay had a bladder full of bear fat on 16 April 1994; he may still have it. Patsy Boucher of Fort McKay has an empty moose bladder, April, 1994 (*Annie L'Hommecourt*).

Beaver castor: Beaver castor is from a gland of the beaver. A source of animal perfume collected in North America and marketed to the world perfume manufacturers, it is a cash crop for trappers and hunters. Traditionally it was used as a medicine. A dried castor was scraped to a stage of powder; the powder was sprinkled on a small ember of burning wood or on a hot stove or a heated stone and the smoke from the castor powder inhaled for sore throat relief. Mixed with grease (bear or moose fat preferred) castor shaving was used as a medicine for human wounds and scabs. For headache relief, a piece of castor was placed on a heated rack on an inside stove and heated to the point that it was smoking but not burning; the smoke was inhaled until the headache was gone (*Katy Sanderson of Fort McMurray, Johnny Orr, and many others*).

Beaver castor gum: The castor contains a gumlike substance that was chewed.

Beaver castor as bait for lynx: Caster shavings were placed inside a prepared lynx trap. The lynx was attracted to the perfume of the shavings and caught in the trap.

Wolf: Wolves have a strong odour, “they urinate on each other, so I always skinned a wolf outside.” (*Zachary Powder, Fort McKay*)

Loonskin waterproof bag: For what is being described here, ducks and geese served just as well as loon but loon skin was favoured because of its attractive colouring and fine feather design. The loon was skinned with the feathers left intact. The skin was stretched by stuffing the cavity with dry moss and then left to dry. The legs were cut off at the first joint to avoid leg holes in the body of the hide leaving the only opening at the neck. This opening was rimmed with moose hide, making holes in its outer rim which were then laced with hide thongs that could be pulled tight to close the opening. This bag protected its contents against moisture and dust, and was used to store food, needles, thread, scissors and sewing material, and virtually anything else small enough to be contained in it. It was also a decorative wall piece or hand bag. Such waterproof bags have not been used in recent years. (*Zachary Powder’s grandmother made these bags in the 1940s. The James Grandjambe family used these bags as recently as the 1960s — Teresa Grandjambe, and other people; Flora Grandjambe — Fort McKay 1994.*)

Rabbit pelt: Tanned hide, with its fur on, was used as trim for clothing, lining for mitts, and decoration on art and crafts. As many as three hundred pelts were needed to make a rabbit-pelt jacket. The pelt was cut in strips, about 1 1/2 inches wide and in varying lengths. The strips were braided and woven together to form a jacket or a blanket. Rabbits at their prime in the fall and winter were caught by snare. Fifty to one-hundred snares set at one time provided the necessary quantity of rabbits in two or three days when rabbits were at the peak of their population cycle, about every seven years. Snares made from moose sinew thread were set in the pathways made by rabbit travel through cut-down jack pine trees or natural deadfall where rabbits sought shelter from predators. People ate rabbit meat and used the pelts for clothing, bedding and decoration (*Viola Lacorde, Susanne Cree, Zachary Powder*).

Grouse and ptarmigan tails: The tail from these birds were fanned out, dried and used as a fan or wall decoration.

Owl and goose wings: These were dried by the heat of the sun and used as floor brooms and furniture dusters.

Gifts: It was the practice of many aboriginal people to pay for the products of the land they use. They gave something back to the land; tobacco was a gift commonly

used but other possessions sufficed. This practice supported a belief that a plant taken from the land would replace itself if what was taken was replaced by a gift. Elder people in northern Alberta recall this as a practice of their parents and grandparents as recently as the early 1900s (*Zachary Powder, Francis Orr and others*).

Jam and syrup: We never got jam from the store; we made our own from wild blueberry, saskatoon, raspberry, chokecherry and three kinds of cranberry, bog, lowbush (mooseberry) and highbush. We dried blueberries and saskatoons. We made our syrup from chokecherries.

Moss: Moss was used as a dish cloth, baby diaper, sanitary napkin, stuffing, chinking and bedding. The muskeg area on the land was the source of moss. The top of the moss plant was picked off. The next layer, light brown and soft, was the best for diapers, pillows and sanitary use. After being picked it was hung in the sun and wind to dry (*Edward Rolland and others*).

Moss bags: Tanned deer, moose hide or heavy cotton material (canvas or monarch) was used for moss bags. Moss was gathered from dry muskeg areas. The redness of the muskeg indicated how dry it was. The moss was picked and dried in the sun for a few days on knocked down willow or poplar trees, then stored in a large sack. (*Alice Boucher and Mary Powder, Fort McKay*).

Tree fungus: Fungus on a tree is in the same plant category as mushroom, toadstool, mildew and mould. There are many tree fungi; they vary with different types of trees or shrubs. Fungus that grows on dry trees, i.e. stumps of trees or on birch deadwood, for example, had two important uses: one, because fire smoulders rather than flames in it and it could be transported from one camp to another, it served as a fire starter; the other, the smoke from a smouldering fungus served as an insect repellent (*Sources: several aboriginal people around Fort McMurray and Fort McKay — Zachary and Mary Powder, April 1994 and Katy Sanderson, 1994.*)

Willow fungus: With a blond-like colour, small in comparison to tree fungus, it grows on a dry branch and has an aroma that served as an air freshener. It did not grow on every dry willow branch but the dry branch it grew on was typically near wet ground. The aroma of this fungus was detected while passing through a grove of willows. As a medicine, a piece of this spongy fungus was soaked in hot water and placed in the ear to relieve earache (*Zachary Powder, Flora Grandjambe, Viola Lacorde and others, Fort McKay, April 1994*).

Ground fungus: The 'powder puff' or 'puff ball' fungus grows on the ground. It contains a dry, brown powder and when applied to a bleeding wound it stopped the bleeding and reduced potential infection (*Zachary Powder and Mary Tourangeau, Fort McKay, 1994*).

Skunk: The liquid from the scent glands of the skunk was mixed with water and the mixture, half skunk juice, half water, was applied with a sponge or a cloth to the gums to relieve toothache; soaked in a cloth and heated it was placed on a person's chest to relieve a sore chest. It was good for itchy skin. Skunk oil (from scent glands) mixed with water turned the water yellow. (Zachary Powder age 66 (1994) last used this as prescribed by his mother when he was 18 years old, in 1948.) (*Granny Powder and Katy Sanderson, Fort McMurray, Mrs. Shott, Fort McKay (1960s) Johnny Orr, Ernie Lacorde family.*)

The skunk scent sack or the skunk hide: These were placed on a tree near the home or on the house to ward off illness that might come or be brought to the home (*Mrs. Shott, Granny Powder and others, Fort McKay and Fort McMurray 1960s*).

Bush medicine: People who took herbs, roots or plants for the purpose of healing would return to where the plant was picked and leave something, usually tobacco (kinnikinnick) or a like plant. It was believed that the user should return to the land something to replace what was taken from it. It was a thank you to the spirits and the giver of the medicine (*Willie Grandjambe and many others*).

Tobacco: Tobacco as we know it now was introduced with the fur trade industry. The tobacco was supplemented with red willow bark or kinnikinnick (bearberry) for smoking in a pipe (*Johnny Orr*). Traditional tobacco was the kinnikinnick leaf. It is a ground plant usually found in jack pine forest. The red leaf was taken, placed out in the sun to dry and then used for smoking (*Annie Ducharme*).

Medicine: Poultice — Balsam tree gum, bear grease and the white inner bark of the tamarack tree mixed together and applied to an open wound “drew out” the infection (*Marianne Boucher Beaver*).

Poultice: Balsam sap and spruce needles boiled together made a poultice.

Frog pond medicine: A plant that looks like a green banana was used for heart medicine (*Victoria McDonald*).

Rumen as medicine: Rumen or cud is the first stage of digested food of moose, deer and caribou. It was used to cover an open or bleeding wound. While cutting ribs of a moose Gabe Orr of Fort McKay severely cut his foot. He applied rumen to stop bleeding. (*Mary Powder, Fort McKay, 1994; Gabe Orr's story was confirmed by Zachary Powder.*)

Snow or sun blindness: Around the womb or uterus of the moose there are round ‘potato-sized’ (diameter 1-2 inches) nodules. They could be removed from the moose and pressed to the eyes to relieve the effects of snow and sun blindness (*Mary Tourangeau, Zachary Powder*).

Rat root: Rat root was chewed for the relief of coughing, sore throat and chest irritation. It was a favourite and the most commonly used plant medicine found in sloughs and wet or shallow-water muskeg areas — generally the habitat of muskrat. The root varies from small to 1/2-inch in diameter. Except for muddy conditions it was relatively easy to gather; it sometimes floated to the water surface. It could be used as picked or left to dry and used later (*many people*).

Medicine — black poplar: The bark was removed from black poplar trees, the next layer scraped, and that material chewed and applied to an open sore. After three or four days the skin went brown and the wound healed without leaving much of a scar (*Ernie Lacorde*).

Ant hill trap: An ant hill was a natural place to put a trap and bait for mink; it was entered from ground level and hollowed out. Mink bait was fish, rotted duck or powdered beaver castor mixed with grease and placed along the sidewall opposite the entrance. Between the entrance and bait a trap was set.

Beaver predator: An otter is a predator of beaver. Otters would destroy a beaver dam letting the water run out. Then they would attack, kill and eat the young small beaver. Large beavers, however, could defend against the otter and protect their young.

Blankets-mattresses: Mattresses were made from the hides of large animals, particularly bear pelts and moose hide. Beaver pelts were used as blankets and pillows.

Duck and goose down and feathers: Pillows, warm clothing and quilts were made of these.

Snowshoes, toboggans and birchbark baskets: The best trees for this use were located close to water because the humidity and moisture absorbed through the roots and bark made these trees pliable and easier to work with than those of dry trees.

Rat trap: A four-foot by three-foot net made with moose hide rope was set in a rat drain — a runway from one rat house to another. A rat house was a 'push-up' involving mud and shallow-water vegetation pushed up through a hole in the ice. A person stood on the ice or sat in a shallow-draft canoe and slapped the house with a stick. Frightened by the noise, the rat dashed out through the runway into the net. It was then pulled out of the water and killed with a blow from a stick (*James Grandjambe*).

Rat fur: Pelt with fur on was cured and used to make all types of clothing; jackets, mitts and headgear were common. Muskrat fur is decorative and was used to trim clothing and in works of art (*James Grandjambe and others*).

Fish trap: For a fish trap a pocket would be built by opening a beaver dam or by

damming a stream. Typically a pocket was about eight feet by eight feet and four feet deep with sides parallel to the stream built up with rocks. Shallow openings were left at both the upstream and downstream ends of the pocket. Fish moved downstream into the pocket and swam to the bottom of the trap to get out where they were scooped out with a fork, traditionally made from willow branches.

Fish snare: In clear shallow water a fish could be snared using a root or strip of bark as a looped hook on the end of a hand-held stick. When a fish swam into the loop, or when the loop could be manoeuvred around a stationary fish, the fish could be snared by jerking the snare.

Fish hook: A hook made of wood, shaped to hold a bone barb and secured to the stick with sinew.

Ice fishing: Setting a net under the ice in the winter was a very effective way of catching fish, but it was also the most difficult way. The net could be any length but 45 to 60 feet was common. Floats made from dry wood were attached to the top of the net and weights (stones) were attached to the bottom of the net. Holes, approximately 15 feet apart, were made in the ice in a straight line; the distance between end holes equalled or slightly exceeded the length of the net. A 15-foot pole was used to feed a rope under the ice. A rope, longer than the distance between the two end holes, was attached to one end of the feed pole and to one end of the net. At that point the net was stretched out on the ice ready to be fed through the hole. The pole was pushed through an end hole and directed towards the opposite end hole by feeding it past each of the holes, in turn, between the end holes. When the pole reached the end hole it was pulled through and the rope attached to it was connected under the ice — one end on the pole and the other on the net. In each end hole a dry pole was set in or on the river or lake bed while it still reached out of the ice hole. Using the long rope the net was pulled through the opposite hole until it was fully stretched out in the water under the ice. Each end of the net was attached by short ropes to each of the poles which were now in the holes and anchored to the bottom of the lake or river. The long rope on the feeding pole could be taken off. Green wood and fresh bark was preferred beaver food; beaver will chew and remove green poles, therefore dry poles were used to anchor the nets under the ice. The holes froze shut and had to be reopened each day. At that time the nets were checked using a long rope tied to one end of the net, temporarily replacing the rope tied to the anchor pole. The net, with the fish, was pulled through. The fish were removed and with the long rope attached under the ice the net was pulled back under the ice. This procedure was repeated as long as fish were needed. Fish could not be left in the net under water for more than

two days because they died in the net and started to rot.

(Fred MacDonald, Fort McKay).

Moose horn knife handles: The horn was boiled until it became soft. It was then cut and shaped while still soft and warm. As it dried it hardened again.

Flesher: A tool for scraping the flesh off hides was made from the lower leg bone of the moose. It was bevelled at one end and teeth notched in the scraping edge

(James Grandjambe).

Drum cover: Animal hides were used for drum covers. Some drum makers preferred a cover made from the hide of an unborn calf. Most drum covers were made from prepared moose hide. Hair and flesh were scraped off leaving a thin hide which was soaked and stretched over a circle hoop made from birch or spruce wood. The hoop was generally a metre in circumference, seven millimetres deep and a millimetre wide. The sound of the drum was determined by the thickness of the hide cover, the size of the drum and by how tight or loose the hide was stretched. By holding it over an open fire, the cover could be made tight after it was stretched and secured on the hoop. Rawhide thongs were used to secure the drum cover to the hoop. Rawhide stretched from side to side at each quarter point of the underside of the drum formed the handle. A willow stick or bone was used to strike the drum cover at whatever beat and timing the drummer chose *(James Grandjambe).*

Strings: Sewing lace and bindings were made from spruce roots. The roots were boiled, then grease worked into them to make them soft and pliable like a rope. They were used to bind, sew or lace baskets, canoes and artifacts.

String and thongs: Tanned or rawhide from moose, deer or caribou hide was used to make handles, moccasin laces, belts, rope and sewing lacing.

Sewing thread: Sinew (tendon) is a fibrous cord connecting muscle and bone. A piece as long as four feet long and four inches wide could be removed from the back of moose, deer or caribou. Dried, it could be made into hundreds of smaller threads that could be separated into very fine strips or into a combination of strips sized as needed for the sewing to be done. Dried thread was dampened by drawing it through water or through the mouth; several fine strips could be made into thicker thread using the palm of the hand and rolling them together over a flat surface *(Julie Lindstrom).*

Root rope: Spruce tree roots were used as thread in sewing birch bark baskets. Roots were taken from young trees that grew by the muskeg. They were coloured with red willow dye for decoration.

Tobacco: Tobacco was expensive, so red willow was mixed with "bought" tobacco

to make it go further.

Sealer: Spruce gum, a general purpose glue, was used to seal cracks in wood.

Colouring dye: Tamarack and red willow bark boiled in water were used to make dye (*Charlie Boucher*).

Canoe building: A canoe, often made from birch wood and birch bark could also be made from dry spruce wood. While the tree was standing alive, the bark was peeled off to about seven feet high. The tree was left in place, standing, for about one year. Removal of the bark killed the tree and as it dried it split into layers. Four or five trees would be stripped of their bark at one time to ensure that the canoe builder would get at least one high-quality tree that split straight up and down and was relatively smooth. Then the tree was cut down, split in half using wood or stone tools, or in recent times, using metal wedges. Wedges were placed in the centre of the tree several inches apart and pounded into the crack to continue parting the tree. After the wedge started the job, the strips were pulled apart by hand. The slabs (strips) were planed down to a smooth surface and then sized and shaped. These boards were shaped for canoe or snowshoe construction by first placing them in hot water that softened them enough to be forcibly twisted, bent and formed to make canoe ribs, sides, bow and stern. Canoes were pieced together with thongs of spruce root, spruce gum and moose sinew. The frame was covered with moose hide, or canvas in recent times. A local canoe, often called a rat canoe, weighed approximately 35 pounds, was approximately ten feet long, three feet wide and ten or twelve inches deep. A single trapper could carry all his gear, one other person or one dog in such a canoe. Fur bearing animals would be skinned out and if a large animal, a moose, was caught it would be cleaned and de-boned to reduce the weight (*Boniface Tripp de Roche and almost everyone else of his time.*)

Cabin construction: Cabins were made from spruce trees; robin hood flour sacks served as windows as there was no glass those days. The door hinges were of moose hide, and the houses were chinked with moss from the muskeg on the inside, and on the outside mud and finely cut grass mixed into a paste. Small poles were put on the roof, then bark was placed between the poles. All of this was covered with about six inches of dirt.

Paddles: Paddles were carved from whatever tree is available; jack pine, spruce and birch were a common source. Jack pine wood has a lot of resin in it and for this reason is slower to rot than other woods (*Willie Boucher and many others*).

Drying rack: A food drying rack was made like a teepee, but with fewer poles. With root or hide thongs, three 15- to 20-foot poles were tied together at the top as they lay on the ground, two side by side and the other parallel, but extending in

the opposite direction, in between the other two, all with their tops together. The three were then raised to make a three-legged teepee. On one or all three sides of this frame, poles were placed horizontally eight inches apart from near the ground to as high as a person could reach. Strips of meat to be dried were placed over these poles and left to dry in the sun and to be cured by smoke from a smouldering fire that was built inside at the centre of the frame (*Isabel Ahyasou*).

Hay fork: A three-prong fork could be made from a willow limb that grew naturally shaped with a handle and three prongs (*Isabel Ahyasou*).

Water bag: Moose, deer or caribou rawhide was scraped to remove meat, fat and hair. Cut to a size needed for a bag, softened with warm water, the outer edge of the rawhide was folded around a block of wood about four inches in diameter and four to six inches long. Prior to securing the edges to the wood, the rawhide was stuffed with moss to shape it. It dried hard and when the block was removed a handle of rawhide was attached and the bag could be used as a water bucket (*Isabel Ahyasou*).

Deer fawn bag: Fawns were seldom killed but if one was killed or found dead, the hide, with its light brown colour and white spots, was used to make a unique decorative hand bag (*Flora Grandjambe and others*).

Pouch: The pouch from the head of a pelican, when slightly modified, made a carrying pouch for small items — medicine and artwork material. Water was also carried in such a pouch (*William and Alice Ahyasou*).

Packsack: The best material for a packsack was the hide from below the knee of a deer, moose or caribou. The hair was short and the skin was tough and waterproof. The strips from the leg were sewn together to make a bag. The opening was rimmed with tanned moose hide and laced with a moose hide thong to close it. The carrying strap was a tanned or rawhide thong (*Alice Boucher and many others*).

Bear trap: A bear trap was made by building a three-wall enclosure approximately five feet square by three feet high. Two logs, 14 inches apart, were placed midway between the side walls at the open end of the enclosure. Between these posts were placed two heavy logs, 8 to 10 inches diameter and maybe 15 to 20 feet long, horizontally on the ground, one on top of the other. One end of the top log was lifted and supported several feet above the bottom log with a trip stick placed upright between the two logs. A string was attached to the bottom of this trip stick and it extended to the end of the bottom log and along the overhanging top log. At that end of the string a piece of bear bait was attached and placed on the bottom log. The bear entered the open end of the enclosure to retrieve the bait. As the bear pulled on the bait, the trip stick released the top log allowing it to fall on the

bear, breaking its back and often killing it (*Willie Grandjambe, James Grandjambe and many others*).

Bannock: A flat round cake (bread) made of flour, usually unleavened, was baked on an iron plate over an open fire. A traditional recipe included ground plant root and fish eggs. Wheat flour, lard, baking powder, egg, salt and sugar are now the basic ingredients of a bannock recipe; fish eggs are added for taste and texture by some bakers (*Alice Boucher, Margaret McDonald, Victoria McDonald, Katy Sanderson and many others*).

Rumen: The partially digested food (cud) from the stomach of a moose, deer or caribou could be used as human food or over a wound to prevent infection.

Fish fat: Fat from the stomach of a fish was rendered and used for cooking (*Maggie Poulin*).

Fish eggs: Eggs could be fried and eaten as was. They were also included in recipes for bannock (*Maggie Poulin, Viola Lacorde and others*).

Eggs: duck, goose, seagull: These eggs were used in food preparation, or eaten hard boiled (*Viola Lacorde*).

Crackling — Indian popcorn: The cape from around the stomach of a moose was boiled to render the fat. The remaining fibre was dry and crisp, and eaten as such (*Viola Lacorde*).

Rat meat: Human food. The animal skinned, gutted and cleaned was placed on a stick and cooked over an open fire.

Porcupine: meat: Classed as white meat, porcupine is light coloured and is closer to the texture of chicken than most animal meat. The porcupine carcass was placed in a fire to burn off the needles. The charred hair, needles and internal organs were removed and then the meat boiled, fried or roasted, whole or in parts.

Lynx meat: Boiled, fried or dried, it was good.

Owl meat: Roast owl tastes like domestic turkey (*Viola Lacorde*).

Duck, goose: These waterfowl were roasted over an open fire.

Dry meat: Meat sliced 1/4 inch thick and as long a length as possible was placed on a drying rack where it dried slowly from the heat of the sun. It was cured by the smoke of a smouldering fire (*Isabel Ahyasou*).

White poplar food: The layer of white material under the bark could be eaten as it was scraped off. It was primarily an emergency food supply and was not on the daily menu when other food was plentiful (*James Grandjambe*).

Syrup: Birch tree sap was a popular source of syrup. A two-week period in the spring was the time to tap a birch tree to catch the sap as it seeped up between the trunk and the bark. A 1/8-inch slit, V-shaped, was cut in the trunk of the tree

approximately two to four feet above the ground. A stick, acting as a spout, was inserted at the point of the V. Below that a container (a birch bark basket before the time of metal or plastic pails) was hung to catch the sap as it dripped off the end of the spout. As much as 10 to 14 litres of sap would drip from one tree. This sap was boiled down to produce four litres of syrup which could be flavoured with a sweetener, traditionally dried fruit berries; sugar is now used. Red willow branches could be boiled with the sap to give the syrup a maple syrup colour. (*Most elders know of this practice. Source: James Grandjambe, his dad's sister, Katherine Boucher, Zachary Powder, Victoria Boucher, Alice Boucher, Katy Sanderson, Fort McKay and Fort McMurray, 1994.*)

Syrup-fruit: Most berries, boiled to produce juice, were a good source of syrup. Highbush cranberry, blueberry, chokecherry were favourites among the dozen and more berries available (*Julie Lindstrom and many others*).

Fruit-preserved: There were twenty-three fruit bearing plants; twelve of them grew in relative abundance. Blueberry, three kinds of cranberry, chokecherry, pincherry, raspberry, dewberry and red currant were among the favourites and could be found throughout most of the northern forest. Fruit was mixed with meat, with bread, with other fruit and eaten raw or cooked. Some berries remained on the vine throughout the winter and could be picked and eaten frozen. Berries were fresh, dried fresh and later rehydrated and cooked (*Julie Lindstrom and many others*).

Bear fat: Used for frying and cooking, and can be mixed with ashes to make soap.

Bear meat: Eaten boiled, dried or roasted.

Bear hide: Used as a floor rug, a mattress or blanket covering for winter travel.

Bear gut: Cleaned and used for storage of fat (*Marianne Boucher Beaver*).

Dog food — fish: Whole fish, most often whitefish, were dried for dog food. A hole was pierced through the tail end of fresh fish and ten fish weighing approximately two to four pounds each were hung from a stick which ran through the holes in the tail. The pole ends rested on a stage made of heavier poles that were set out of the reach of dogs, about six feet above ground. The fish dried in the sun and wind, and were fed to the dogs as needed (*Willie Grandjambe and many others*).

Drink: Mint could be used green as picked or preserved dry and steeped in hot water and drunk as a tea. It could be found near small creeks; a beaver dam was a good location to find this grass (*Edward Rolland and many others*).

Food cache: Logs were used to build a cache three or four feet high and four by four feet square. The floor was made of branches or boughs and the top was layered with poles, grass and heavy logs to resist the entry of animals (*Dolphus Ahya-sou and others*).

Meat and fish Storage: Dry meat and dry fish were stored in a boxlike shed built five feet off the ground. This reduced the threat of damage by bears. Four standing spruce trees evenly spaced to measure 5 feet by 5 feet were used. Next, 4-inch diameter spruce trees were felled removing all branches to make six-foot rails. Using strips of moose hide four rails were tied to the standing trees 5 feet above the ground. Spruce railings were placed to build the floor. Framing the structure was continued by tying rails to enclose all four sides ending up with a 3-foot-high framed box. Spruce boughs were placed on the floor and along the sides. After all the meat was placed in this storage shed, the entire roof was covered with more spruce boughs and rails. Air circulated through the boughs and railings. Meat in the open, but protected from birds and animals by the screen-like spruce boughs, led to a hard dark brown surface seal about 1/2 inch deep. The meat inside remained fresh and tenderized with age.

Hunting: Three or four families would travel together on fall moose-hunting trips. The men decided as to what direction in the bush each of them would go and designated a spot, e.g., by creek, stream or some landmark, to meet at, at a certain time of day. If the hunters got a moose that day they packed as much of the meat back to camp as they were able to load on their backs. The next day they would come back to get the rest of the meat. In recent times they used dogs for packing the meat. A strong, healthy dog could pack an average of sixty pounds. A strong man could pack from forty to one hundred pounds. The actual weight carried depended on the terrain these dogs and men had to go through (creeks, muskeg, rivers) (*Alice Boucher, Fort McKay*).

Bed—outdoors—cold weather: Two large logs were placed parallel, three feet apart. End-piece spruce boughs were placed between the logs on the ground or snow and covered with a bear hide mattress. People lay in this crevice covered with other fur. A slow-burning fire at either end of the bed circulated some heat (*Willie Grandjambe and many others*).

Roofing shingles: Bark peeled in wide long strips from spruce trees was used to cover roof poles on log cabins. Bark peeled best in spring (*Raymond Boucher and others*).

Stoves in log buildings. The fireplace generally occupied the corner of a room. If clay was available, it was used. Otherwise it was made of logs and sod and chinked with a mixture of long grass, clay and ashes. The mixture dried hard. A three-foot by three-foot chimney was built from the fireplace through the roof of the building. This type of fireplace provided light, heat and a place to cook (*James Grand-*

jambe, Dolphus Ahyasou and others).

Door hinges: The strongest part of moose hide was used as hinges on log-built doors.

Whitewash: Limestone was gathered from appropriate geological formations. It was placed in a wood-burning fire. The heat reduced it to a white powder. The powder was mixed with water and the slurry applied to a peeled-log building; in this way, the building was “whitewashed” and retained an off-white colour (*Zachary Powder, Fort McKay, April 1994*).

Night light: Often called a ‘bitch light’. Strips of fabric placed in a container of bear grease with one end lit provided light (*William and Alice Ahyasou*).

Birchbark: The most pliable bark and the easiest to remove from the tree was taken from the tree closest to the water’s edge. Humidity in the air added moisture to the tree and the bark (*Raymond Boucher and many others*).

Death: Traditionally when a medicine man died he would be set up by a tree and left there with much of his belongings. If he died in his log cabin he would be left there. The cabin was never used again. The corpse and the cabin would eventually disintegrate.

Clothespins: Made by partially splitting four-inch pieces of willow branch (*Annie Ducharme and others*).

Tree sap: Balsam fir produced a sap that was chewed as gum; when mixed with pine leaves and boiled it could be used as a poultice for application to sores or inflamed parts of the body. It was used to seal or glue cracks, holes and seams in birchbark baskets or canoes.

Craft marker: Wood ash was used to pencil in designs to be followed when sewing porcupine quills, fish scales or moose hair to decorate clothing and crafts (*Edward Rolland*).

Fire: Dry grass rubbed together provided the spark to light birch fungus which smouldered until it was burned out (*Alice Boucher and others*).

Fire: Birch fungus when set afire did not flame but smouldered and provided a fire that could be transported from one camp to another or stored until the fungus was burned out.

Fly and insect repellent: Smouldering birch fungus emitted a smoke which repelled insects, in particular, mosquitoes.

Sounds of the bush: Poplar trees made a sound like a song in the wind. The pitch of the song changed as the tree went from dry to wet and wet to dry, and was bent back and forth by the wind. The change in the strength of the wind changed the tone (*Zachary Powder, Fort McKay, April, 1994*).

Making moose hide fabric: A new hide would be soaked in tub of warm water overnight to soften it. Any holes in the hide would be plugged. Next day, holes would be cut three inches apart around the outer edge of the whole hide and a strip of moose hide strip or rope was woven through these holes to hold and stretch the hide on a pole frame. The hide was stretched onto the frame with hair side down and head end highest. A scraping tool — a skin flesher made from moose leg — was used to take the flesh and fat off the hide. This moose hide pole stretcher frame was tied to two trees the same distance apart as the width of the frame and on a slant to the ground at about a 50-degree angle. The frame was made of spruce rails about 4 inches in diameter. Spruce was used because it is strong. After all the flesh and fat was removed, the frame was turned around with the head side up and back leg side down. Using another tool made of steel or spruce wood, the fur was scraped off, starting at the top and working down. Removal of all hair and rough spots from the hide was very important. Scraping was done in an up-and-down motion and sideways with the grain of the hide. Rough spots were removed, otherwise they showed up in the finished product; this determined the smoothness of the hide when done. This part was very hard work. After hair, fat and flesh were removed from the hide, the hide was taken out of the frame. The entire outer edge was trimmed off to remove the part that had been used to tie and stretch the hide on the frame. The hide was laid on the ground on the hair side; the following mixture was worked into it: one moose or beef brain, one cup sunlight detergent (or traditional homemade soap) and a half pound of fat. This mixture was boiled and cooled and thoroughly worked into the hide. Then it was left until dry. When dry, black outlines could be spotted on the leg parts of the hide. The hide was then folded into a small bundle and placed in a tub of warm water overnight. Next day, it was agitated in a tub of water or stream, for about a half hour. After that, the moisture was wrung from it by attaching one end of the hide to a tree and twisting the other end hard around the tree. A strong person was needed to do this. After all the moisture was out, the hide was pulled by hand from all sides with two people working together, one on each end. The hide was grabbed and pulled “with” the grain and directly “against” the grain. The grain on hides runs back to stomach and head to tail. When the “stretch” is out of the hide, it doesn’t “give” any more. Now a steel or hardwood jack pine scraper was used to remove any rough or loose spots from the skin. The hide was now white. It was sewn together to make a tube that was extended by sewing a 12-inch strip of canvas or other hide onto one end. A hole was dug in the ground and lined with stakes. A smouldering fire was built in the hole. *Poplar or rotted spruce were the best woods to use for this. The top of the*

hide now in the form of a vertical cylinder was attached to a tree overhanging the fire and in this way the hide was placed over this smouldering fire for smoking. In about half a day the hide was smoked to a nice tan shade.

Dog food — hung fish: In the fall fish were caught and hung for the dogs' winter food. To prepare white fish for hanging, a hole was poked through the tail end of each fish and a stick slipped through. Ten fish were hung on each stick this way, and all the sticks were hung about six feet above the ground. About 2000 fish could be hung in about a week.

Dugout homes: There used to be dugouts for people to live in; they would build a roof over a dugout on the side of hills near Beaver Creek.

Blanket: To make rabbitskin blankets, women skinned rabbits and cut them in half making two pieces. In winter the skins were left outside to freeze so they wouldn't dry out as the braiding had to be done while wet. While still wet, they were tied together, braided and hung across a long stick. The braiding was done interweaving one braid along side another braid. The blanket was warm. It took a lot of rabbits, maybe 200-300, to make one blanket but there were many rabbits.

Colouring hide: Boiled, peeled red willow produced a wine coloured dye. Old moccasins were washed in this coloured water to make them soft. Then they could be mended.

Log stove in log house: To make a stove in a log house a hole was cut in one corner of the building. Four poles were put upright to the roof. Then poles were placed crosswise about six inches apart all the way up. Hay, mud and water were mixed and smeared on three sides. The back was left open all the way up with a small opening in the front. That was the stove.

Fish trap: A three-foot high dam was built by putting logs and spruce boughs across a stream. At the centre of the bottom of the dam a box 4 feet by 10 feet was made out of poles. An opening was chopped in the dam in front of the box to allow the stream water to flow through the box. In about an hour the box would be full of fish. That is how it was possible to fish without hooks.

Muskrat trap: In the old days, rats were killed by using a net (about three by four feet in size) made from moosehide rope set in a muskrat runway which led from the rat houses. The hunters used sticks to hit the rat house so the frightened rats would scurry down the runway into the net. There they were clubbed to death.

Bear trap: A suitable location was chosen and two poles were put upright in the ground about 14 inches apart to hold the active bars of the trap. A second pair was put up about 5 feet away. That would be the front face of the trap. The other three walls would be 3 feet high making a box 5 feet by 5 feet square. To make the

killing mechanism, two big logs [for the active bars] were pulled out of the bush by dogs to the trap location. One heavy log was placed on the ground in the guides in the front of the enclosure, and the other heavy log was put on top with one end held up by a 20-inch stick under it. A string tied to that stick ran to the bait in the enclosure — a piece of meat at the back of the pen. When the bear stuck its head in between the two heavy poles and seized the meat, it pulled on the string and the upper log came down on its head (or back) and killed it.

Dye for fancy work: Dye was made from berries, willow bark (by boiling the material scraped from under the bark) and willow roots. This was used for flower ornamentation and hide dyeing. Porcupine quills and moose hair could be coloured and used in fancy sewing.

5.3 The “old times”, the “in-between times” and the “now times” in the Fort McKay traditional land use study

It was felt useful here to abstract particular comments that reflected the views held by many First Nations people. While the “old times” were tough, the people knew what they were doing and why they were doing it. The times between the old days and the “now” days have been disruptive and confusing however, filled with misled hopes and promises of a better future. The “now time” is insecure, dependent and out of their control.

Fred Marcel — age 83

- I think in those days [1940s and 1950s] there were more jobs. Everybody was working and having a good time.
- There used to be people every five to ten miles living there [along the Athabasca River] — all summer and winter.
- There were house dances all the time, nobody got drunk, not like they do now.
- I remember in the summer they travelled by small boats, rowing, some had outboards, and in winter they had dog teams.
- Those were the good old days.

Roy Rolland — age 54

- I sure miss the bush life.
- Now that I am sick all I can do is think about it [the bush] — the life I once loved so much. That is why I surely hope they will not log this area any more.

Veronica Rolland — age 77

- I spent all of my life in the bush; as long as I can remember I was never sick.
- I had to go with my sister or brother or I couldn't go out to play, and when I was twenty years old I still had to be home by 9:00 pm.
- All summer... we would travel all over to where there were moose, rabbits and berries.
- Those days you had to outsmart the moose to get one.
- The people were more friendly and always happy; they would visit one another on Sundays.
- At my house we couldn't go anywhere on Sundays; we had to stay home, sing Indian church songs and say our prayers. After that we would cook a big meal and then my dad and grandpa would tell stories about how to do things in the bush. That was our schooling.
- I remember seeing a mud stove but I did not see them build it. I just wish they would leave the bush alone.
- We had a lot of tea dances those days. My family were not Treaty along time ago. They got Treaty status in the 1940s. My husband was chief for about four years.

Gina Boucher

- I was born 8 March 8 1933 in a cabin in the bush not far from Jackfish Lake [Richardson Lake, south of Fort Chipewyan].

Francis Orr — age 62

- I was born in the bush at Moose Lake [Namur Lake].
Pretty well every tree has medicine.

Charlie Boucher — age 63

- I was born under a tree 20 March 1931 at Moose Lake. Grandmother Sophie helped mother with my birth.
- We used to pick blueberries three miles north of Fort McKay. We set rabbit snares everywhere. We had everything then [1930s].

Boniface Tripp de Roche — age 84

- I used to make my own canoes, not out of birch but out of dry spruce.

Isabel Ahyasou — age 67

- We lived off the land; we never got sick — it was a good living.
- As long as I can remember we always had jump traps. There was no wire for snares until back in the 1930s we got some hay wire.
- I wish the young kids would try to learn something from this.

Howard Lacorde — age 46

- In some areas all the spruce have been taken so now the squirrels are all gone. If

all the poplars are taken the beaver will leave, too.

- It is just about all bare, just open areas, I don't like it.

Willie Grandjambe — age 65

- As long as I can remember we lived in the bush off the land.
- I never forgot what my dad showed me and told me about bush life; he said it was not easy and he was right.
- The water and snow were real good, now the water is not all that good and the snow looks like you put pepper on it.
- We never got sick out there, maybe a cold now and then, but the old rat root fixed that. Now that I spend most of my time in McKay, I'm sick all the time.

Raymond Boucher — age 59

- I was nicknamed Muchee geesi gou, translated 'born in bad weather' at Poplar point.
- Mrs. Billy (Angat) Loutitt, referred to as 'doctor just for babies', helped deliver me.

Flora Grandjambe — age 60s

- Father knew roots and herbs, but he never passed his knowledge on to me.

Emma Faichney — age 60

- What we ate was fresh; there was no pollution.
- When the [oil sands] plants opened it was good for jobs but it ruined our country.
- I won't eat fish or have berries to eat; the animals will be unfit to eat and we won't be able to drink the water.
- Our lifestyle will be different; we will have to live like whites.

Maggie Paulin — age 84

- I remember one time when my husband tried for three weeks to get a moose; he finally got one and then we were okay again for awhile.
- Now my kids say let's go on a picnic so we can roast some hot dogs and some spareribs, and sit around the campfire. So I said, "If that's what you call a picnic, I guess I've picnicked most all my life!"
- I remember the forest ranger used to travel by canoe, paddling in the summer and all over in the winter by dog team.

Mary Tourangeau — age 51

- In 1949 Father Begin was a teacher at Fort McKay; I didn't speak English then.

Mary Jane Boucher — age 74

- I lived at Moose Lake (Gardiner Lake) and moved to Fort McKay for the kids to go to school in 1949.

- Things were cheaper in those days [1940s]; life was hard. Today things are easier in some ways but the kids need more education. They can't live off a trapline; there's no money in it; they have to depend on [outside] jobs.

Johnny Orr — born 1936

- There was no sickness long ago — just that big flu [1919].
- The snow was just yellow.

Eddie Boucher

- There's still lots of fur but the white man is taking over.

Willie Boucher — age 63

- People used to get along better; there was lots of fun at the New Year's dances.

Ernie Lacorde — age 74

- You would trap anywhere in the 1930s, but it was hard to make a dollar those days.
- There were no government fish and wildlife people [then], only one forestry person and one RCMP man.
- I got my [trapline] license in McMurray by dog team.

Viola Lacorde — age 65

- We never went hungry.
- People never got colds except after New Year's dances when people sweated and went out to cool off.
- Talking was not permitted during meals — you might choke.
- When visitors came, you kept your distance from the visitor, and you were not allowed to speak.
- Wooden beds were for parents only.

James Grandjambe — age 73

- When I was thirteen (1934) my dad took me out in the bush and showed me how to make my living off the land.
- That is why I am not afraid to say there is a living out there and a good one too.
- The reason we moved back [from Moose Lake to Fort McKay] was that the kids had to go to school (1949). That is why we could not go back to the bush and trap. If it wasn't for that I would still be out there. The school was good for the kids but it was bad for us older people.
- It was hard to make a living staying in Fort McKay; the welfare payments made everybody lazy and very poor.
- Everybody visited each other in the bush, and when anybody killed anything everybody got some; it's not like today, even your cousins now are 'cheap', and nobody visits any more.

- People did not die as much those days as they do now. There's too much junk to eat — you don't know what's in it.
- I remember some women gave birth summer, fall or winter on the trail by a campfire and after two days they were back on the trail.
- When development people take the timber they take away our way of life; they not only destroy the bush but they destroy the feed and feeding areas of the animals we depend on.
- I used to drink the water from around here and it tasted good; now it makes you sick.
- My dad told me that my grandpa told him that in the old days when an old medicine man died they would set him up by a tree and they would leave him with all his things, food, clothes and tobacco. If he died in a house they would leave him there. They would never go back to that house.

Annie Ducharme — age 68

- My husband and I lived there [Sled Island] summer and winter. We made our living off the land.
- We never went to see a doctor when we were sick; we would get our medicine from the bush.
- I surely would like to see this country stay like it is — no more logging and oil drilling.
- It used to be so good in the old days but now everything is polluted.
- In those days we got all our meat to eat from the land; now we have to watch what we eat and where it was killed.

William Ahyasou

- One thing I'd like to say is that the people are not the same as long ago; they are not so friendly.
- We did a lot of moving around in those days.
- We never killed anything for no reason; we only killed when we needed some meat.
- Everybody worked hard those days and we felt good. Now, with too much welfare, everybody is lazy.

Melanie Ahyasou

- I surely would like to see the people leave the bush alone so we can live the way we like.
- If they take all this bush the moose will leave and so will the beaver.
- We would bury our dead anywhere.

Basil McDonald

- There were no radios or televisions; in the evening we would listen to the elders.
- Nobody got drunk; there was nothing to drink — no beer, no brew.

Dolphus Ahyasou — age 66

- I surely would like to see the loggers and soil drillers leave things alone. If they take all the trees the moose and deer will go away, so will the beaver.

Edward Rolland — age 54

- We wouldn't want anybody to destroy our land which we were raised on.
- We didn't have all the things kids have today but we were very happy.

Julie Lindstrom — age plus 60

- I lived most of my life in the bush.

Julian Powder — age plus 60

- I wish they [the development companies] wouldn't destroy our land that we lived on for so many years.
- I would like to see the oil companies and the sawmill companies and logging companies have a little respect for traditional land.
- They [the developers] should talk to older people so the older people can tell them what is out there and how we can all share and enjoy it. There is still survival out there.

Victoria McDonald — age 78

- There are too many changes today because there is no religion and people are going into space.
- Everybody helped one another long ago, not so today.
- **Alice Boucher** — age late 70s
- There are too many white people; we can't even go berry picking; women are scared to go by themselves.
- My first [1940s] outboard motor was three horsepower.

Arthur Boucher — age 74

- I never found any arrowheads or artifacts.

Annie L'Hommecourt - age 65

- We lived at Poplar Point; we listened to a battery-operated radio with an aerial [in the trees] pointed east-west.

6. Interviews Transcribed and edited

The following 61 pages give detailed transcripts of the interviews conducted in this study of traditional land use and occupancy. The editors have tried to preserve the reality of the stories while presenting them here in everyday language. The reader should note that many of the interviews were actually conducted in the Cree or Chipewyan language, and while great care was taken by the interviewers and interpreters, it is more than possible that errors of understanding or meaning may have crept into the material here. For these we apologize, and we would direct the reader in such instances to consult the original transcripts and tapes that are housed in the archives of the Fort McKay First Nations' band office in Fort McKay.

The detailed stories of the 67 elders are priceless — and we hope that First Nations children, elders and northern residents will enjoy these first-hand accounts of life in the bush along the Athabasca River north of the Clearwater. The same accounts are important also for all people, including those wishing to undertake projects that may impact on the traditional style of living in the bush.

Edward Rolland

My family and I used to live at Spruce Lake which is 40 air miles and about 60 miles by road or trails from Fort McKay. We were all raised out there. We would stay out there all winter trapping, then in the spring we would come back to Fort McKay. I started school at the age of eleven. We would travel by pack horses and by walking. You could also go to Chipewyan Lakes on the trail we used. Lots of people used the trail. There were a lot of camp sites on the trail from McKay to Chip lake. If we didn't kill a moose on the way we would make the trip in about four days; if we killed something, it would take a week to make the trip.

We lived off the land. We also put in a garden for all our vegetables. We ate moose meat and fish, fresh and dried. We got our fish from Buffalo Lake, now called Namur Lake. There were



Edward Rolland, age 54
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald 16 March 1994

lots of fruit plants: blueberry, cranberry, raspberry and gooseberry all around our cabin and near the trail. We would find some saskatoons, too. We dried a lot of our berries to keep them over the winter. From moose hides we got our mitts, moccasins and jackets. We also had caribou out there that gave us meat to eat and hide for lacing our snowshoes. There always were a lot of animals: bear, deer, rabbit, moose, caribou, beaver, rat, chicken, duck and geese; all this was our food. We used a lot of roots and willow plants for our medicine.

At Spruce Lake there are a few graves including that of my sister and two others; the graves are well marked; we look after them every year.

To make our snowshoes and toboggans we got birch wood from an island or some other place close to water. There were lots of small creeks and small lakes for our fresh water. In the winter we trapped otter, muskrat, mink, squirrel (red), fisher, wolf, coyote, fox (red, cross, silver) and weasel (short tail). The land is very good for animal pasture and there might be some salt licks; I'm not too sure. We used to travel by dog team but now we use a skidoo or go by plane. For all the time I was on the trapline I tracked a wolverine only twice. There is still one old cabin standing and there are ruins of the old cabins beside my new cabin. I remember my mom and granny used ashes for marking when making fancy moccasins, gloves, mukluks and parkas. I also remember dad and grandpa made lumber for sleds and toboggans with a crosscut saw. I helped my mom make moose hides. I surely hope the younger kids learn to make moose hides.

A long time ago there was a cabin about half way to our place for everybody to use but now there are too many traplines. We use spruce for wood for our heat and cooking and to build our cabins. The trapline I'm on is very good. All our medicine we get from roots, herbs and plants. Rat root and mint grass is for our tea. The mint grass is found beside small creeks or small lakes. Rat root comes from the shallow lakes and the muskeg tea is found mostly in the same areas as blueberry patches. Rat root is very bitter; it does not taste very good but it is good for you. We used dry muskeg for baby diapers to keep the baby dry over night or for a long time. Some people use skunk hide to keep sickness away by nailing it on the outside of their home at the side of the door.

Ducks, mostly mallards, lay their eggs at Spruce Lake. Most of the women kept the feathers from ducks and geese for sleeping bags, blankets and pillows. The reason we dry meat is that it is light for travelling and can be stored in the summer. We dried blueberries and saskatoons to keep them for winter; you didn't have to can them. And when you wanted to cook some dried berries all you had to do was put them in some water and sugar after which they puffed out just like they were picked that day. When my dad would go to the store in Fort McKay or in Fort McMurray the things he would buy were mostly flour, lard, sugar, tea, salt, jam, raisins, prunes, rice, baking powder

...they puffed out just like they were picked that day.

— and butter if we could afford it — and always some candy for us kids. We didn't have all the things kids have today but we were very happy.

There are a lot of pipelines, well heads and cut lines all over my trapline now; it makes it hard to trap any more because there is too much noise; machines work summer and winter. I had an agreement with a drilling company about ten years ago. They were to pay me as they developed more areas on my trapline; but they only gave me three payments in ten years. They said they would pay me when they did more work but they didn't, and now they are going to do still more work on my line. It looks like they don't want to pay any more. That was not the deal. That is the reason why we would like to see the land stay so our children could one day live like we did and have a good life. We wouldn't want anybody to destroy our land which we were raised on.

Julie Lindstom

I lived most of my life in the bush. We lived at Moose Lake, Buffalo Lake and Spruce Lake moving back and forth to wherever hunting and fishing was good, summer and winter. My dad and grandpa used to do all the hunting and fishing and my mom, with my brother and sisters, made dry meat and dry fish, and also made moose hide for our mitts, moccasins, jackets and gloves. We got our strong sinew thread from the moose also. We never got jam from the store; we made our own from wild blueberry, saskatoon, raspberry, chokecherry and three kinds of cranberry — bog, lowbush (mooseberry) and highbush. We dried blueberries and saskatoons, and got our syrup from chokecherries. We prepared jam, syrup and dried fruit for packing when we moved from camp to camp and also to keep for winter use. We did a lot of moving around. The way we travelled was with pack horses, pack dogs and packing ourselves and walking. We made our own

*The way we travelled
was with pack horses...*

cabins out of spruce trees; for our windows we would use robin hood flour sacks; there was no glass for windows those days. We used moose hide for hinges on our door, and to chink our house we used moss from the muskeg for the inside, and mud and grass all cut up and mixed into a paste for the outside. For our roof we used small poles with bark from peeled logs packed in between the poles. Then we covered the poles and bark with dirt about six inches thick. From the birch tree we made canoes, snowshoes and sleds. We made our dog harness and horse and dog packs from moose hide. The animals and birds we ate were moose, deer, bear, caribou, rabbit, beaver, rat, chicken, duck, geese, owl, squirrel, lynx, porcupine and many kinds of fish — whitefish, jackfish, trout, pickerel and goldeye. We also had a garden and grew our



Julie Lindstom
born at Buffalo Lake in 1924
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
16 March 1994 at Fort McKay

vegetables. From the bush we got all our medicine from roots, grass, herbs, and bark from different trees, and some also from the lakes.



Julian Powder
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
16-17 March 1994

Julian Powder

A long time ago I came up the river from around the Bitumount area when I met an RCMP officer at Isadore Lacorde's place. They had just buried a body by Isadore's cabin. That is how they did it in the old days because the only transportation was by slow moving boats in the summer and dogs and horses in the winter. Most of the time the RCMP would bury unknown persons wherever they died or were found. I talked to a man here in Fort McKay who said that across the river at the Alsands site there were two areas where old burial crosses were found; those areas have not been touched.

I know more about the land around Fort McMurray. Before the railroad and the highway came to McMurray everybody lived off the land. The land provided meat, fish, berries for food, timber for their cabins and roots and herbs for the sick. People can still live off the land as long as the younger people learn about how to do it. I wish they wouldn't destroy our land that we have lived on for so many years. I want the oil outfits, sawmill and loggers to have a little respect for traditional land. They should talk to some older people so those people can tell them what is out there and how we can all share and enjoy it. There is still survival out there.

I wish they wouldn't destroy our land that we have lived on for so many years.



Victoria McDonald
Born in 1915, 78 years old
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter 16-17 March 1994

Victoria McDonald

We never caused a forest fire although we used to leave fires smouldering. They would never burst into a red flame. Once there was a big grass fire that suddenly went out by itself. Once it was bright daylight and then suddenly dark [possibly an eclipse?].

Old Adam Boucher's dad, Louis Boucher, came from Montreal to Athabasca Landing. Aunt Angelique Boucher lived at Athabasca Landing all summer and at Moose Lake in winter. They took a scow from Athabasca Landing to McKay. The old Bay

store was where Fort McMurray-Athabasca river bridge is now. Louise Boucher bought a small boat and built a house in Fort McKay. There are no salt licks in Moose Lake area that I know of.

*They took a scow from Athabasca
Landing to McKay.*

We had lots of families and there were no serious sicknesses except the bad flu in 1919 that killed many people; at one time, six people were buried in one grave. I was around four years old at the time. I did not get the flu and I kept the fire going. There were many deaths in the Michelle Boucher family. There are 50 graves at Moose Lake. Medicines were found in frog ponds where the moss could be used for making tea for anything.

The Echo steamboat travelled to McMurray. We went with it and stayed in McMurray all summer. We came back to McKay in August and lived on the river by Suncor to pick berries and hunt moose; there were two tents for two families. There were lots of fish. Auntie Mary made dry meat. Everybody came, lived there (Ray Boucher has a cabin there now) and picked blueberries and sold them in town at the McGinnis fisheries. They traded blueberries for food, mainly big bags of flour. We went back to Fort McKay at the end of September. Granny Claire dried berries hung out on a line, as well as drying lots of meat.

We hunted by dog team in the winter. The green frog plant looks like a banana; it is a good medicine for the heart. There is writing on a brown rock by the shipyard on this side of the river. Lots of blueberries, cranberries and raspberries grew on the island. We sold berries for ten cents a pound when one pound of lard was ten cents, bread five cents, a four-pound can of jam 40 cents, a pound of butter 40 cents.

Francis Boucher, Mary Ann Beaver's dad, gambled blackjack to buy food. There was a store in Moose Lake — dad's warehouse. There were lots of horses — everybody had one or two. Dad had about ten horses. Horses had to be moved to grassy areas. There are still some horses around Moose Lake. We went to Moose Lake in the fall by horse. There was lots of hay and we didn't have to put it up; everything used to grow well. My dad made snowshoes out of moose hide or deer hide and birch wood. I know how to do it.

Moise Evans, a travelling salesman in 1992, died last year (1993). When he was fourteen years old he was a good worker. He set nets in Moose Lakes and trapped lots of furs.

In 1942 my grandpa came from Montreal; I don't know his name. All my kids were never sick because they had moss bags. In 1953 the Fort McKay school opened. My husband Philip, the chief, wanted to move the Fort McKay community to Moose Lake but Jack Stewart, the Indian Agent at Fort Chipewyan said, "No". Crees here came from Chipewyan Lake. Melanie Ahyasou's dad was the first one. They wore red scarves around their necks. They were poor, hungry people. Alphonse Ahyasou, Modeste Powder and Jonas Tourangeau lived here. The

rest were all Bouchers. Grandjambe people came from Fort Chipewyan, too.

Everybody lived in harmony because of their religion. Nine o'clock was prayer time every day. We stopped to pray, kneeling by big trees. Adam Boucher, my dad, was like his dad. We stayed on the top of a hill over night and used one horse each to pack the kids across the creek. The horses couldn't cross so my brother and I built a bridge. I sewed and sold gloves for \$15.00, moccasins \$1.50, beaded slippers \$5.00. At Buffalo Lake we had tea dances. At tea dances we traded guns, moose hide, moccasins, gun cases, dogs, sleighs and harness. We came to Fort McKay for a Christmas dance for one week; there was no drinking — lots of fun. We had Players tobacco, not many different kinds. There are too many changes today because there is no religion. People are going into space. People don't believe in God any more. We never had any tornadoes, no storms.

*Everybody lived in harmony
because of their religion.*

There is red clay by Ruddy's place. We used to use red clay to fill cracks in a log house. We set nets and caught lots of fish to dry. We made bear grease and tanned hides. We bought handicrafts.

Tent material was worth 10 cents yard. There was lots of hunting and fishing. The railway fare to Athabasca was \$15.00. Philip Boucher and Hermas Boucher worked on the Echo steamboat. The shipyard was a big place. Steamboats were stored at the shipyards — the big town. Nice flowers and tall plants were planted there. Babies were baptised in Fort McMurray in the church by the Oil Sands hotel. There were rich people in Fort McMurray. Old man Coffee would throw money on the sidewalk for kids. It cost 50¢ to enter a dance hall then.

Harvey, Henry and I were in the mission [school] in Chip. We were so lonesome that we came home. My brothers (Harvey and Henry) could read well. Our first plane scared everybody because they thought it was a war plane. We cried and the RCMP came; we were really scared of them.

There were lots of porcupines then, none now. The store manager told us not to eat too much lard because it was bad for a person's health.

When people moved from McKay they went to live at Moose Lake and Middle Moose Lake. They used a saw to cut tree trunks up and down to make boards. They would sell their lumber, and Philip was well known for his good lumber. I was a good worker; I can still work hard. I would make a hut to store dry meat, putting it up high so that bears couldn't get at it. Medicine from frog ponds could be found near the Syncrude muskeg area and there were lots of medicines around the Syncrude lease. We dried berries by putting them on a plate and setting them outside, or by stringing them with a needle and thread for hanging to dry. We stored them in birchbark baskets. Snowshoes were made of birch, first chopped with an axe

and then planed smooth with a planer. Caribou hide for the snowshoes was trimmed with a sharp pocket knife; holes were made in the wood with an awl starting at the toe part and working towards the heel of the snowshoe. Moose rawhide was used for the shoe. Basil McDonald or Francis Orr would probably know how to make snowshoes.

Philip and Hermas Boucher worked on the Echo steamboat.

In 1956, my husband, Philip McDonald, cut bush with a power saw to clear a road from Fort McKay to McMurray. Philip was the foreman but he didn't get paid very much. Mickey Patterson fished at Mildred Lake and lived there for the summer catching jackfish. Now you can't eat fish from around here.

Everybody used dog teams in the winter. Dogs were so well trained that they could deliver messages by themselves. Susanne Kookan was a dog trainer and she was really good. Dan Latendre lived with Mary Rose Lacorde. He had a store and lived at Moose Lake and Buffalo Lake. Emil Shott was a travelling salesman; he sold flour, lard and baking powder by dog team. Philip Evans, Charlie Evans and Moise Evans came to Moose Lake by horse and sleigh to catch fish to sell; they fished with nets.

Alex Wetigo liked playing cards. Dan MacMillan played the fiddle very well. At Fort McKay, Helen Powder held dances across the river on the reserve and she made feasts for everybody with lots of fun — there were six days of dances between Christmas and New Year's at a different house each night, going across by dog team. My husband, Philip McDonald, Fred Marcel and my brother Henry Boucher would be callers for the square dances. My brother Hermas Boucher would play the fiddle. Joseph Roubiard was a good fiddler too. Everybody helped one another long ago, but not today.

Alice Boucher

Bush berries include cranberry, blueberry, chokecherry, raspberry, strawberry, pincherry, saskatoon, gooseberry and highbush cranberry. Today all berries seem to dry up before they ripen. Berries grow better where they are protected by the bush. The muskegberry looks like a raspberry but it turns yellow when ripe. It tastes like an apricot. Spruce tree roots are used to sew birchbark baskets. Roots from young trees that grow by muskeg are used after being coloured with a dye.

The middle layer of peeled tamarack tree bark is pounded to a powder and then boiled to make a juice for healing cuts. The outer green bark of a poplar tree can be squeezed or chewed to make a juice to stop bleeding. Red willow can be mixed with tobacco to make a "smoke" that tastes good. In this way expensive tobacco can be made to go a little further. Wild strawberry roots were boiled to make a drink for controlling high blood pressure. Muskeg tea cleans the stomach. There are two kinds of muskeg tea. Some kind of boiled spruce bark

peeling is good for a stomach pain, and mixed muskeg tea and rat root is also good for stomach pain. Tea made from peppermint tastes good and peppermint is also used for lynx bait. Tea from the camomile plant is good for sweating out a cold.



Alice Boucher
Born 1 October 1920 at Jackfish lake
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter
16-17 and 28 March 1994

There are 40 graves on the reserve across the river from Fort McKay. Abe's brothers and Helen's family came from Chipewyan in 1938 and lived across the river until 1949. Helen Powder, Jonas Boucher, Alex Boucher, Joe Boucher, Moshom Gegin, Louise Piche, Gegin's mom Josette Cayan are from Fort Chip. Gilbert's mom (Elise) was a Cayan (Cagain).

Diamonds were seen near the Firebag River in a stream coming out of the mountain. Joe Boucher saw them and told my dad, but he couldn't find the right stream again. There is writing-on-stone (white rock) across the river on the other side of Tar Island.

Everybody used to be in good health before a hospital in Fort McMurray was opened in 1958.

On a hunting trip we went past the Firebag and Big Mink rivers to Willow Lake and Otter Lake close to the Saskatchewan border. We went in the fall and came back in the spring. We took rice, raisins, oats, flour, beans, bacon and bear grease with us. Caribou were like cows — lots of them. I killed five caribou at Red Creek past the Firebag River, all by myself, and made enough dry meat for all summer.

Bush medicine included Howard Lacorde's herbs for kidneys. Rat root medicine is used for a cold. For liver ailments, chew or shave the root and mix it with hot water to make a drink.

We made storage houses covered first with birch bark, then with moss, and finally with more trees. Birch fungus is used to transport and start a fire. Dry grass rubbed together will make a flame for starting a fire.

There is a salt lick by the pond at the base of Muskeg mountain.

The best trees for building cabins are spruce trees.

A moose bladder is used for storing bear grease or moose grease and bear gut grease. Caribou leg hide strips, sewn together, are used to make backpack bags. These hide strips are good, too, for making mukluks.

Dry grass rubbed together will make a flame for starting a fire.

There was good clean fresh air in the bush and clean water in the creeks but now some creeks — creeks near Muskeg Mountain and the Firebag River — have so much oil in them that the water is no good for tea.

It took three days to walk with a six dog pack from Fort McKay to the Firebag River.

Dye is made from roots. Knives are made from moose ribs. Moose bones are used to make arrows sharpened by rubbing them on rocks. Fish nets are made of willows knotted together. Undried rabbit hide is used to make blankets by twisting — a kind of crocheting. Duck and goose feathers are used to make rope blankets. Spruce gum is used for chewing. Green spruce gum is good for caulking canoes and baskets. There is red ochre or red mud on the river banks below our house and by an old salt lick. There is also some below Flora Grandjambe's and Maglore Grandjambe's home.

Bush people never got lost. They watched the land and there was good communication by telling each other where they are going to hunt. There were no hunting accidents.

Tea dances were frequent, and there were exchanges of gifts like clothes and guns. There now are not as many ptarmigan, spruce chickens, rabbits, birds, robins, blackbirds, whiskey jacks or ducks on the river. But, there are still lots of beaver.

Tea dances were frequent, and there were exchanges of gifts...

Drums were made from deer hide or moose hide. Mr. Bovier, MLA promised McKay people a water supply when he ran in an election for MLA; they dug a 500-foot well, got gas by the fire hall; a smelly odour came up out of the hole and they gave up...

Billy Loutitt was a store manager until 1938 when his brother Tommy Loutitt took over. There were no white men long ago. The first white store manager in Fort McKay was Mr. Faichney (1948). Eric Styles, also white, with government forestry, came soon after. Now there are too many white people; we can not even go berry picking. Woman are scared to go by themselves because they can not trust anybody. Before, we didn't have to go even as far as the Muskeg River for moose. Now there are too many hunters; it's getting harder to get moose. There is no money in trapping now; we have to pay for gas, licenses and skidoos.

People used to pull boats up to McMurray from Fort McKay. The first motorboat in Fort McKay had only three horsepower.

Recipe for making moose hide: Soak the new hide in a tub of warm water overnight to soften it. Plug or close any bruise holes and any other holes in the hide. Next day, cut holes, three inches apart, around the outer edge of the whole hide and weave moose hide strip or rope

through these holes to hold and stretch the hide on a pole frame. Stretch the hide onto the frame with the hair side down and the head end highest. Using a scraping tool (a skin flesher made from a moose leg bone) take the flesh and fat off the hide. A moose hide pole stretcher frame is tied to two trees the same distance apart as the width of the frame and on a slant to the ground at about 50 degree angle. The frame is made out of spruce rails about four inches in diameter. Spruce is used because it is strong. After all the flesh and fat have been removed turn the frame around. Put the head side up and back leg side down. Then using another tool made of steel or spruce wood, scrape the fur off, starting at the top and working down. Removal of all hair and rough spots from the hide is very important. Scrape in an up and down motion and sideways, with the grain of the hide. Remove rough spots; any that are left will show up in the finished product; this will determine the smoothness of the hide when done. This part is very hard work.

Soak the new hide in a tub of warm water over night...

After the hair, fat and flesh are all removed from the hide, take the hide out of the frame. Cut off the entire outer edge to remove the part that had been used to tie and stretch the hide onto the frame. Lay the hide on the ground on the hair side and work in the following mixture to the entire hide: one moose brain or beef brain, one cup of [sunlight] detergent (or traditional homemade soap) and a half pound of fat. Boil this mixture, let it cool, and work it into the hide thoroughly. Leave this mixture on until it soaks in and dries. You can tell if it is dry when you can spot black outlines on the leg parts of the hide. Then fold the hide into a small bundle and place it in a tub of warm water overnight. Next day, agitate it in the tub of water, or in a stream, for about half hour. The next step is to wring the moisture out by attaching one end of the hide to a tree and twist the hide hard around the tree to squeeze out the moisture. It would be wise to get a strong person to do this. After all the moisture is out, pull the hide by hand from all sides. You need two people for this, one on each end. Grab the hide and pull with the grain, and then directly against the grain. The grain on hides runs back to stomach and head to tail. When the stretch is out of the hide, or when it doesn't give any more, you'll know it is done. Now take your steel or hardwood jack pine scraper and scrape any rough or loose spots off the skin. The hide is now white.

To smoke the hide, now sew it together so as to make a tube, and make it longer by sewing canvas or another hide onto one end — about twelve inches in width and the same circumference as the tube. Dig a hole in the ground and drive stakes in to cover the outer circle of the hole. Build a fire in the hole — not a flaming fire — just a smouldering fire. The best wood to use is poplar or rotted spruce. Attach the top of the hide “tube” to a tree overhanging the fire and place the hide over this smouldering fire. Smoke the hide to a nice tan shade; this should take about half an hour.

One hide will make approximately thirteen pairs of moccasins if they are cut by an experienced person taking care to avoid wastage. The hide of a young moose is good for gloves and

mitts. Older moose hide is better for footwear because of the greater thickness. Today (1994) a hide sells for \$400-500. It takes about four days of work to do a hide from start to finish — four days of hard work.

Bush medicines: Medicine for cleaning the stomach — use peelings of a balsam tree cut about four inches wide and mixed with muskeg tea and rat root. The frying pan plant grows in muskeg, is shaped like a little cup, has yellow flowers and green leaves. Boil and drink the whole plant; it cleans the system, gall bladder, etc. This grows on my trapline in a slough. Moss bags are made of heavier type cotton or light hide. Moss is taken from dry muskeg. Red dry moss is best. Place trees on a slant with the leaves still on. Place the moss on this to dry. Pick enough in the fall to last the whole winter. Clean the moss by removing all stems and roots. Place the dry moss in a bag for storage. Babies never got a diaper rash when moss diapers were used.

Arthur Boucher

I know of lots of cranberry and blueberry in this area and lots of jackfish, big ones, in the Firebag River. There is a salt lick but I do not know where. My dad knew the exact spot, though. Heart medicine is available from a flowering plant that grows by the muskeg and smells good. It grows only in a certain area and it flakes like tea.

In the graveyard across the river on the Indian reserve, there were quite a few graves — the Helen Powder family, Joe Boucher, Jonas Boucher, Louise Boucher, Alex Boucher and the Josette Cayan families. My granny lived across the river on the reserve. Modeste Powder's family were there with four kids. Beliza [Powder], Katherine [Powder] (step-mom), Louisa Powder and Alphonse Powder had a big family. There were around 40 people with five houses all together. There was a store on

the reserve across from McKay, the Alex McIver store. Pierre Boucher ran it and he lived with my auntie, Mrs. Coogan. Mr. Marten was store manager in McKay. Fred Camsell, Tommy Loutitt, Fred [Loutitt], Ted [Loutitt] and wife were there. Mr. Faichney came and lived for

a long time. The store warehouse was built in 1920, my birth year. A fire was kept on all night so we would not freeze. Someone sometimes stole candy from store. My brother Alex Boucher had good credit at the store — he was well liked. My name wasn't good for credit.

*A fire was kept on all night
so we would not freeze...*



Arthur Boucher
Born 20 Feb 1920 - 74 years
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter 16-17 March 1994

The store across the river was just for winter purchases. Pierre Boucher would write in Cree what he sold to take back to McIver. We trapped rats and commuted back and forth. Modeste Powder moved further up and trapped lots of beaver. In the summer, we made lots and lots of dry meat for all winter, and stored it on a high rack. Marianne Beaver's dad (Francis Boucher) had a little pointed knife that he used to drain puss from a wound. Francis Boucher would do this for everybody. He would go all over. Frank Boucher died of headache. Uncle Billy's brother died of internal bleeding and swelled stomach, dying right away.

Muskeg tea is used to clean the stomach and it tastes good. Squeeses, my auntie, a medicine woman had lots of bags of herbs in her house. Beaver castor is good for lots of different needs. There is a stone inside of it but it separates out so it is good for chewing. For smoking you can mix red willow with tobacco and bearberries. Just shave the willow with a knife and mix it in. It smells good and saves money .

There is engraved writing-on-stone at the shipyard. They pulled boats up the river from the fire sign. My dad, Alex Boucher, got \$3.00 a day to pull scows from Athabasca. Narcise Shott bought a five-horse motor. We envied him. My dad had a three-horse motor, of an unknown make, now an antique. Pierre Boucher had no kids and lived with Josette Cayan (my auntie). Bobby Armit's dad was a Cree translator, Pierre Boucher was a Chipewyan translator. He couldn't read labels on the goods in store, so he just pointed. When the store people didn't understand he ran home to get something to show the storekeeper. He understood no English at all, and no Cree, either. Now he speaks very good Cree because it was easy to learn. Father Begin was strong for a small man and could lift very heavy things.

*My dad, Alex Boucher, got \$3.00
a day to pull scows from Athabasca.*

At one place salt water comes out of the ground. It smells bad and you can't drink it.

A moose bladder is good for storing bear grease and moose grease. Twenty-four pounds flour, bacon, lard, sugar, tea were rations for one month. My granny looked after us with only \$10 a month rations. Emil Boucher, Harvey Boucher and I worked for fifteen cents an hour with government forestry on a big fire at Willow Lake area ten miles south of Waterways.

Mr. Hyman came from Jackfish Lake and married my sister Jenny Boucher.

The shipyard was where boats were taken out of the water. The cafe there had \$3.00 meals. The steamboats had a repair shop there for blacksmith repairs. Two steamers docked there for the winter. Nobody was there all winter. I went to the shipyard by dog team to shop with my brother Alex [Boucher]. I went up to Fitzgerald in 1942 as a deckhand on a boat. Jimmy Powder and my brother Alex made \$40.00 a month as deckhands on the Athabasca and

Echo boats. There was a small store on the boat. We weren't allowed on the upper part of the boat; that was only for passengers. That was where the boat staterooms were; the kitchen was on the middle deck of the boat. We got \$5.00 advance money for drink at a stopover. Jimmy Williamson was purser (banker) on the boat. There were twelve men lined up — since we were always broke by payday. In 1942 American soldiers came on a trip to Fitzgerald for eight days. They paid \$180.00 month for the boat pilot. Dad, Jimmy and I worked for three years on the Mackenzie Highway. Lots of people from McKay worked for the Americans hauling pipe to Fitzgerald. Some of them got stuck because they did not know the river route. There were lots of Negroes, but half the soldiers were white. Negroes were not to go into any bars. Negroes got only two beers. They asked us Canadians to buy them beer. American boys were ignorant — thought they were "it". At 6 o'clock, groups with MP on their sleeves marched on the street at the Prairie. Three MPs in a jeep travelled together to gather the Negro soldiers. Lieutenants would look for them. Beer was bootlegged for twenty dollars a case.

I worked for Boyle Brothers Drilling for fifty cents an hour, labour. The SS Graham boat rotted on an island north of Prudency Point. There is no trace left of the real old cabins on the Firebag trapline. Alex Boucher's cabin still stands on Stony Creek. There are lots rabbits, chickens and fish. A government forestry camp is ten miles from my cabin at the Firebag River. I could get there by "trike" in the summer in about two hours. I sold my trapline with one cabin for \$4000 to Hansen last year. Hansen has his own plane business at Fort McMurray. I have never found any arrow heads or artifacts.

Annie L'Hommecourt

Some family history: I was the fourth child of Maurice (Moise) Boucher and Philomine Herman. Elizabeth Piche and Agatha Loutitt were midwives helping Philomine birth me. I was brought up by Catherine Herman. I did not know my grandmother or grandfather. My grandparents originated from La Loche, Saskatchewan. Grandfather died in La Loche; grandmother moved to Poplar Point because her daughter Philomine married Maurice Boucher. Maurice Boucher was born in Fort McKay. Maurice Boucher's father's name is Louis Boucher. Maurice is a brother to Adam Boucher and Jonas Boucher. My parents lived on the west side of Poplar Point, but they lived on the east side at times, too. I never attended school. I married at nineteen years of age to Norbert L'Hommecourt; we had twelve kids with nine still living. Of the three lost kids, one is buried in Fort Chipewyan, one in Fort McKay and the other at Poplar Point, west side.



Annie L'Hommecourt
Born at Poplar Point 15 March 1929,
Interviewed by Cecilia Boucher 6 April 1994
at Fort McKay

I used to make moose hides brought to me by Margaret L'Hommecourt, my husband's mother. To do that, you cut the moose down the stomach area and take the moose pelt off to make into a hide. Then you scrape the hair off with a moose bone made from the back leg of a moose. After that, the brain of the moose is boiled and spread over the scraped moose hide. Then you smoke the hide over a smouldering fire with the moose brain stuff still on. After that you put it in warm water and then twist the liquid out. Then you pull it to stretch it until it dries. You use a strap to scrape off excess rough hide spots to make it soft, then you sew and smoke it with rotten spruce wood. Finally, you colour it with a liquid mixture made from willow bark.

We used powdered red drift wood to paint paddles. We boiled the red drift wood to make the water colouring. Moose horns are used to make handles for knives, saws and awls, also used for gun racks and hat racks to hang things on.

Moose brains taste good with cranberries and moose milk. The milk is taken from the moose which has just been freshly killed, in the spring season. Moose eyes, ears, jaws, noses and tongues are all delicacies and they taste good. Moose teeth are used for necklaces; you boil them for a long time and bleach them, then you bore a hole to take a lace. Moose liver is fried as a steak. Also, from inside the stomach, the 'bible' is eaten raw or cooked. Moose kidney is roasted over an open fire two minutes. Moose guts are fried to make grease. Grease is made from any animal like moose or bear and is stored in a clean moose bladder. Marrow is rendered from all the moose bones. Moose hide is formed to make a dog harness collar with moose hair stuffed in the collar to give it form, strength and a soft surface against the shoulder of the dog. Moose hair mixed with mud is used as chinking to seal the logs in log-built houses.

Moose brains taste good with cranberries and moose milk.

To prepare porcupines for eating, throw the carcass in a fire to burn the quills; peel off the hide and cook the meat. Quills are also used to embroider pointed moose hide moccasins and to apply fancy work to other clothing.

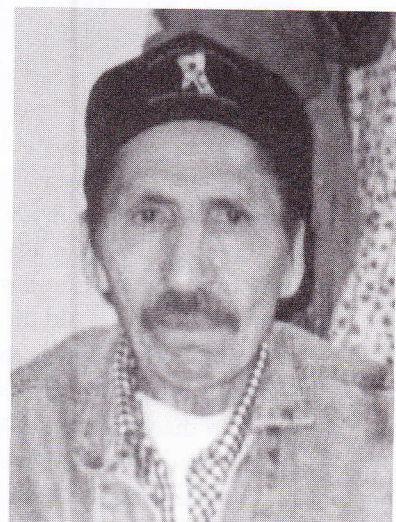
Stories were told about mean, bearded white men, Tho tana shine, to scare children into staying close to home.

Fruit berries of the bush are blueberry, cranberry, saskatoon, chokecherry, pincherry, raspberry, strawberry, muskegberry (black). Highbush cranberries stay on the bushes all winter. Green kinnikinnick, mooseberry, rose hip, bearberry and chicken berry are not edible as a whole berry because they have seeds. But the pulp covering the seeds can be eaten. You boil all these berries and drink the juice. Medicine: Rat root is found anywhere; spruce gum is used for cuts and sores. Meat of the bush is moose, beaver, rat, bear, porcupine, mink, lynx, owl, two different kinds of caribou, duck, all kinds of fish, rabbit, chicken — three different

kinds and one white bird, ptarmigan, migrating from the north. Some fish and ducks are not good to eat. We sold fur, beaver and rabbit for ten cents, squirrel five cents. We also sold mink, otter, lynx — not too many — rats and weasel when white in the winter. There was a wolf bounty of fifteen dollars for the ears and the carcass was given back to the hunter. Our New Year's entertainment was a dance with a fiddle played by Hermas Boucher. Christmas was for going to church. We took a dog team to Fort Chipewyan for the dance. There were dances also in Fort McKay and Poplar Point. We listened to a radio that had an aerial that was strung out east and west. The radio used a big battery worth seventeen dollars. We had a gramophone that was about a half a metre high. We changed the needle and played 78 rpm records.

Willie Grandjambe

As far as I can remember we always lived in the bush and lived off the land at Gardiner Lake. I never forgot what my dad showed me and told me about the bush life. He said it wasn't easy and he was right. We used to kill lots of fox and lynx, and it was a lot of work to skin them, stretch them and turn them inside out. We used to fish in the fall to catch and hang fish for food for our dogs. The way to prepare whitefish for hanging is to poke a hole at the tail end of the fish and to slip a stick through it. Ten fish can be put on each pole. The fish are hung about six feet above the ground to protect them from dogs and other animals. Sometimes we would hang about two thousand. We would do that in about a week or less. Every year we picked a lot of cranberries; there were lots of them around Moose Lake. They are good to eat — very good for your kidneys. My dad used to make bannock out of fish eggs, and that surely was tasty. When you ate some of that you could walk or work all day. It was a hard life, but I liked it; I like hard work; I felt good.



Willie Grandjambe age 65
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
March 1994

I remember my dad making a bear trap. First, he picked a good spot to make a trap. Then, he got two big logs that he pulled out of the bush with dogs. He put one big log at the bottom and then he would lay the other one on top, but he would lift one end up and put a little short stick, to hold it up, with a string tied to the bottom of the stick and he would tie the other end of the string to the bait just inside the pen. He made it so that the bear had to step over one log and under the other. Then the bear would pull or bite the bait. That would pull the little stick out from under the big log and it would fall on the bear and break its back and kill him. That is how you killed bears in the old days. We took fat off the bear and made grease for baking and frying meat, and also for making our soap. To make soap we would mix the grease with ashes then let it get hard. We used the bear hide for a rug or mattress and the meat we ate.

I remember we had only one shack in 1945. So we went in the bush sometimes for three or four nights. We slept under a spruce, sometimes at 50 or 60 below zero, but we were warm. For our bed we used spruce boughs between two logs lying about three feet apart. On top of the spruce we would lay our bear hide to sleep on. We cooked our bannock on a stick by just rolling the dough around the stick and then shoving one end of the stick into the ground to hold the bannock end over the fire where it cooked. We would also put meat on a stick and roast it by a campfire. We made our tea in a lard pail, sometimes using store tea and sometimes with muskeg tea from a berry that looks like a blueberry plant found in a muskeg area. The river water was really good for tea and so was melted snow. That is the way it was then; now the water is not all that good, and the snow looks like you put pepper on it. We killed beaver, rabbit, rat, chicken, fish, duck, lynx, moose, bear and deer, and that is what we ate. We never got sick out there — maybe just a cold now and then — but the old rat root would fix that. But now that I spend most of my time in my home in McKay, I am sick all the time. I never feel good. In the last few years, I have had TB, cancer and a heart attack. That is caused mostly from the food I buy from the store, and maybe because there are too many different people around.

We slept under a spruce, sometimes at 50 or 60 below zero, but we were warm.

When I am here I have to go and see a doctor and get some pills, and when I'm in the bush I do not even take my pills because I feel so good. Everything is so fresh, the meat, water and air, and there are a lot of roots and herbs out there for any kind of sickness. My dad showed me all the different kinds of roots and what they were used for. My dad never charged money for his help when he gave his medicine. All you had to do was to offer him something like tobacco, a cup or a shirt. And when you gave him this he would take the tobacco into the bush from where he had taken the roots, and he would put some of the tobacco back in the ground. That was the Indian way of thanking the spirits for the roots. You have to believe in this Indian medicine for it to help you.

Everything is so fresh, the meat, water and air, and there are a lot of roots and herbs out there

I know where there are some graves including those of my grandfather, grandmother and sister. We used to travel the road from McKay to Moose Lake and Gardiner Lake. There is one place on the trail from McKay to Moose Lake where there is a rope hanging on a tree. I do not know who hung it there but they called that place Hanging Rope. That was on the road to Moose Lake about thirty miles out of Fort McKay. At another place there was an old head of a buffalo sitting on an old stump. So they called that place Buffalo Head, about 45 miles out from Fort McKay. It would take us four or five days to travel from McKay to Moose Lake and Gardiner Lake. We would camp along the way where it was good for wood and water, and also good to set snares for rabbits. If there were no creeks or lakes for water we would make a hole in the muskeg to collect our water. There are some places along that road where I found some old pots made out of copper.

Raymond Boucher

People trapping at Poplar Point have been Raymond Boucher, Willie Boucher, and Annie L'Hommecourt and Norbert L'Hommecourt. Beaver castor gum is used for toothache; it kills the pain the same as rat root. I last used beaver castors about 28 years ago but I still use rat root for colds and stomachache.

Grandmother Catherine Herman made sixteen-foot birch canoes. In the spring before the leaves come out

A sap spout is notched into the tree with one chop of an axe

birchbark is easy to peel and strip. For one week in the spring the birch tree sap runs. A sap spout is notched into the tree with one chop of an axe. A five-

pound pail will fill in an hour. Peeled spruce bark in the spring is used as roofing shingle (as stripped by my uncle Joe Hyman). Celine Island had huge birch trees for bark. Good birch trees for bark are found on islands close to water. They also used birchbark for cigarette papers. Grandfather and uncle Joe Hyman made snowshoes from a birch tree for me. A dog sleigh was given to me by Edward Tripp de Roche; it was made by Boniface Tripp de Roche.

Agatha Angat Loutitt, referred to as a “doctor just for babies” helped deliver me in 1935. My nickname, “Muchee geesigou”, means “Born in bad weather”. My birth date was 17 October 1935 but my registered birth date is 17 August 1934 — a difference of over one year. I was born in Poplar Point, the youngest of six (3 girls, 3 boys). Mother’s name was Philomine Boucher; her maiden name was Herman. There was a Hudson’s Bay Company store at Poplar Point run by Billy Loutitt; they paid 10¢ for rabbit fur and a bagful of candies for a weasel fur. Five oranges cost 25¢. Mail came delivered by horse once a month from Fort McMurray. Father’s name was Moise Boucher. My grandmother, Catherine Herman, fell ill and died at Point Brule. Mother Philomine died in 1941 when I was six. She was buried in Poplar Point. I was brought up by Big Joe Herman — my uncle’s mother’s brother. On the west side of the Athabasca River, opposite Poplar Point, there were four houses — Moise Boucher, Joe Herman, Alex McDonald and Raymond Boucher. There are graves on both sides of the Athabasca River at Poplar Point. On the east side there were four houses: Boniface Tripp de Roche, H.B.C. Dzegun, Pierre Piche and Norbert L'Hommecourt.

In the spring I came to McKay to shop and dance. By dog team the trip took six hours. The elevation got higher as I came south. Sometime I walked to Fort McKay from Embarras which took about 36 hours. I trapped at Poplar Point with Big Joe Herman trapping lynx



Raymond Boucher
Interviewed by Cecilia Boucher 18 March 1994

(\$8.00), fox, beaver, squirrel, rat, weasel and marten. Big Joe found three marten towards Birch Mountain. We used a cracker saw, a two-man saw with two handles, then a swede saw. Norbert L'Hommecourt and I dog-packed in the spring trapping beaver; we got 15 beaver for \$90. One beaver was 74 inches long — not like a river beaver. It was huge — called a blanket beaver. We trudged through knee deep muskeg with no bannock. We had taken 24 pounds of flour, cooked two bannocks, and a bear stole the rest. We lived on beaver meat but were always hungry. Finally we killed a caribou and made dry meat which took away the hunger. Our destination was Birch Mountain, hunting on the way. We left the small beaver, trapping only blanket beaver. It took over a week to get to Birch Mountain. In the spring we sold beaver in Fort Chipewyan and then paddled for over a week back to Poplar Point. Then we paddled up the Firebag River and walked to Big Lake, now Sandy Lake, to father's trapline where we fished with a spoon. We went home and then paddled up the Firebag River. Uncle Big Joe hunted moose on the Firebag River. Granny made dried meat. In August after a bear hunt we made bear grease and went back to Poplar Point in September to harvest potatoes from uncle Joe's garden. We bought two sacks from Mike Budinski at \$2.00 a sack. At the end of October we went into the bush to catch fish for the dogs; sometimes 2000 fish were used to feed the dogs in winter. We fished on the east side of the Athabasca River not too far from Point Brule. In the winter months we trapped for family and dogs. One spring the trapping season was closed for beaver but one beaver was sold illegally to Mrs. Reid at Embarras Portage. We lived on dry meat from moose, bear, beaver, caribou, rat, fish and fish eggs. Fish bones were boiled to make good grease. There were lots of berries of all kinds. Father made blueberry pies like bannock.

One beaver was 74 inches long... it was huge — a blanket beaver.



Flora Grandjambe
born 1923, Fort McKay
Interviewed by Cecillia Boucher 24 March 1994

Flora Grandjambe

To make bannock: use ten pounds of flour, two pounds of lard and baking powder.

Squeeses' grandmother was the midwife at my birth. I had six brothers, four of whom are living. Two boys passed away, Edward and James. One older sister died. Three younger sisters, Rosa, Mary and Katy died. My mother was Mary Rose Kookan (maiden name), called Rosine. My grandmother, Susanne Kookan, never married. She had three children: Rosine Kookan, William McDonald and Philip McDonald. Archie Simpson and family used to live here and so did Moise Boucher before moving to Poplar Point. The Crees — Orrs and Ahyasous — were accepted into the band by Adam Boucher. They used to come from Chipewyan Lakes and camp at Targets. Louis Boucher, Joe Boucher's dad, used to live here as did Mary Rose Waquan's grandmother. She was married at

McKay to Petelie Whitehead. All those people spoke Chip and Cree.

In winter, we moved to Moose Lake. In the spring we came back and lived here all summer. The life in Moose Lake was good. We had good food: moose meat, fish, ducks, rabbit, beaver meat, chicken, rat, dry meat and dry fish. Everything in the moose was good; meat, heart, liver, head, eyes, jaws, tongue, nose and kidneys. New Year's and Christmas were spent out there at Moose Lake. Father went to Fort McKay to buy oranges, apples and sugar.

*The life in Moose
Lake was good.*

We had fish: whitefish, jackfish, and grayling in Namur Lake. Buffalo Lake had trout. It was the only place for trout. We ate myriah liver and fried fish eggs. Myriah was found at the narrows between Buffalo Lake and Moose Lake. Fish were caught by net. Twine for making the nets was given out at treaty time. Trout were caught by ice fishing hooks. We bought tobacco, matches, shells, buckshot shells and powder to refill the shells. Shells were never thrown away. We had a big family. We got rations: bacon, salt, sugar, lard, dry beans, tea and tobacco from the Indian agent. Rations were given out whenever you were short, about once a month or so. The chief went house to house to ask what was needed in the way of repairs. There were two good chiefs, Michelle Cayan and Old Ajune's husband, Pierre Piche. Sammy Rolland and Adam Boucher were chiefs too. Jack Stewart was an Indian agent. He spoke good Cree even though he was a white man. George Sutherland was the druggist in Fort McMurray.

Once, when I was small, I went outside for wood and found Mom was screaming from the middle of the lake. There was a deer and she had no shells so I took an axe and ran into the narrows. I didn't feel the water. The deer went into the bush. I followed him. Then I slapped him and held him down. Mother threw an axe to me and I hit him on the neck. We killed him and took him home. The deer wasn't even heavy. Mom fried the meat. When the (men) trappers got home they said an injured deer got away from them at the deer crossing. James followed the deer but it still got away. James came back empty handed and was angry saying I scared it away. Uncle Ulm was happy for the meal and they all teased James saying his sister did a better job at deer hunting.

Moose hide is good for moccasins, gloves, vests, mitts and wrappers for dog sleighs. I never learned how to tan hide. Mom and dad tanned the hide. Deer provided meat, jackets, vests, etc., but it is too thin for moccasins. The berries at Moose Lake are cranberries, mooseberries, blueberries and kinnikinnick berries. Auntie fried fish eggs and mashed them with kinnikinnick berries. Father knew all the roots and herbs but he never passed his knowledge on to me. He used birchbark, saskatoon trees, roots of all kinds, evergreen flat-needed trees, sharp high-bush cranberries, roots of chokecherry and saskatoon trees which are all good for medicine. Rat root is boiled to make a medicine for a sore chest. Mushrooms (fungi) growing on willows was smoked for incense. It was used before you touched medicine.



Emma Faichney (and Ian Faichney)
 Birth date 1934, May 28 at Fort McKay
 Interviewed by Cecilia Boucher 25 March 1994

Emma Faichney

Marianne Boucher was my mother's name. Felix Beaver is my father. Mother's midwives were Helen Shott and her mother, Angélique Boucher. Marianne Boucher was born at Old Fort on August 12, 1911. She was one of thirteen children but all the others died. She spoke Cree and Chip.

Felix Beaver was born in Wabasca on 10 April 1900. He understood Chip and spoke Cree. Two of his brothers and one sister are still living. The younger brother (73 years old) lives in Wabasca and the other in Gift Lake. His sister lives in Whitewater, Slave

Lake. Father was fourteen years old when he left home and travelled north to Fond du Lac. He returned at about thirty to thirty-three years of age. On the way home he stopped here and found Marianne all grown up and so he married her. That was in 1933 and they lived at Jackfish Lake (Richardson Lake) in the willows.

I was married at twenty-one, in 1955 by Father Turcotte in Fort McMurray. We lived at Bitumount for four years. Ian was a watchman for three years. We made moose hide once. Christmas for us was a prayer service at midnight Christmas eve. Mother always saved every bit of moose hide for survival. She also made bear grease. Cranberries kept well in a big box holding about one thousand pounds. Mother made dried fish with whitefish. We ice-fished for suckers with a net in the cold early spring. Around August father killed bears for grease and mixed it with berries to store away. People were very busy. What we ate was fresh. There was no pollution. We camped and picked berries across from where we lived: mooseberries, strawberries, raspberries, saskatoons, chokecherries, highbush cranberries (picked in the fall), pincherries, gooseberries, and just casual picking of blackberries grown in muskeg.

Christmas for us was a prayer service at midnight Christmas eve.

There were medicines of all kinds. There were roots for heart medicine — root (apsis sagewaskoos), for women menstruating - (mistisagewas), and for sores balsam tree gum boiled with lard or grease. For infections, tamarack bark was boiled and the white part peeled off and put on as a poultice. This “draws out” the infection. There was penicillin for the bad disease, syphilis. The penicillin came from the roots of nettles which were boiled to make a tea. Father made the medicines. He also boiled little bundles of minty flowers for treating kids' fever and bad colds. A tea (la

The penicillin came from the root of nettles which were boiled to make a tea.

tea) was made from peppermint growing in wet areas; when mixed and boiled with muskeg leaves it made the patient sweat. This was good as drugstore medicine. In those days there was no smoking or drinking, but some old people drank homemade brew at New Year's. The brew was made from sugar, prunes, apples, raisins, barley and yeast cake. Mother made moonshine by boiling the brew. The steam that came out was moonshine — it was so potent it could be lit on fire.

Father trapped beaver, fox, wolf, muskrat, weasel, mink and lynx. When I was a young girl there were no lynx or flat-tail deer (white-tail deer). There were only mule deer. Barren land caribou came around 1951-1952. There were thousands all around Fort McKay. People took advantage of them and killed just for tongues or just for fun. Woodland caribou are found around Birch Mountain and Poplar Mountain. I have two fresh moose hides in the deep freeze. My son Roger has two already. Dogs were important. They were used for transporting packs in the summer and for pulling sleighs in the winter. Mooshum Peterson made a boat with lumber. Some people made boats with birchbark. A Swede made a Chipewyan skiff. Margaret Peterson is buried in Fort McMurray. Ian was born in Wabasca and moved to Fort McKay when he was thirteen. Harry McDonald and Harvey McDonald wrote in Cree and Chip. Since mother passed away I speak very little Chip. The same is the case for my daughter. Father drowned in the Athabasca River.

When the [oil sand] plants opened it was good for jobs but it still ruined our country. We won't have fish or berries to eat. The animals will be unfit to eat and we won't be able to drink the water. Our lifestyle will be different. We'll have to live like whites. I worked twelve years at Suncor, two years at Syncrude and raised ten children. I now have a granddaughter. We moved to Fort McKay when the children were old enough for school. I did a lot of bead and embroidery work to sell moccasins and mitts. Mother made birch wood snowshoes. The birch trees are now drying up. The old days were healthier days — tough but healthy.

When the plants opened it was good for jobs but it still ruined our country

Mother used bear gut for grease. All used containers were washed and kept. She never threw them out. In the summer, meat was smoked or dried to keep it in good condition. My grandfather was Francis Boucher. Mother had two uncles, Antoine Boucher and Modeste Boucher. Uncle Modeste is buried in Fort McMurray and all others are in Fort McKay. Mother's mom is buried at Janvier. Francis's sister, Marie Boucher, married Michel Cayan. Michel Boucher was her brother. I lost a baby on the trapline and brought it back to McKay for burial.

Maggie Poulin

I lived most my life in Fort McMurray, but I did move around some, too. I remember staying at Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Chipewyan as a kid. Bringing up kids in those days was hard. I



Maggie Paulin
Age 84 Interviewer - Fred MacDonald
25 March 1994

remember we used to catch a lot of fish with a net. The net was made by the ladies. We made dried fish. This is the way we did it. When we checked the net for fish the only ones we kept were the ones that were still alive. The dead ones were for the dogs. We brought them back to our camping spot. There we would clean them. When we took the guts out we would take the fish fat to make grease. The rest of the fish we would cut up for drying. We would cut from the tail right next to the back bone leaving all the bones in the fish. Then we would cut them cross-ways about one half inch apart. After that we would dry and smoke them for about two days in a smoke house. Then we hung them out on a pole to dry in the sun and wind. It was a lot of work. We had to take them in at night so the dogs wouldn't get them. We also had to get wood for the smoke fires — not just any kind of wood. We got willow from around the lakes or rivers. I remember one time my husband tried for three weeks to get a moose. He finally got one, and we were okay again for awhile. Then he went hunting again; this time he killed three

moose. That is when the work started — cutting it up to dry the meat. First, we gave some away; then we made a drying rack. After that we made grease from the bones. Then came the hard work of making the moose hide. This is how to do it. Put water in the hide and fold it up leaving it like that over night. Then stretch it out on a square frame and flesh it with a moose bone. After that, turn it over and scrape the hair off. Then cut the hide out of the frame and lay it out on the ground in the sun. Rub it down with a moose brain paste and let it sit like that for two or three days. Soak it with soap and water to get it very soft, then wring it out by tying it in a loop and putting two poles through it for two people to twist the hide with one going this way and the other, the other way, until the water is all out. Then make a big fire. Start drying and stretching it with two people at each end pulling it apart every three inches from top to bottom. After reaching the end, start over until it is dry. Then nail a piece of flat strapping on a tree, up and down, one nail at the top and one at bottom, and feed the hide through, grabbing each end and pulling it back and forth. That helps to soften it and it also takes the rough spots off. When this is done, sew the hide up like a long bag. At the top and bottom sew on some old hide or canvas. That is to get a tight fit. Then dig a hole in the ground about eighteen inches around for a fire. Use rotten wood to make dark brown hide. Stand up two poles over the fire and tie the hide to them, then smoke it for four hours. That is how I made a moose hide.

First, we gave some away; then we made a drying rack.

I also remember a long time ago when I lost my first husband, I had to go on welfare at that time (1943). I got twenty-five dollars a month. I had to pay my rent from that which was five dollars a month, and my wood was four dollars a load. That left me with sixteen dollars for

grub for me and three kids. Some times we would go to bed early just to save some wood. We got a lot of 50° - 60° below-zero weather. I would make moose hide moccasins and take them to the store to sell. I would get a dollar a pair, then I would buy more grub. Fifty pounds of flour was one dollar and fifty cents and a twenty-five pound bag was seventy-five cents. Ten pounds of sugar and a twenty pound bag of rolled oats was seventy-five cents. Four pounds of jam cost one dollar. My kids would say "Let's go on a picnic" and we would go out and roast some hot dogs and maybe some spare ribs and sit around the campfire. So I asked them "Is that what you call a picnic?" I guess I picnicked most all my life. I remember the forestry ranger used to travel all over by canoe in the summer and in the winter by dog teams. We used to make syrup from birch sap. It surely tasted good. We used to pick berries to sell for ten cents a pound.

Mary Tourangeau

We collected blueberry, cranberry, mooseberry, saskatoon, blackberry, pincherry and chokecherry as berries and birch tree, spruce, tamarack and willow for other things. Bush medicine uses spruce gum and bear grease for sores, cuts and infection. Powder from a dry dark mushroom (a puff ball) is rubbed on open sores and cuts to reduce infection.

There is a salt lick by Cecile Island. I know where to find it on a map. You have to go on land to Cecile Lake first.

Father Begin was a teacher in 1949. I didn't speak English. Edward Tourangeau's dad lived at Muskeg Lake and raised his family there. Edward made a return trip to Fort McKay. The Tourangeau family lived in Fort McKay all their lives. Uncle Joe's

cabin is at Muskeg Mountain. There are diamonds, sparkling and shiny, coming out of the mountain beside the stream. There is a salt lick by Shelley Creek.

There are diamonds, sparkling and shiny, coming out of the mountain beside the stream.

There is a lot of rat root at Muskeg Lake. Chewing rat root is good for stopping coughing and relieving colds. The water found near the cabin has poisonous gases and there is tar in Muskeg Lake. A moose womb has potato-sized, round knobs. You can take them out and cover your eyes with them to prevent snow blindness. Johnny Orr did this after his dad told him about them. My trapline in the Muskeg Lake area has moose, deer, lynx, rabbit, coyote, wolf, marten, fisher, fox, squirrel, wolverine, weasel, rat, beaver and otter. There are no skunks or groundhogs. There are jackfish in the lake but there are too many trees to fish. There are loons and ducks. There is red mud on the river bank by Flora Grandjambe and Maglore Grandjambe's place. A salt lick is located by old McCally Lacorde's place but it smells bad,



Mary Tourangeau
Born 27 Sept 1943
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter 17 March 1994

especially when it is windy. In 1960, one hundred dollars worth of groceries used to last from September to Christmas for a family of four. The grocery list was flour, sugar, baking powder, butter, salt, jam, syrup, peanut butter and cases of carnation milk. We washed diapers every day with a washboard. Modeste Powder had a vision that if Mrs. Cayan didn't leave Tommy Loutitt, she would become blind. She didn't leave and she became blind. One of Armas Boucher's family or friends in Chip got bitten by a rat and died. Cree medicine was suspected. Children fished for chubs after school and fed them to the dogs but nobody does that any more. There is a lot of tar coming out of the ground in certain spots on my [Alice Boucher's and Mary Tourangeau's] trapline.

Boys would gather together and play their fiddles and guitars outside on nice days and evenings. We used to have a lot of dances. Every second night at James Grandjambe's we moved the bed and tables aside to make room to dance. We used to pick berries at the Targets. Freddy would pee on the blueberries so they had to quit. We weren't allowed to swim in the river because it was too dangerous. Tea dances were held at Gabe Orr's. We traded guns and jackets.

There are diamonds on our trapline. Limestone occurs across the river. There are salt licks in two places. One of them is on Mary's line. It never freezes and there are a lot of moose. The other one is by the third cabin. There is a pipe coming out of the ground and the water is salty. There is some gas in the area, so the company quit drilling. There are fewer and fewer rabbits and lynx, but a lot of beaver.

Mary Jane Boucher

I don't know my birth date. Herman Boucher, my husband, was born on 15 September 1910. Moise L'Hommecourt was my dad. Mother was a Boucher. I was raised at Poplar Point. I married in Fort McMurray when I was twenty-six years old. I lived at Moose Lake before there was a school. Then I moved to Fort McKay in 1949 so that our kids could go to school. All nine kids were born in Fort McKay. Three passed away at birth. There were a lot of moose in that area. We lived mainly on moose meat. I made a lot of moose hides in my life time. It is hard work. There were a lot of fish in the river. I made a lot of dry meat and dry fish. I stocked up enough for dog feed for all winter. No other families lived at Poplar Point, just us. There were a lot of blueberries and cranberries. We planted a lot of potatoes

We planted a lot of potatoes and stored them in a cellar for the winter.



Mary Jane Boucher
74 years old, born in Fort Chipewyan
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter 1994

and stored them in a cellar for the winter. Just myself, my brother Norbert (L'Hommecourt) and my sister, Adeline Tripp de Roche lived there. Rat root is good for all kinds of ailments but I don't know much about medicine. There is [old] writing on stone, on white rock at some point on the same side of the river as Fort McKay, but I don't know the exact spot. I haven't been on the river for a long time.

Moris (Louise) Boucher was Adam Boucher's dad. Moris Boucher spoke only French when he came to Fort McKay. My husband, Hermas Boucher, told me stories about him. In the 1940s, fur from beaver was worth forty dollars, lynx one hundred dollars, squirrels ten to fifteen cents and then up to three dollars at the end. Things were cheaper in those days (1940s). We made handicrafts. We got three dollars for slippers and ten dollars for fully beaded mukluks. Life was hard. We had to keep a fire going all night to keep warm. We had to have warm feather blankets. Today things are easier in some ways, but the kids need their education more. They can't live off the traplines as there is no money in it. They have to depend on outside jobs.

Johnny Orr

I lived in Moose Lake. When I was ten to twelve years old we moved to Fort McKay for school. Sammy Rolland, Archie Ahyasou, and Big Joe Ahyasou's brother all moved to Fort McKay for school. Father Begin was the teacher in the old church. Mrs. Faichney and Joe Mooney were teachers also. I have trapped for twenty to twenty-five years in the Moose Lake area. I trapped mostly beaver, lynx, rat, fox, squirrel, fisher, weasel, otter and coyote. James Grandjambe, Albert Grandjambe, Philip McDonald, Gabe Orr, and Sylvester Ahyasou also trapped there. My mom's dad's grave is at Moose Lake. Adam Boucher lived there. There is a big graveyard there and some of the graves have ten bodies. They were buried like that because of the flu in 1919. At Little Lake there is one grave and behind the cabins there is another graveyard.

There are a lot of berries and whitefish, jackfish and trout. All three lakes are good for fishing. Namur (Buffalo) Lake also has graves around it. Moose Lake is Gardiner Lake. The area all over is good for moose. Rat root is used for colds and coughing. My dad made birchbark baskets in which to keep and carry berries. Small canoes were sewn with roots. We would mix red willow with tobacco to smoke in a pipe. One drop of skunk juice in hot water was used for the flu. We would add a bit of sugar or mint tea to enhance the taste and sweat out the cold. Skunk juice came from the sack of the skunk. We would put some of this juice in a can and hang it outside the

We took five dog teams to get a lot of fish for dog food.



Johnny Orr Born 10 Oct 1936
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter
28 March 1994

house to stop sickness from coming inside.

There are three cabins at Birch Mountain. Michelle Boucher's cabin is halfway to Moose Lake on top of the hill. From Fort McKay it is two days to Moose Lake by dog team, and two hours by skidoo. We took five dog teams to get a lot of fish for dog food. It was a better life in Moose Lake. Albert Grandjambe lived at Big Lake. Philip McDonald and Adam Boucher's family lived at Middle Lake. William McDonald, Sammy Rolland, Archie Ahyasou and Big Joe Ahyasou lived at Small Lake and we lived nearby — a half mile away.

My mother is still living. She was baptized 97 years ago when she was more than an infant so she may be older than that. She is still healthy and her mind is still good. Tea dances were held every year and they included trading a gun or moosehide jacket for a hundred dollar bill. If you got a gun you had to shoot one shell to thank the person who gave you the gift of a gun. Everything was free at the tea dance. There was no drinking. We smoked pipes and offered something on the fire for the spirits. Dad had a peace pipe. I don't know where it is now. Somebody made Moise Orr's grandfather's pipe. Modeste Powder, Alex Boucher, Jonas Boucher, Mrs. Cayan, Tommy Loutitt and Alphonse Powder's family all lived across the river.

Beaver castor has gum in it. It tastes like beaver castor for awhile but after awhile it is good. When we were selling it we put stones in the beaver castor so it weighed more so as to get more money per beaver. There are a lot of moose in the Muskeg Lake area —over twenty moose were taken in the last year. Moose Lake is a bigger area. There were no sicknesses long ago, just that big flu in 1919. The snow was just yellow. The sickness came from somewhere and the people believed that the war had something to do with it. They thought there was a poisonous gas in the air.

Celine Lake has a salt lick and there is another across from the Moose River. A six inch pipe sticks out of the ground. Three miles north of Fort McKay, on the Fort McKay side of the river, there is writing on the limestone. I know the exact spot. Dolphus Ahyasou knows where it is too. It is on this side of Ells River.

A dog could pack sixty pounds easily. Everybody had horses. There may be some horses still by Sammy Rolland's trapline area. Edward Rolland has that line now. There were over forty horses in Fort McKay. Sammy Rolland, Adam Boucher, Archie Ahyasou are all Moose Lake people. Paul Ahyasou, William Ahyasou and Roy Rolland have Archie Ahyasou's old line. Old Big Joe Ahyasou's brother was Archie Ahyasou. They lived all their life at Spruce Lake but must have first come from Chipewyan Lake. There was a store at Buffalo Lake (Namur Lake). The store manager was Dan Latendre. He was a fur buyer and he sold groceries. Lard was five cents per pound, a five-pound sack of sugar was twenty-five

*A dog could pack
sixty pounds easily.*

cents, two hundred and fifty pounds of flour was fifty cents, tobacco was seventy-five cents per tin, chewing tobacco was five cents, bib-type coveralls were seventy-five cents and runners were twenty-four cents. I would steal from my dad. I didn't speak English when I moved to Fort McKay. The writing on stone between Fort McKay and Ells River shows a lot of names and dates engraved with a knife. I could find it easily.

A lot of people died within ten years in Fort McKay but most didn't die of sickness.

Eddy Boucher

I am the son of Hermas Boucher. I trap on dad's old line 2195 now known as 65. I trap at Willow Lake, the smallest lake of the three Moose Lakes. I have trapped lynx, beaver, muskrat, squirrel, mink, otter and fisher. I think the river on my line is the McKay River. There are a lot of moose all over — not just in certain areas. There is a salt lick along the river and ponds. It took three days to get to the trapline from Fort McKay with dog packs and dog teams. I saw a lot of grave sites at Moose

It took three days to get to the trapline from Fort McKay with dog packs and dog teams.



Eddy Boucher (and Marie Boucher)
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter March 1994

Lakes. I lived in Chip Lake for four years. I didn't like it there because there was no work. The people in Chip Lake still live straight off trapping. Logging outfits paid three dollars for a person with a power saw, logging, twenty dollars per day, but there was no money in the 1980s. Four or five families still live at Chip Lake. Noskeys, Nanotch, Orrs and Yellowknee have nice log houses built there. I took a house-building course. I trapped all the way down close to High Level when I lived at Chipewyan Lake. I trapped all the way down this side too. I have seen the way to here and Fox Lake by skidoo. Now it takes me only one day to get to my trapline by skidoo which is about one hundred miles. There are a lot of berries beside Moose Lake, the first lake. I don't know too much about berries as I never picked much. There's still a lot of fur, but white men are taking over — the Newfies. I know one white guy who has his own treaty card. He must be an Indian from a long way back I guess. His name is Don How. Andrew knows him, too.

My dad didn't know any medicine so I don't know any. I've heard that skunk oil is good for colds. I don't know of any graveyards or grave sites other than those at Moose Lake. I have never heard of any writing on stone. You should talk to Clement Powder from Calling Lake. He knows a lot about a long time ago. He is related to old Modeste Powder. He used to work on the boats from Athabasca Landing. He speaks English but I don't know if he is still living. My wife, Marie Boucher, can make moose hides.



Gilbert McDonald born 30 May 1946
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter
31 March 1994

Gilbert McDonald

Dad's trapline later was Ted Boucher's. Ted was paid off by Syncrude where 41B Syncrude is now, up to the 24th baseline from ten miles north and five miles west of the Athabasca River. Ted Boucher got the money. There was always exploration all the years — Jimmy Boucher would know. I got a lot of moose and trapped a lot of beaver, otter, lynx, squirrel, weasel and rabbit. The rabbits ate spruce. The spruce were barely two feet high. There were a lot of prairie chickens. I don't know any grave sites. There used to be dugouts that people lived in. People would build a roof over a dugout on the side of hills by Beaver Creek. There are a lot of cranberries in the jack pine area. The blueberries are in the poplar area. Raspberry and saskatoon berries are found along Beaver Creek.

There used to be dugouts that people lived in.

Muskeg medicine is found in dry muskeg sites. It looks like alfalfa sprouts. The roots are used (chewed) when they are dry. I used muskeg medicine myself. Raphael Cree gave me some. You have to pay for these medicines with tobacco or some other gift. Rat root is for coughs or colds. Muskeg willow medicine is for weight loss. It looks like saskatoon willow but is shorter — about four feet high. You boil the willow and drink the tea for weight loss. I have never tried it. I know from Billy Joe Tucarro that skunk oil is for colds. A mixture of roots is used for different ailments. For a bad cold the muskeg area orange and green leaves are used, and so is rat root and peppermint. Bark from four spruce trees with blisters (balsam fir and others) is boiled to make a drink for colds. Puff balls are used to stop bleeding. They are found in a spruce area along the McKay River. The first layer is taken off a red birch tree and cut into pieces three or four inches long that are boiled and steeped. This is good for diabetes. Red birch doesn't grow just any place. It is scarce. All medicine plants are hard to find. They are protected by spirits. I learned from different elders from all over with a lot of interest because of my sickness. I was on sixteen pills at one time but now I use only traditional and spiritual healing.

I don't know of the writing on the stone. It may date back to 1942 when soldiers went through. Dad's trapline was a nesting area for sand cranes. They would come every summer and nest in the muskeg. We lived beside the Muskeg River and fished for dog food for all winter. It was whitefish mostly. We had dog teams to travel to the trapline. We went to Saint Paul around 1963-64. I was the first student in Keyano in Fort McMurray. I took a heavy equipment mechanic training course and got my ticket. There were horses in Fort McKay. Gabe Orr, William Ahyasou and Archie Ahyasou hauled logs with a team to build houses. William hauled wood with horses. Adam Boucher used horses to pack meat out of the bush.

The horses were healthy. In the winter the men moved them to where there was grass so the horses would survive the winter better. Dad and mom made birchbark baskets, canoes, toboggans and snowshoes. They split the birch with a wedge and axe, and planed it smooth. The wood to be used for the front or head part of a sleigh was put in boiling water to soften it so it could be shaped. I've got some of dad's tools including his knife sharpening tool. Mom died in 1987 and dad in 1989.

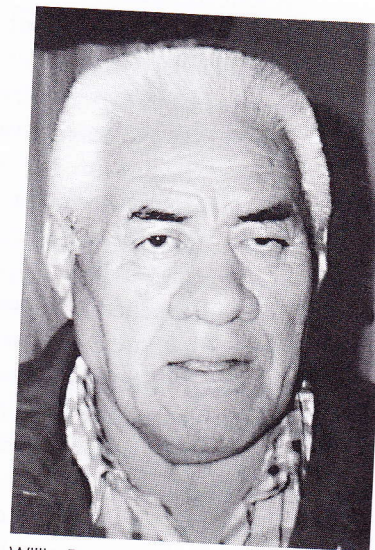
I have fished for suckers on the McKay River after the ice break up but you can't eat fish out of the rivers now. We boiled fish heads for a delicacy and smoke-cured the body parts. There is a salt lick at Narcise Shott's place. There is one salt lick on the west side of the McKay River and another north of Celine Island. The Shotts were our neighbours on the second bend up river between Beaver Creek and Celine Island on the west shore of the Athabasca River. Going to the trapline on land was shorter than going on the river. We used dog packs in the spring. In the fall we hung fish for dog food.

Willie Boucher

Moise Boucher, my dad, had trapline 2297, across from Suncor. I moved to Fort McKay from Poplar Point in 1964. There were a lot of rats at Rolland Lake. Grant Golosky and Ed Cooper had the line before. There are two cabins — one on the Steepbank River and the other by the Steepbank River, seventeen miles into the bush. There were a lot of people all along the river to Chipewyan. There was a Hudson Bay store at Poplar Point. Billy Loutitt was the manager. He sold groceries and bought furs. We trapped rat, fox, lynx, beaver, otter, weasel and squirrel. There was a lot of fur. Rats brought five dollars. One hundred dollars was a lot in those days. A hotel room was only \$2 a night.

I don't know of any medicinal herbs, just rat root for colds. Bob Grant used to give skunk oil to his kids every day. He said it was good medicine. There are a lot of fish: whitefish, pickerel, sucker and jackfish. At Rolland Lake there were a lot of woodland caribou and buffalo. There are still some today. There is a lot of wild meat: moose, caribou, and rabbit.

The Embarras store was run by Mrs. Reed. Mr. Gunner moved in with her after Mr. Reed died. He had a trapline nearby and Bud Pelton bought it later. There is no store there now. Mother died when I was twelve. Dad raised us. All my brothers and sisters and dad lived at Poplar Point. Father Begin would come to Poplar Point every winter to baptize the kids and say mass, staying for a week at a time. Father Begin stayed at L'Hommecourts while at Poplar Point. I paddled up to Fort McKay only once. It was three days paddling from Poplar Point



Willie Boucher
Born 1931, Poplar Point
Interviewed by Bertha Ganter 31 March 1994

to Fort McKay. I would use a sail when there was a north wind. My first motor was an Evinrude four-horse. Then I got a nine-horse Johnson. I sawed wood with a crosscut saw but when swede [hand] saws were first brought in they seemed as good as a power saw. People got along better then. It was a lot of fun at the New Year's dances at Poplar Point when people gathered from Jackfish Lake and Fort Chipewyan. Ben Marcel's and Fred Marcel's family came from Jackfish. Fred and Billy Danials were callers and Tommy Loutitt played the fiddle.

It was three days paddling from Poplar Point to Fort McKay.

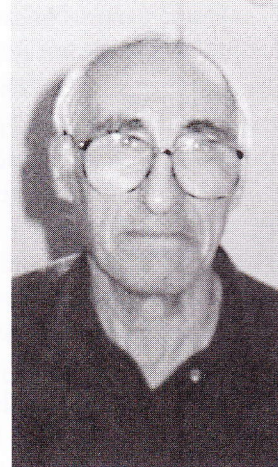
I know there was a salt lick on my late dad's line but never I saw it. At Ted Boucher's cabin there is an outhouse nearby. I saw it five years ago. Raymond Boucher has that line now. There are a lot of berries at Poplar Point. There are a lot of blueberries, a lot of bears, and a lot of lakes around there, but no more rats now. We never got lonely at Poplar Point. Life was good; we lived off the bush. My old Granny Piche would sell rabbits to me for dog food. About six families lived across the Athabasca River from the Poplar Point reserve. Theodore's house roof got blown off by a strong wind or whirlwind in the 1940s. I go to Moose Lake from Poplar Point to see relatives. It takes two days from Birch Mountain Tower by dog team. The men would go — the women stayed at home because it was our relatives, not theirs, that we were visiting.

The graveyard at Poplar has my mom and dad, Philomine Boucher and Moise Boucher. It has my brother and sister, too, and a lot of old people. Point Brule has a lot of people in the graveyard. In 1986 a big fire went through but it went around the community — the same thing happened at Moose Lake. They must have been holy people to be saved like that. I heard there are two graves on Ted Boucher's trapline. Surveyors found them and left that area clear — I know which area it is — they left about one acre untouched. I've heard of diamonds across the river. Alex (my dad) told me about them but I don't know where they are — perhaps near the Firebag River somewhere. I've heard there are some diamonds by the Birch Mountain, too. Grandpa Jonas Boucher told me about them. Jonas Boucher, Moise Boucher, and Adam Boucher are brothers. A lot of fish were netted at Moose Lake and Charlie Boucher would spear them with a hay fork. In 1942 some American soldiers went through Poplar Point. Some stayed all summer. They gave candies to us kids.

Ernie Lacorde

My parents were Isadore Lacorde and Mary Rose Lacorde; my grandfather was Jonas Tourangeau and Elizabeth Tourangeau was my grandmother. I had a trapline since I was seventeen. I trapped with dad and dad trapped all over. Where you had a chance to go, you just went. The trapline is now Tp 96, R11-R12 and part of R13. You would trap anywhere in those days in the 1930s. It was hard to get a dollar those days. There is medicine in trees. With black poplar you take the bark off and scrape the next layer. You then chew that material and apply it to an open sore. After three or four days the skin goes brown and the sore

heals without leaving much of a scar. We used a stove. We bought pails and also made pails out of birchbark but we could not boil water in the birchbark pails. I just know of burials in Fort McKay. I heard they found two grave sites on the Alsands lease. There is a stranger, somewhere from the south, buried at Willow Island three miles north of Fort McKay. Isadore Lacorde lived on the east side of the Athabasca River near Willow Island at about mile forty. There were no government fish and wildlife people then; only one forestry person and one RCMP. If you caught a fox and wanted to sell it, the storekeeper said, "Go to town, get a two-dollar trap licence from the RCMP". I went by dog team to get my licences in Fort McMurray. I had the best



Ernie Lacorde age 74,
born Fort McKay. Interviewed by
Fred MacDonald and Terry Garvin
22 March 1994



Lulu Lacorde

Go to town, get a two-dollar trap licence from the RCMP.

line in the world with beaver, coyote, marten, fox, lynx, otter, fisher, red squirrel, bear, wolf and skunk. I saw a wolverine only once in my life, in the winter of 1993-94. Skunk used to be worth a dollar and a half. Mother used to use skunk oil mixed with water — it turns yellow — for bad colds and for itchy skin. [Drink it and/or apply it.] My auntie, Mrs. Shott, used to nail skunk on the door of the house to keep the germs out. There are blueberries all over. There are highbush cranberries across the river from Fort McKay.

I found bones in the ground near my dad's home and I found a piece of birchbark there, too. The bones were yellow and an old fashioned axe was found with them. I am quite sure there are graves just west of Fort McKay about half a mile. We will walk there after the snow is gone. I have four cabins: two at Tar Creek, one at Johnson Creek and one north of Tar River.

There is writing on stone near the shipyard. At Tar Island, the writing on the stone is covered by tar. There is writing on limestone at the junction of the Ells and Athabasca Rivers and one and one-half miles south of the Ells River on the east side of the Athabasca River. More writing on stone could have been where Syncrude is now — at the lower camp. There is more below Fort McKay on black rocks near the Ells River. I saw it about five years ago, on the same side as Fort McKay. Ernie Lacorde's, Pat Shott's and Roderick Shott's names are on rock on the shore of the Athabasca River near Daphne Island about eight miles north.

Viola Lecorde

I was the oldest, then my brother Alex McDonald. Viola was the third child. Susanne Cree, father's mother was probably the midwife for Elise. Father (William) used the "McDonald"

photo
not
available

Viola LACORDE born 8 Dec 1929
in Fort McKay AB interviewed
by Cecilia Boucher March 1994

name because his father was John McDonald from Fort McMurray. Mother's maiden name was Elise Cayan. There were nineteen children in the family. Mother Elise was born 2 August 1904, probably in Fort McKay. Elise's mother's name was Marie. Elise's father's name was Michelle Cayan. Elise had a brother Gabriel. Elsie, the youngest, died in the Fort Chip convent at age twenty-five or twenty-six. Her belongings were sent on a steamboat from Fort Chip to Fort McKay. I remember grandfather Michelle and Aunt Elsie. Mother Elise died in December 1987. Father William McDonald was born 16 June 1898 and died 4 June 1989. William had a sister Rosine Grandjambe and [a brother] Philip McDonald. William's mother died alone in the bush between Birch Mountain and Fort McKay. She was on her way back to Fort McKay when she got sick. It was in the winter. Before it was called Birch Mountain it was known as Seth li A. She camped in a spruce area where Michelle Boucher usually camps. Michelle was passing by when he heard a dog bark and found Suzanne sick. He went back to get a dog team

with his son Emile Boucher and together they took Suzanne Cree back to Fort McKay where she died. Brother Alex and I cried when she left Moose Lake. She used to live alone in a shack. She used to make us rabbit skin blankets. She skinned rabbits and while the skin was still wet she tied the skins together. She first cut them in half making two pieces from one rabbit skin. She would braid the rabbit skins and hang the braid across a long stick. In the winter she'd leave it outside to freeze so it wouldn't dry out. The braiding had to be done wet. The braiding was done by interweaving one braid along side another braid. The blanket was warm. It took a lot of rabbits, maybe two to three hundred, to make one blanket but there were many rabbits.

She'd have moosehide mattresses with the hair still on. Sometimes she used bear hide. She had a lot of fur of all kinds. She used bear hide for blankets. She used to make rabbit snares with thread (fishnet thread). She made birchbark baskets. She'd go to a birch tree, make a notch on birchbark and catch birch sap in four one-gallon cans. From that she made three pounds of syrup after boiling the sap all day. She used to make laundry soap with ashes and grease by boiling them together in a thick kettle. Mother left the kettle at Moose Lake. [See original hand-drawn map of Moose Lakes region.] There are a lot of fish in the narrows of Moose Lake where it never freezes. In the winter you could catch fish there any time.

From that [sap] she made three pounds of syrup after boiling the sap all day.

One sister died in the fall. Aunty Rosine baptized her Elsie. Mother miscarried when she was two months pregnant.

Emile Shott had a little store there. The ranger's yard had a lot of cranberries. We walked five miles from the small lake to get to Buffalo Lake. In Chip it's called *De Tan tuwe*. Translated, it would probably be called Geese Lake. Grandpa used to get eggs from the lake which is now called Namur Lake. They were eggs from sea gulls. They were clean eggs. Granny used to have *sheltu kula* [probably chewing-plug tobacco]. She'd cut it with a pocket knife and put it in her pipe and smoke it.

We never went hungry. We had moose meat and cranberries all winter. In the spring we'd pick cranberries when the snow melted. We had ducks and geese. Tea, flour, baking powder, sugar and lard were all store-bought. Every Sunday mother gave us two candies each. She'd hide the candies in the bush, dug down into a hole, somewhere that only mother and father would know. She also stored dried prunes and apples there. There were a lot of blackberries (*gea zena*) that were put on a plate in the fall to dry in the sun. They were boiled and a little sugar was added and then they were put on the plate to dry. In the winter, when you boiled them, they were like fresh berries. We had a lot of dry fish and a lot of dry meat. In the spring when the frozen meat began to thaw, mother made it into dry fish and meat. This had to be done or the meat would go bad. Pemmican was also made. She'd make a fifty pound flour sack full of pemmican [*acheese* in Chip]. She'd also make Indian popcorn from moose fat [*Eka jane* in Chip]. We had nine or ten dogs. Mother used to make a dog pack in the spring from young moosehide. She would flesh the hide, take off the hair and dry it, and then put dry meat inside. She also made moose rope.

Moose Lake to Fort McKay took eight or nine days in the spring and it was the same thing in the fall when going back to Moose Lake from Fort McKay. The trail was well travelled and clear. Father had a horse that got stuck in the muskeg and died. The horse was named "Tweet" and he was like a person. He would come running when called. I would cut his bangs and tail. He was sorely missed. When the muskeg froze over father was able to investigate the muskeg. He found the horse and covered it with spruce boughs.

The horse was named "Tweet" and he was like a person.

Father used to make snowshoes and sleighs from birch. Sleigh wrap [la carryall] is made from moose hide. One sleigh could carry five hundred fish or up to five hundred pounds. Five or six dogs could pull heavy loads (five hundred pounds or more) to Fort McKay from Moose Lake. Father would use five dogs. My brother had five dogs, too. The sleighs could hold half a moose. Only moccasins and rubbers were worn except for dances when nice slippers or mukluks were used. At Christmas and New Year's we wore our best parkas and long gloves made from moose hide trimmed with beaver fur. Pelajie, Helen, Gigin, Alice, Jonas, and Catherine Boucher all knew how to sew. Coogan and Elise McDonald and Beebeegis lived on this side. The house had a shelf for a coal oil lamp. If there was no coal oil a candle was used. The walls were covered with paper. Flour sacks were used for curtains. Victoria's house burned down when the men were out trapping. The fire left nothing. My uncle came back

later to find the house burned but he was glad that Victoria was alive.

Mother would use both flannelette sheets and moss for diapers. Diapers were washed immediately. They were never left dirty. For moss diapers, mother would use a tarp to bring moss home. It was dried on trees behind the house. Peppermint stored in a sugar sack smelled good in homemade tea. For cuts or sores mother kept spruce gum — the leaky, soft gum — in a can. For toothache she used boiled rat root. The longer you boiled it the stronger it got. The fungus that grows on willow branches was good for an earache. You could pick it and boil it before putting it on a cloth, or you could use it directly by putting it into the ear in warm water. For colds we would boil water, sugar and beaver castor. People never got colds except at New Year's dances when they would sweat and go outside to cool off, getting a chill.

A thick bough cover on the floor makes it soft to sleep on. A spruce bough tent floor covering is changed twice a week. Mother never threw out old moccasins. She used to peel red willow and boil it until it made a wine colour. Then she washed the old moccasins in this coloured water to make them soft after which she mended them. Mother never wasted anything. Flour sacking — the one-hundred pound type that was checkered blue, green and red — was used for the fabric to make good curtains and dresses. Mother taught us how to sew. If it was not sewn right we'd undo it until it was perfect. Father looked after his things too. His tools, etc. were off limits to all, and his permission was needed before you touched anything.

Talking was not permitted during meals; you might choke. When visitors came you kept your distance from the visitor and you were not allowed to speak. When making bread it was set in the morning and left to rise all night. Once in awhile the fire was re-stoked to keep the bread dough warm so it would not fall. It was baked the next day. Bread wasn't made very often, but it was good. Mother made bannock with fish eggs. In the summer, bannock was always made outside on an open fire. My mother used a sewing machine to make our tent. (We still have the 1904 sewing machine from mother's mother that was a wedding gift from Elise's mother to Elise.) The total cost of the tent was ten dollars. The canvas was thirty-six inches wide. One bundle of tarp was bought that was about one metre high and two metres wide to make a large tent. Dog packs were also made from canvas and moose hide. Mother made fish nets in two different sizes: large and medium for whitefish and pickerel. No small fish were caught.

Talking was not permitted during meals

Mother would roast owls. There were many owls. Mother would shoot them with a ".22". Fat owls tasted like turkey. She stuffed them with dried onions that came in cans, soaked first, and then mixed with bannock. Geese were stuffed the same way. We had rice, and a lot of oats and beans that came in a gunny sack. Beans were soaked before bedtime. Salt pork also came in a sack and it had a lot of meat. We boiled the beans for hours. They were our potatoes. Everything was homemade. Sweaters weren't homemade though.

We had homemade feather blankets. A large sack was stuffed with moose hair and used as a mattress. The bed — made from wood — was only for our parents. Moose hide that was dried in the fall was used for mattresses. Father cut the moose hide in half and the girls used one half for a mattress, the boys the other.

I remember Edward and Tommy, my younger brothers. There was an older sister Agnes, then Alex, Viola, Tommy, Edward and then Eva in 1934. After Eva, Tommy, Jean, Sarah and Mary were born, about one year apart. After Mary, another girl died at two months. A year later another girl died at two months. Mother lost twelve children. Edward died, probably from TB, in Moose Lake. He was buried in Fort McKay. Another two- or three-year old girl also died. Three are buried in Fort McMurray, one is buried in Moose Lake and the rest are buried in Fort McKay. In the spring, a brother nicknamed Lilloo had his foot run over by a bulldozer. There was no possible way to get to Fort McMurray. The foot got gangrene and he died from the poisoning.

There were a lot of birds. Large flocks of snow birds would colour the ground white. There were many grass birds, with different coloured throats and with all-black bodies. The ground was totally covered with a black moving cover. There were many robins. The spring would bring many bird songs. Moose Lake was good with beautiful sunsets (*da gene*). Loons would sing with their songs reverberating around the lake — in the early morning, too. Another bird had a sound of bells in his throat. In the Chip language it sounded like he was saying “I’ll come back to you”. Marshes had pink, white, purple and yellow flowers. There were many bumblebees, too. There were many mice and we would poke holes in the ground to flush them out. We’d try to snare them. There were many chipmunks and squirrels were all over. Ernie Lacorde used to kill three thousand squirrels before Christmas. Felix Beaver would kill that many too. Ernie used to beat all the trappers for squirrels. They were worth fifty cents each.

In the Chip language it sounded like he was saying “I’ll come back to you”

A half bag of candy was five cents. In Fort McMurray, when the hall opened, adults paid fifteen cents, kids five cents, and the dance hall was twenty-five cents to get in. At the first showing of movies at the hall many people ran out. They were scared. It was black and white and ghostly.

A telegraph wired the news of the first plane to arrive in Fort McMurray. Joe Shott was hired to tell the news and at 2:00 pm the plane flew around Fort McMurray. The women were frightened and ran into the bushes, including Mrs. Golosky who related this story to me. The plane landed in the Snye. A few men were there, including Walter Hill. The men tried to tell the women not to be scared. Uncle Golosky had the first radio. He connected it to an aerial on a pole and when he turned up the volume Mrs. Golosky ran away again. The same

thing happened with his record player but he had to go back to the store to learn how to operate the player and change needles too.

James Grandjambe

When I was thirteen my dad took me out into the bush and showed me how to make my living off the land: how to hunt, fish, trap and what to do when I killed a game animal. For example, he showed me how to dry the meat and take some parts of the body that we needed for working tools — the leg was used to make a scraper for scraping the flesh off the hide. We took everything from the belly. The stomach was used for bags for carrying water and dry meat. The brains of the moose was used for tanning the hide. From the moose hide we would get mitts, footwear, jackets, dog harnesses, rope and moose hide bags for packing. One time my dad and I went into the bush to hunt moose and go fishing in September — the month



James Grandjambe age 73
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
21 March 1994

that the moose start to run [for breeding]. You could call a moose right to your camp. The fishing was good then. We were just staying outside by a camp fire and it got cold. We moved into a shack but it didn't have a stove, so my dad said he would make one. He cut a hole in one corner of the shack with an axe and then he put four poles right up to the roof, standing up and down. Then he put some poles crossways about six inches apart. Then we got some bunches of long hay. He put them up and down, over one, under the other, all the way up. Then he mixed mud and water and smeared it on all three sides. The back was left open all the way up with a small opening in the front. That was our stove. Our window was made out of flour sacks. There was one time my dad said to me, "There is a creek just over the hill, let's go and kill some fish". I said "Okay". Then I wondered how he was going to kill them. We got to the creek. He said, "Let's get some logs". Then he started to make a dam. He put the logs right across about three feet high, then he made a big long box out of poles about four feet wide and ten feet long. He put it at the bottom end at the centre of the dam, then he chopped an

opening right in front of the box and made some kind of a ramp up to the front of it. Then we put spruce boughs in front of it to hold the water back. With the trap finished we went back to our camp for about an hour. When we got back to the creek, the box was completely full of whitefish. So that is how we fished without hooks. We had a lot of fish to eat, but no bannock, so he made bannock out of fish eggs. Boy, were they very good! That is why I'm not afraid to say there's a living out there and a good one too.

A lot of times when we stayed in the bush over freeze up we had to use pack dogs, and we also walked and carried a pack on our backs sixty miles to Fort McKay. After freeze-up we used a dog team for the rest of the winter. When we went to the trapline we had no cabin to camp in. We slept outside by a camp fire. The only roof we had was the sky and stars. But we never

slept cold or got sick. After the trapping was over, sometime in June, we would go back to Fort McKay just in time for treaty days. We would stay around for a few weeks, meeting and telling stories with all the people that came from all over the bush. After that it was back to the bush for another year. At treaty days we got a lot of food and things we needed: fish nets, three kinds of shells, rope and canvas to make tents or teepees. We never got any fancy food, just flour, lard, salt, salt pork, beans, tea and blankets. Also, before everybody left, there was a tea dance.

We all moved back to Fort McKay because the kids had to go to school. If it wasn't for that I would still be out there. The school was good for the kids but it was hard for us older people. It was hard to make a living staying in town. The welfare payments made everybody lazy and very poor. Everybody now seemed to be sick all the time. When we lived out there (at Moose Lake) we were always happy. Everyone visited each other and when anybody killed anything everybody got some—not like today when everyone is “cheap”, even your cousins, and nobody visits any more.

We all moved back to Fort McKay because the kids had to go to school.

The living could still be good if they would build a road out to the Moose Lake area. The people did not die as much those days as they do now. Too much junk food is no good, you do not know what is in it.

Buffalo Lake got its name after three or four hunters from Fort Chipewyan came hunting south up the Birch River following Birch Mountain. There they saw buffalo tracks and followed the tracks right up to Buffalo Lake which, in later days, was called Namur Lake. Anyway, the buffalo all went to the lake and were never seen after that. The hunters went all the way around the lake shore but didn't find any more tracks. That is how the lake was named. I remember some women gave birth summer, fall and winter on the trail out by a camp fire. After two days they were back on the road. The woman and her baby never got sick. They did not need a hospital or a doctor to have a baby.

Moose Lake probably got its name from some hunters. I guess they came to this lake and saw a moose eating by the lake so they called it Moose Lake. When the people take the timber, they take our way of life with it. They not only destroy the bush, they destroy the feed and feeding areas — areas where we get our roots and herbs. I used to drink the water from around here and make tea. It used to taste so good but now it makes you sick, even the water from the tap in the house. I remember when I used to get ready to go into the bush. I had to get everything I needed for the winter. You made sure you didn't forget anything because there were no stores in the bush. I remember my dad making a bear trap out of logs. It was a death fall when a bear got in. He was dead and not going anywhere. I remember my dad telling me how they killed rats in the old days. They used to set a net made from moose hide rope. It was about four feet long and maybe about three feet high. They would set it in a rat drain or (runway). This runway led from the rat house. What hunters would do was to go

and hit the house so the rat would run away — down that runway right into the net. All they had to do then was to hit them on the head with a stick. They would skin them, eat the meat and sell the fur. The way they stretched the furs was to get some small willows and bend them into a U-shape and just pull the rat hides over them. They did this in the bush so the rat hides were light for packing back to the main cabin. There they would put them in water and stretch them properly on a good rat stretcher. The rat meat they would boil or roast on a stick over a camp fire. You cut a stick that looks like a fork with the rat stuck on one end and the other end pushed into the ground so the rat was suspended over the fire. I remember when we were travelling through the bush sometimes we would not have anything to eat, so we would look for big white poplar trees. We would take the bark off such a tree and then scrape the inside white stuff off and eat it directly. There are a lot of poplar trees at Moose Lake on the east side of the lake.

..we would look for big white poplar trees.

My dad said that my grandpa told him in the old days, when one of the old people died, if he was a medicine man they would set him up by a tree and they would leave him with all his things: gun, food, clothes, tobacco and matches. If he died in a house, they would leave him in there. They would never go back to that house. He just told me about it; he never told me where.

We never got hungry out there around Moose Lake. That area between Long Lake and Moose Lake has a lot of blueberries and cranberries, as well as moose, deer and bear. I know a guy can make a living in the bush yet. To make a bear trap put two sticks in the ground about fourteen inches apart standing up and about five feet apart. Then put two more sticks in standing upright. That would be the front. Then build three walls five feet by five feet and three feet high. After that put one log in the front in between the poles at the bottom and then put one more log on top of the one laying down. Leave one end up and put a twenty-inch stick up under the end that is left up. Then tie a string to the stick holding the one end up and tie the other end to a piece of meat and place it at the back of the pen. When the bear pulls on the meat bait string the log will come down on his head.

They don't catch fish in a box any more. They fish with a net. To do that they take a net at each end and pull it across the narrows between Little Moose Lake and Big Moose Lake and the fish swim into the net. Then they pull the two ends together like a big bowl and the fish stay inside and they can be forked out into a boat. Bannock is made with fish eggs. Mix flour and baking powder and a little bit of salt all together. Put some water into a bowl. Put the fish eggs into the bowl and mix it all up to a hard mix and put it in a pan for cooking or cook it on a stick.

We moved back to Fort McKay so the kids could go to school. That is why we could not go back to the bush and trap, fish and hunt. We had to stay around home to help the women

with the chores, cutting wood, getting water, killing rabbits and maybe moose, too. We had to keep a fire on all night in the winter time to keep warm. Sometimes we would go into the bush for two weeks and do some trapping or hunting. We could not stay any longer. We had to get back home.

Annie Ducharme

I trapped over forty years south of Sled Island on the east side of the river. My late husband and I lived there summer and winter. We made our living off the land. We ate the wild meat and picked berries. We used moose hides for all the things we needed to survive in the bush — mitts, parkas, jackets, gun cases, knife cases, small bags and also dog harnesses. We got our thread from the moose. It was sinew and was very strong. I remember my mom used moose hair for her fancy sewing work, making flowers on slippers and jackets. She used to draw the flowers by using dye from berries, willows and some willow roots. We also used porcupine quills for our fancy sewing. Mother would colour them the same way as the moose hair — we would get our willow from around the rivers and lakes for dyeing our new moose hides and re-dyeing our old, faded moose items, too, so they looked like new again. We would scrape the bark off the willow, then boil what we took from under the bark to make the dye. A lot of times — if we ran out of tobacco — we would go up to the jack pine area and pick some small red leaves. That was kinnikinnick, better known as bearberry, and we used it for our tobacco.



Annie Ducharme age 68,
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
March 1994

I would dry meat so we could keep it longer and make it lighter for packing if we had to go some place. We did a lot of moving around to where the hunting and fishing and berry picking was good. We also got our syrup from birch sap. After we collected the sap we would boil it until it turned yellow. Now and then we would add a little sugar to sweeten it. I made all of our own jams from the berries we picked — blueberry, raspberry, cranberry, and saskatoon berries. I also picked chokecherries and I would crush them by pounding them. Then I dried them. I also dried saskatoons for longer keeping. I used some of these dried berries in my bannock for special days.

We never went to the store very much — just to get supplies which were mostly flour, lard, baking powder, sugar, salt, rice, beans, shells and snare wire. I would make our soap using fat from moose and bear with a little ash from the stove — soap for the dishes, clothes and everything else. I also made blankets out of rabbit skins. We would sew them all together. We would tan caribou hides so they were safe and I would also tan wolf hides for blankets. I would leave the hair on. For our mattresses, I used moose hair. The older folks would use moose hide to build their teepees and tents, and they would use spruce boughs for the floor.

When we ran out of tea we would make some muskeg tea out of labrador leaf found in muskeg areas. I used to make my own clothespins out of willow by splitting one end about half way down.

We never went to see a doctor when we were sick. I got medicine from the bush and from around the rivers and lakes. We would all get our medicine from the bush. The most common medicine was rat root. For heart trouble we would pick a certain small plant in the fall after all the leaves fell. This plant grew in sandy areas to about fourteen inches in height. It had light blue flowers in the summer time. For appendix problems, there was a plant that grew along the river banks. It's about twelve inches high and brown in the fall when we picked them. For a chest cold I used to get some balsam bark, mix it with rat root, boil it, and then drink it. It was also good for asthma and for [breathing].

We never went to see a doctor when we were sick...

When we travelled the river we had to paddle or use a sail if it was windy. Sometimes we would have to track the boat by pulling it from shore with a long rope while another person stayed in the boat to steer it.

I surely would like to see this country stay like it is — with no more logging or oil drilling. It used to be so good in the old days but now everything is polluted, even the small birds are dying and so are the fish. The water is not fit to drink any more. When I was trapping I used to get beaver, rat, squirrel, mink, weasel, fox (red, cross, and silver), coyote, lynx, marten, fisher and otter. All these furs were sold for money to buy stuff from the store. We got all of our meat to eat from the land in those days. Now you have to watch what you eat and where it lived.

There are only two graves that I know of and I'm not too sure where they are. It's been a long time since I saw them.

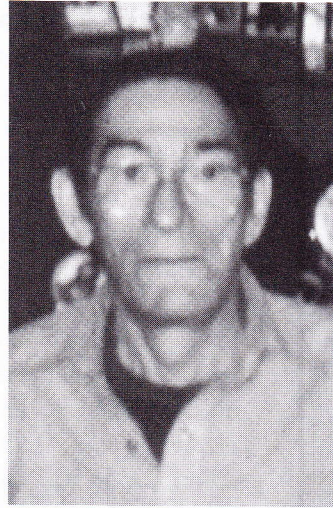
William Ahyasou

I don't really remember too much about the times long ago. I was sick too much, but I will try. I remember when I used to live off the land. We always had a lot to eat. We would go and kill our meat (moose, deer, bear) and then we would dry it. We picked a lot of berries, and some we dried. I remember that nobody got sick as much as today. We used to kill ducks and chickens. One thing I would like to say is that the people are not the same as they were a long time ago. They are not as friendly. We used to visit a lot. We never had shoes like we have now. If we didn't make moose hide for our moccasins we would have nothing to wear. Also, we never had rubber boots. We would walk in the water in our moccasins. We used to make our own soap out of wild animal fat. We cut it up and rendered it, then put it in a pot with some lye that we got from the store or we would use the ashes from the stove or campfire to

mix with the fat instead of using lye. There were no bags so we had to make them out of birchbark. They were called birchbark baskets. I remember that to

We used to make our own soap out of wild animal fat.

make them we would use birchbark, and for the thread or string we would use roots from small spruce trees that grew in the muskeg. We would put our berries and dry meat up on a cache that was a platform built high up in a tree for storage. We did a lot of moving around those days. Everything was done by walking and pack dogs. Sometimes we used pack horses, but we still had to walk. We never had mattresses. In those days we used straw and wild hay, and it was very warm. We made horns from the birchbark to "call" moose. The time to call moose was in September.



William and Alice Ahyasou
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
March 1994

When we travelled by water in a boat we had to paddle or pull the boat with a long rope. In the winter sometimes I had to sleep outside when I had no cabin and no tent. I would remove all the snow and then put down some spruce limbs for a mattress. It didn't matter if it was 40° or 50° below, we were always warm. I remember my mom used to make bags out of swan hide and the carrying pouch of a pelican. To make a bag from a pelican my mom filled it up with moss so it would stretch and dry that way. We could carry water with it. We made our own lumber for the floor of our birchbark toboggans using a crosscut saw. We would saw the tree while it was still standing. One thing we never did was to kill something for nothing. We only killed when we needed some meat and we used every last piece. Another thing I would like to see is the younger people talk with their elders about how to make a living in the bush and off the land. In those days, we went to the store once a year and that was it. As long as we had salt, tea and flour we were okay. Everybody worked hard those days and we felt better, not like now. Now there is too much welfare money and everybody is lazy. We got all our medicine from the bush. Nobody was sick very much but sometimes we needed a rest. I remember we didn't have much for light — only candles or a bitch light. A bitch light was made from grease and a rag rolled up to form a wick.

There are moose on my line but no graves that I know of.



Melanie Ahyasou
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
March 1994

Melanie Ahyasou

I will tell you as much as I know. I was raised at Spruce Lake. I remember how we used to travel mostly by walking in the summer and by dog team in the winter. The priests used to come by dog team all the way from Wabasca and Chipewyan Lake every year. They would stay two or three days and baptize our kids. All of our baptism papers were burned in a fire so we don't really know how old we are.

When we killed a moose the work really started. We dried all the meat and got all the things we needed from the moose to tan the hide. A bone from the hind leg was used for taking the flesh and fat off of the hide. When that was done we turned the hide over to take the hair off. We used to make

...and they came with one or two pack dogs to carry the meat home.

our hair scraper out of a big metal file by hammering it to shape it. We stored our meat in the fall so the bears wouldn't steal it. We built a log shed about eight feet by eight feet with no windows. We put in a floor made out of poles. After the meat was put inside, we covered it with tree logs to keep the bears out. When we killed a moose in the summer we would ask everybody to come and get some meat and they came with one or two pack dogs to carry the meat home. We never left any meat to rot. Now, getting back to the moose hide making — after scraping the hair off you laid it out in the sun. We rubbed the brain of the moose into the hide using grass. Then we folded it up and put something heavy on it to hold it down. Another thing we used to soften the hide was the soap made from moose fat and ashes.

We almost never got sick but if we did we got medicine from the bush. We used roots from plants, willows and trees. We had medicine for the heart, kidneys, colds, stomach, burns and even toothache. We could cure almost any sickness that came. Rat root was the most important root. It was good for everything. I would surely like to see the people leave the bush alone so we can live the way we like and the way we were raised. If they take all of this land, the moose will leave and so will the beaver, and those are just some of the things we live on. We used to get wood from the bush by packing it on our back or dragging it under our arms. We did this every day. Also, we would get water from the river and creek, or sometimes we would dig a hole in the muskeg for water.

I know for sure there are graves all around Moose Lake but I don't remember exactly where. We would bury our dead wherever convenient, and then when a priest came he would go and bless the grave. It didn't matter if it was one or two years later. In the old days the people prayed a lot and never worked on Sunday. The kids were not their own boss until they were

twenty or twenty-four years old. Before that they would have to ask if they wanted to go somewhere and tell their parents what time they'd be home. If not, they would get a good licking or a strapping.

We ate a lot of bannock in those days. We would cook it on an open fire in some kind of a pan — sometimes in a cast iron frying pan — or we cooked the bannock on a stick. Just about any place was good for hunting and picking berries. I can't mark on a map where the hunting and berry picking was good — it was all good!

Basil McDonald

I remember the old trail to Small Moose Lake and Big Moose Lake. About half way there was a lake we called Long Lake. People would camp there for days to hunt and pick berries. I remember that old Albert Grandjambe had a cabin there and another one along the road to Gardiner Lake. We used to put fish away for the dogs to last all winter. We would leave in September to go and hang fish for our winter supply. Sometimes we would hang about two thousand fish. All of our fish nets were handmade, mostly by the women, but sometimes the men would make them too.

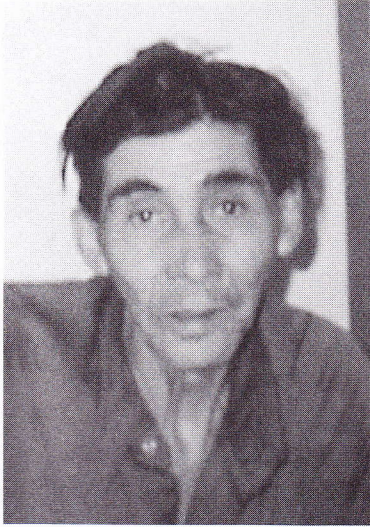
We fished in the creeks between the lakes. We would put about three nets across the creek and they all would be full three times a day. We cleaned our nets every two days. Some people built some kind of a dam and right in the centre they made an opening where they built a fish box. That box would fill up three times a day. They would shovel the fish out of the box with a homemade fork. I remember the game warden used to come and show us where our trapline boundaries were. Everybody worked, from the old people to the young kids. Nobody sat around. There were no radios or TVs in the evening. We would listen to the elders tell stories about every little thing they used to do and where they lived and how they worked. That is how I learned so much about the country and how to make my living in the bush and off the land. We didn't have a swede saw in those days, just an axe. We cut all our wood and built our houses with that. Nobody got drunk. There was nothing to drink; no beer, no brew.

When we moved with horses, the kids under six years old rode the horses. The rest had to walk up to ten miles a day and most days we walked about five miles. Most of the kids did not go to school then because they had to go to the bush to make a living with their family. Some old timers cannot read or write. But they were very wise and very smart in the bush. They didn't need a map. They went by the sun by day and the stars at night.

They went by the sun by day and the stars at night.



Basil McDonald
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
March 1994



Dolphus Ahyasou age 66,
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
March 1994

Dolphus Ahyasou

I remember when we used to move to Spruce Lake in the fall. We hunted all the time — every living day. If we didn't hunt moose, it would be rabbits or chickens or ducks. We never had many cabins in those days. Mostly we had a big tarp and we would make a teepee as we went because we didn't know where or when we were going. We went where there were moose or rabbits and water. In the late summer, when the berries were good, we would move to pick berries to eat and dry for the winter. In September we would hunt moose so we could store some meat for the winter. We had to dry all of our meat so it wouldn't spoil. After we dried it we would build a little shack we called a cache. It would be about three to four feet in height and maybe four feet square. We put all of the meat inside and then closed it up. Then we would put some hay on top. After that we would chop a bunch of trees down and put them on top of it so the bears

*We hunted all the time
— every living day.*

couldn't break in. When we killed a moose or a bear or deer we never left anything. The things we didn't eat we used for something else. From the belly we would make bags for berries or dry meat. It even held water. Every thing had to be dried first. Even the bones were used, some for making moose hide and cleaning the fur.

A lot of times we would camp out with just a little tarp and sometimes not even that. That is when we would use spruce to make a lean-to shelter. Sometimes I'm sure it would get to 50° to 60° below, but we had to keep trapping and hunting to make ends meet. We would trap fox (red, silver, and cross), mink, weasel, beaver, rat and squirrel. We didn't go to the store that much, maybe twice a year for our tea, salt, lard, flour, baking powder, shells and snare wire. That is all we needed. I lived most of my life up and down the Moose River, now called the Ells River. Sometimes I lived at Spruce Lake, but not much. My mom lived at Fort McKay so we had to come and cut her some wood. We never had stoves in our teepees. I always made a campfire outside in the open. In our trapping cabins we never had a floor or glass for windows. We would use flour sacks for our windows and spruce branches laid out for a floor. Most of our stoves were made from tubs turned upside down. In the old days they said they made the stoves out of mud. They would put four sticks upright, about three to four feet high, and then they would put poles all the way around, about four inches apart. They would roll up some hay, making it into a long rope and then fill in the cracks. After that they would mix mud with ashes and water until it became a paste to plaster all four walls. There was no top. All it had was an opening in the front end and they mostly made this stove in a corner of a cabin because they could take out the walls so the smoke would go out. If the stove started to crack they would mix ashes and mud and fill in the cracks and it would be

good for a long time again.

I surely would like to see the loggers and drillers leave things alone. If they take all of the trees, the moose and deer will go away and so will the beaver. That is why there is no fur. There is too much noise. I can't mark where good places are on the map for the whole area is good.

Charlie Boucher

I was born under a spruce tree. Grandmother Sophie Freezie, my mother's mother, and Alex Boucher helped my mother, Victoria Boucher, give birth.

In 1954, Basil McDonald and Charlie Boucher (CWB) surveyed from Waterways to Embarras for two years. They used a TA link boat. Charlie was the pilot and Basil looked after the canoe. Embarras was at mile 117 of the Athabasca River.

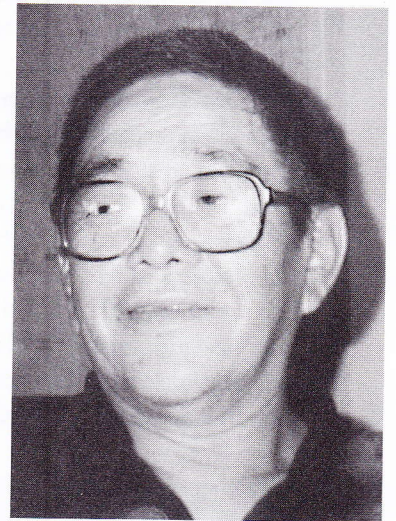
Mother was in the Ponoka Hospital for one year. When she came back from Lac Ste. Anne in 1938 she was depressed for the first time.

I was like an orphan. I lived in Birch Mountain. There were six of us in a shack with Michelle Boucher and the family. I also lived with Hermas Boucher and Jonas Boucher across from Fort McKay and with Modeste Powder and Adeline Tripp de Roche. I trapped with Elise McDonald in Moose Lake and fished with Archie Ahyasou at Namur Lake. The Crees talking to me were Archie Ahyasou and Joe Ahyasou. Joe's son was deaf and dumb. I was with Sammy Rolland. My father, Adam Boucher, brought him up. I left here in 1949. Between ten and twelve years old, I trapped with my father. William McDonald took me to Archie Ahyasou's. I always travelled. There were Big Gardiner Lake (*Do Nea To Cho*), Big Moose Lake and Middle Lake (*Ta Nezi Whon Ka*). Some of the Middle water runs where it never freezes. Little Willow Lake is *Ke Tuo Aze*. I portaged a canoe over from Little Moose Lake to Willow Lake and back again after the hunting and trapping was done.

Hermas Boucher built a dam on the narrows called Elak. There were banks on both sides built up by boulders. In the middle there was a drop where they could scoop up fish that were unable to return. The water runs shallow year round. The deepest place is about three and a half feet deep. Now the lake is full of algae, like green paint. It was never like that before.

Now the lake is full of algae, like green paint.

I was with Elise McDonald in the spring. I picked berries and trapped



Charlie Boucher born 20 March 1931
at Moose Lake Interviewed by
Cecilia Boucher 11 April 1994

with her. Across from Middle Lake we knocked some trees down and set up rabbit snares. There were a lot of rabbits. Small round rat flowers with purple leaves grow up to four to five feet tall (*Tun bunthaze*).

Walter Orr took a [metal] detector to a big hill and found some things. Father and Charlie came back to Moose Lake from Ells River. In the summer we walked to Moose Lake and in the winter we used a dog team. At Christmas time we came to Fort McKay to shop and to go to church, also at Easter time. One time, when Charlie was nineteen years old, he drank.

Mother Victoria was born around 1903 to Sophie at Birch River on the other side of Fort Chipewyan. She has one brother left, Pierre Ratfat. Sisters Marianne Boucher and Catherine Boucher are now deceased. All three sisters married Bouchers. Father Adam Boucher was born in 1888. The father of Adam was Louis Boucher. Adam had two brothers, Maurice and Jonas. Louis was a Frenchman. Felix Beaver stayed at Birch River with Marianne, his wife. Madeline and Antoine Boucher were Marianne's sister and brother.

Before Christmas in 1949, I worked for Ernie Demers, six miles south of Fort McMurray logging for seventy-five cents per tree. I played pool but I had to pray before I played Jean Pauline because he was religious. Father Adam Boucher brought the Crees into the band.

I made moose hide with mother. Raphael Flett made canoes. Father and son, Herman, Charlie's brother, went to Tuktoyaktuk to hunt white fox. They went down with dogs and came back with a canoe. I was with Uncle Maurice Boucher. Mother came back from Ponoka and my uncle took me to Fort McMurray with a five horsepower motor, picking me up from Stony Island eighteen miles south of Fort McMurray. In 1949 I left Fort McKay and went logging with Leo McDonald for thirty-five cents a tree. Walter Malcolm and Charlie Townsend worked there also. We lived down the hill in Fort McKay by the Athabasca River. From there we moved up here. The log house built in 1953 is still standing. Father went trapping. Charlie lived with Jonas Tourangeau. I put a net in the Athabasca River for fish for the dogs with Ernie Lacorde. My sister Reno is buried at Moose Lake.

Tamarack (*Ki*) and willows (*Kulishen*) are used to dye moccasins.

Tamarack and willows are used to dye moccasins.

On the trip back from Moose Lake with little Joe, William McDonald and the family were stranded in a storm on Pelican Island in Namur Lake for three days. They had three baskets of boiled seagull eggs. William McDonald said the pack was getting heavier. He was also packing furs. There were a lot of mosquitoes and the little girls, Mary McDonald and Sarah McDonald, were crying. They canoed to shore after the storm died down and on the trail Elise and Charlie saw something flash in the lake — whitefish were stranded! They put out a fish net and caught a lot of fish. Elise dried the fish and they walked to Fort McKay in three days with seagull eggs, dry fish and furs.

I had no schooling but I learned all kinds of trades.

When we got to Birch Mountain we used snow for water and ate rabbits and chickens. I had no schooling here but I learned all kinds of trades. I went to school in Edmonton up to grade nine. We got the logs to build houses from the limestone area three miles north of Fort McKay. We rafted the logs to McKay. I used to pick blueberries there. I had everything then. I set rabbit snares everywhere. Elise cooked a mink in the oven and it tasted good. I was by myself in my dad's house, the biggest house in Moose Lake.

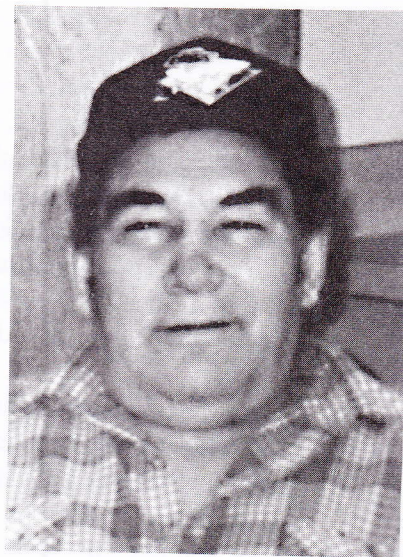
I walked two days to Moose Lake to feed the dogs and pick berries with Alex McDonald in July. I picked up moulting ducks that couldn't fly. I walked back to Fort McKay taking one day to make the trip with fifty-two ducks and forty-seven dogs.

I always trapped with Elise. I paddled with Adam (my father) from Moose Lake down the Ells River. The canoe overturned and got ripped but my father patched it with spruce gum and we continued on. We killed a moose on the way. That was the last trip Charlie made. There is a trail to Moose Lake. The first camp is eighteen miles out (*Chath Nao*) with rope hanging (*Klul do theლა*) at the campsite (*Horetur de Ze*). On other side of Birch Mountain is a campsite. The next campsite is Little Lake (*seth lia tuo aze*) — a very beautiful spot. I would like to walk that trail again.

Francis Orr

I was born in the bush, probably at Namur Lake or Buffalo Lake (*Mostos Sakuhikun*) in 1932 on 17 January. My birth certificate was done in Wabasca and it was probably two years later. I had two sisters and two older brothers. Julie Lindstrom is older. Father, Gabriel Orr, was born in Wabasca where he grew up. Mother, Eulilie Orr, was born in Chipewyan Lakes. I do not know when. They never kept track of her age though they kept track of the children's ages. The Indian agent kept track, not the natives.

My godparents were Albert Ahyasou and his wife Melanie. My parents met at Spruce Lake. Moving out of Chip Lakes over land, my father built a beaver dam to catch suckers and jackfish. There are some jackfish and suckers at Spruce Lake but no whitefish. Spruce Lake is forty miles overland from Chip Lakes. I visited Chip Lakes over land, with a horse, over a hundred miles from here. It took two days. If I had walked, it would have taken three days with two overnight camps.



Francis Orr born 17 January 1932
at Moose Lake Interviewed by
Cecilia Boucher and Fred MacDonald
21 April 1994

My parents moved to *Mostos Sakuhikun* before I was born. Brother John was born in Fort McKay and so were all the younger kids. Walter, Marie and Johnny were born on the other side of the church in Fort McKay.

We hunted moose, caribou, deer, bear, big game, beaver, muskrat, rabbit, chicken — three or four kinds, prairie, spruce hen, grouse, ptarmigan — and ducks of all kinds, over ten different kinds. We trapped lynx, wolf, coyote, fox, beaver and smaller furs like mink, weasel, squirrel and muskrat. Silver fox and cross fox were worth the biggest money. There were different kinds of fox: black fox and red fox. The foxes are the same size but different colours. The tip of the fur of a silver fox is white. I saw only one black fox in all my life. Lynx is not worth very much. Lynx meat is edible. It is like turkey.

There were some marten in patches but I haven't seen a fisher. My father told me about killing two fishers a long time ago — before his marriage. There used to be a lot of wolverine but there are none in his trapping area now. Some other places have them.

Moose hair is kept as bedding in the winter for keeping the dogs warm. The hind leg bone of moose is used for fleshing. The moose horn is used for knife handles. The horn is boiled long enough to make it soft after which it is cut to shape. When it dries it is hard again. You can make anything from moose hide: moccasins, jackets, vests, mitts and teepees. A moose hide sleigh wrapper is very warm. Horse packs, snowshoes, babiche, sinew, tanned thongs and drums are made from the wet part of the young calf. In those days, everyone helped. Mother was trained to know the same things as father. That's how she learned everything. All moose meat is edible, even the fat is used to make grease and the bones boiled to make grease. Deer hide can also be tanned like moose hide and it makes good drum covers. Deer sinew is used for snowshoes. The hide with the hair on is used as a floor rug or mattress by taking off the flesh and drying it. All parts of the deer meat are edible. We used to split and boil the joints to get at the grease that can be spooned out as lard.

Moose hair is kept as bedding in the winter for keeping the dogs warm.

There are cranberries, blueberries and many other kinds of berries. Some berries, i.e. blueberries, are used to make jam that keeps for long time. You can take berries with you to cook when moving around. If you stay in one place the berries can be picked as needed. Sometimes berries are dried on tarps for three days if the days are hot. They shrink and dry, and when you boil and cook them they are just like they were when they were fresh. I mixed raspberries or blueberries with meat to make pemmican. It tasted good.

There are many kinds of fish: myriahs, jack, sucker, pickerel, trout, grayling, perch, and white. Whitefish are the best to make dry fish. If the fish were spawning, one could make a dam with a pocket or box eight by eight feet. The bottom was filled with spruce boughs then

the dam was opened to let the fish in. But that is not allowed any more. We can use snares on jackfish, though. When a jackfish is going up to spawn it stops and goes. A snare on a long stick can be maneuvered around the middle of a fish that is stationary and then jerked up. It's a lot of fun. Jimmy Orr and Francis went to the creek with Jimmy showing me how to snare fish. I had a choice of small, medium or big fish. In the winter, the fish-hook wire was stiff. Years ago we made fish-hooks with a file. We put bait on the hook when fishing through a hole in the ice. We caught trout, jacks, myriahs and pickerel. Trout were found only at certain places at Namur Lake, about thirty feet down. There are no pickerel at Moose Lake. At Chipewyan Lakes there are all kinds of fish: whitefish, perch, jack, pickerel and myriahs.

We lived in a cabin and lived off the land. We can't have everything. Winter was spent in houses, some with flat tops. It was faster to build a wigwam made out of spruce poles. It looked like a teepee. We were able to stay there all winter. A stove or tarp was not needed.

A wigwam is waterproof if built in a certain way.

The wood was spruce or jack pine. A wigwam is waterproof if built in a certain way — from the bottom up. We could cook inside, in the centre. There were cabins with no stoves. We would build our own stove by making a chimney three feet by three feet with poles through the roof. It had an open fireplace three feet high. We put cross pieces

to the top. Mud and hay were placed on the cross pieces and covered with mud. In some places clay was used. It was the best. When grass or hay were used they were mixed with clay or mud and it dried hard. For the floor we used spruce falls [limbs]. If it was a wigwam, the spruce had to have perfectly straight limbs.

There was a store at Namur Lake owned by Dan Letandre who hauled freight with horses from Fort McKay. Ernie Lacorde's mother and her husband, Isadore Lacorde, lived with Dan Letandre in the same house. There were two stores at Chip Lakes. Trappers were hired to visit different families in various places to buy fur and sell groceries. One day the government came in and gave good prices and there were no more salesman after that. It was just to get rid of them. Towards the end it all broke down. We used to have all kinds of shells, rings, etc., all in the dog packs.

Round dances or tea dances were held, and also square dances. No powwow dances were held. Now, the powwow dances come in from the south. At the tea dances we invited people six months ahead of time. There was a lot of giveaway: horses, saddles, dogs, guns and everything. Hopefully it'll come back.

I remember twice dad went to Spruce Lake. It took one and one-half days. We had all kinds of food: moose meat, pemmican and grease — all the good foods from moose. There was very little booze, just some made-home brew. Drinking was done only on New Year's day, Christmas and Easter. At the tea dances the singers were the only ones who were given drinks — to make them sing better.

Birch baskets with designs were made by mother. Strings or bindings were made out of spruce roots that were boiled for a long time. She added grease and they would end up soft like rope and wouldn't break. Father made birchbark canoes. The bark had to be heated up around the fire so it could be shaped into the proper form. Roots were also used to sew canoes or for use as bindings. Gum was used from the spruce tree. It was boiled in a huge pot and coloured with willow bark. Grease was added to take away the stickiness of the gum. It was pitch, unlike spruce gum, in the end. The final colours were orange or black.

Spruce trees were good for medicine. Pretty well every tree has medicine in the roots, bark or leaves. Some trees have to be split and the pulp used for medicine. Willows are also good for medicine. Everything is good, especially the saskatoons, pincherries, blueberries, strawberries, leaves and roots. Berry trees are all used for medicine. Tamarack trees provide one of the best medicines. There is medicine for certain sicknesses, i.e. pneumonia. There is also medicine to stop bleeding. We used to pay for the medicine with tobacco. This kind of information is available to anyone who is interested. You just have to ask for specific information. It is not easy to take herbal medicine. You have to believe in the medicine. In taking forest products an offering is always left to thank the Great Spirit.

We used to pay for the medicine with tobacco.

When I was fifteen years old the medicine man asked for water because he needed to treat a sick lady. The medicine man was from around the Spruce Lake area. The father of the girl had asked the medicine man to prepare a medicine for her. The medicine man said to get water from the stream with a small tea pot and dip the water out in the direction of the running stream — don't look back, just bring it. He was to put the medicine from his bag into the water and make a smudge. He explained to Francis that he would put the herbs into the water and if the herbs swirled in the same rotation as the sun the medicine would work. Francis watched as the medicine man put the herbs into the water and the herbs swirled faster and faster. The medicine man said it was good and it should work. He then boiled the herbs and poured the mixture into a cup about three-quarters full and gave it to the sick woman's husband to take to his wife. About an hour later the woman walked over and thanked the medicine man. She couldn't get out of bed before!

photo
not
available

Gina Boucher

I was born in the bush not far from Jackfish Lake. My mother is Celine Laviolette, and my father, Jean Baptiste Flett. I was brought up at Point Brule and travelled all over in the bush. I never went to school. I stayed home until I married Willie Boucher in 1956 or 1957.

Gina Boucher born 8 March 1933
Interviewed by Cecilia Boucher
13 April 1994

Mother Celine taught me how to make moose hide. With the moose hide I made moccasins (*giske-la carl a gues za ber*). Mother sewed clothes for the family. There were a lot of moose, beaver, bear, caribou, buffalo, rabbit, fish (white, jack, and pickerel). Chickens, (*Kes ba*) white ptarmigan sitting on willows were found more towards Fort Chipewyan. There were ducks (*cheth*). Porcupine (*Tchee*) is nice meat. To prepare it you clean it in the fire, burning all the needles after which you take off all the black stuff by hand and boil the meat.

I never went to school. I stayed home until I married Willie Boucher.

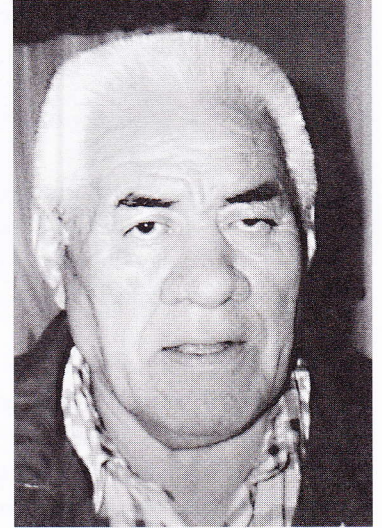
We had dry meat (*eguna*), dry fish (*ethdia*), pemmican (*ahncheeze*) and pounded dry fish. There were fur bearers: squirrel (*zlea*), rat (*dzen*), lynx (*cheezae*), beaver (*cha*), wolf (*no nea*), otter (*nan bea*), weasel (*thelkile*) and mink (*kles juiza*).

The berries were cranberry, blueberry, raspberry (*ekhoszea*), chokecherry, strawberry (*engeazae*), saskatoon (*kheesgea*) in early summer and finally mooseberry (*denesgea*) that was picked in the fall when red. When mooseberry was cooked by boiling, it smelled like dog but it tasted good with sugar.

Willie Boucher

Willie and Joe Boucher took a plane to Johnson Lake from Fort McKay around 20th April 1960. They built a canoe from makeshift materials using insulation pipe, which is thin and pliable, jack pine for ribs and canvas painted greyish white for cover. Paddles were made from jack pine. They canoed back to Fort McKay by way of the Marguerite River, Firebag River and the Athabasca River. They paddled up about three miles to Harry McDonald's place and were picked up there by Freddy Boucher. At that time there were many bears which they saw morning, noon and night.

Willie, a Chipewyan, learned the Cree language by having a Cree playmate, Edward Cyprien. Edward learned his Chip from Willie and his brothers. Willie's mother, Philomine (Herman) Boucher, probably had his grandmother Catherine Herman and La Louise Cyprien as midwives (also Agate Loutitt). Willie's grandmother related stories about life in her young days but he could not remember any specific story. His grandmother made birchbark baskets. The large baskets were about twelve inches high with a circumference about twenty-four inches. Bushes Willow made birchbark canoes twelve or fourteen feet long. They involved burning and sewing holes. He probably used spruce gum for caulking and jack pine for ribs. Some people used birch but jack pine is best because it has a lot of resin and is slow to rot. Paddles were made from the same material.



Willie Boucher
Interviewed by Cecilia Boucher
7 April 1994

During wintertime, Willie's grandmother made fish nets with twine using a piece of birch wood, four by three inches, as a needle (*eta' che nae*). The net size depended on how big they wanted the mesh squares to be, which in turn depended on the size of fish they were fishing for. Lake nets were made bigger than river nets. The fish caught were whitefish, jackfish and pickerel.

Most of the meat was buffalo. Even now there's some buffalo behind Bob Grant's place. Three years ago there were tracks near Howard Lacorde's cabin. Buffalo hides were rough and tough, too sandy and too tough to tan. Buffalo horns were used for storing gun powder. Rudolph Flett and Willie Boucher got fourteen buffalo one winter. Many families helped themselves to the meat: L'Hommecourt, brothers Raymond and Theodore Boucher, Cypriens, Piche, Pierre Boucher and son Alphonse, Tripp de Roche and Basil McDonald. Willie trapped one year with Basil, Harvey Boucher and Alex McDonald. Moise L'Hommecourt, Bushes Willow, Joe Herman and Boniface Tripp de Roche made their own dog sleighs and snowshoes. Willie's wife, Gina, used to make snowshoes with caribou hide. His mother, grandmother and wife Gina made moccasins. Gina and Willie used to make moose hide. His dad, Morris Boucher, made his own shells by putting gunpowder into empty casings with pellets packing with a stick-like packer. Some used willow as a cork.

*Most of the meat
was buffalo.*

Syrup was made from boiled birch sap with sugar probably added.

Willie portaged a canoe about fifteen miles west and north one fall with brothers Ted and Raymond and Fred MacDonald. Father Maurice was at the lake to shoot ducks one day. But the next day the lake was frozen at their end so they portaged the canoe around the lake again to hunt ducks in an open part of the lake.

His grandmother made loon bags for general storage. The feather side was turned inside to dry the skin. A loon bag has nice colours. The opening is laced with moose hide.

Fort Chipewyan (*Ki'na thella*) translated is "flat where there's willows", also (*Kh'ur'*) is "where there are houses". Poplar Point is *Khe's Hon'chinla*; La Rock point, *Hon chin Nectear*. Big Sand Hill (*Thai'l the cho*) is about two miles south of Poplar Point. One hundred is *e Kliia baschenage*. Point Brule is *Nangh Chia Thel Thee* meaning "wolverine dead". Fort McKay is *Che'diza Be Chea*: red clay river at the mouth. The white limestone is about three miles south of Fort McKay, on the west bank side of the Athabasca River. Fort McMurray is *Dhes Khli' Gli(en) Khuan* meaning rivers joining together. Firebag River is *Klel dheza* — something that's used to sharpen bones and knives, like a file. Ells River was Moose River (*Dhe Nea Toudheza*). Tar Creek was *The'gera dheza*. Tar Island was *The' Gera Knw*".

Targets was *Elth Khethe No Dhezal Keth*: “target shooting with a gun”. Two miles northwest of Fort McKay is a cat road made years ago probably to Ells River. Ronald Lake was *Tho Cholk* — Big Lake. Bitumount was *The’cea eches* (boiling) tar sands. Willie worked there at age fifteen, so did Pierre Piche, Laurent, Swan Peterson’s wife’s son, also Theodore Boucher and little Joe Ratfat (flunky). Suzanne Woodward was the cook. There were a lot of skunks around the garbage area — about two families of skunks. People cut wood up the hill and threw it down in the chute to keep the boiler going for boiling tar. There were barrels and huge tanks to store the tar. Ed Meyers drove a barge freighting groceries, barrels etc., between Bitumount and Fort McMurray. Later Paul Schmidt took over.

Boniface Tripp de Roche

age 84

Someone said there is one grave about one mile up the Firebag River on the east side of the river. Joe Powder was buried there in early 1900. I do not know for sure. There is another grave across from their old cabin at mile 76 on the west side of the Athabasca River and there is another grave on the east side of the river right across from Moose River. Also, there are a lot of graves on the west side of Poplar Point behind Sid McKay’s trapping cabin. There is one with the name of Danials who was buried around 1925, about three or four miles south of the Firebag River bridge on the east side of the Athabasca River. There is another grave on Arnie Hermansen’s trapline. About seventy-five years ago my wife’s grandpa drowned in the Athabasca River near the 27th baseline on the park side. They couldn’t find the body right away but two years later they found the bones on the Athabasca River shore. So they picked them up and buried them up on the hill where they found them near the 27th baseline on the east side of the river. They also said that there is a grave on the side of the road going to the graveyard at Poplar Point on the east side of the river. That grave must be about one hundred years old. I do not remember anybody being buried there; it was before my time. I’m eighty-four years old now so it was before that. I trapped mostly on the east side of the Athabasca River but I hunted all over the place. I know the area really well.



Boniface and Adeline Tripp de Roche
Fort Chipewyan
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald 27 April 1994

I used to make my own canoes, not out of birch, but out of dry spruce. We had to peel the

base of the spruce tree to about seven feet high and wait a year to see how the tree would crack. Sometimes it would take four or five trees before getting one that cracked straight up and down. That one I would cut down and split in half. Then to cut a board about one quarter inch thick I would use two small axes, one as an axe and the other as a wedge. After the board was started, I pulled it off by hand. A single tree would make lots of boards in this way. Then they were planed down to whatever thickness wanted. Ribs were made and soaked in water for a few days so they would soften and bend better. Then you made the shape you wanted and then held them in place with sinew, rawhide or nails. After that you put canvas over the ribs and painted it. A ten-foot canoe weighed only thirty-five pounds. I made the canoes light for packing and portaging from one area to another. I used them on the Creek or Marguerite River and the Firebag River for hunting, mostly shooting rats and beaver. In that little canoe I could carry a dog and all my things, gun, grub, blankets and all the beaver that I killed. If I killed too many I would go to shore to skin them, just taking the hide. That way I lightened my load and took them home for fleshing and drying.

I made the canoes light for packing and portaging from one area to another.



Isabel Ahyasou
age 67 Interviewed by
Fred MacDonald April 1994

Isabel Ahyasou

I was born at Chipewyan Lake and lived in that area and Fort McKay most of my life. We lived off the land. It was a good living; we never got sick. We were always happy. My dad did a lot of hunting and fishing. The way we made dry meat was to take a piece of meat and slice it about quarter inch thick and make it as long as possible. Then you hang it on a rack constructed outdoors like a teepee with three poles tied together at the top. We made two like that and then placed them a few feet apart as end supports for poles that were secured horizontally all the way up the sides about eight inches apart. Then you would put sliced meat on the poles and make a fire under the meat to dry it and also to smoke it. Dry and green poplar was used for this for two or three days. We had to put the meat in the tent every night and put it back on the poles in the morning. You would do that all over again until it was dried and cured. While the meat was drying we would work on the hide. If I had to tell you how we worked on a hide we would be here talking all night. We will be doing four moose hides very soon. Come around then.

I remember there were always a lot of blueberries and cranberries, mostly at Spruce Lake. We would put the berries in a raw skin bag or a birch bag and hang them high up in a tree until around Christmas. The rest of the winter we would eat these fresh-tasting berries. In the summer my dad would put in a big garden every year. He used horses for ploughing the

garden with some kind of plough. He also ploughed for other people. We had to cut hay for our horses in the winter when we used a sleigh. To pick up the hay we used a fork which was made from a large willow branch; the handle had two or three branch ends which was the fork. My dad worked very hard for us but he never worked on Sunday. On Sunday we would say a few prayers. Then we ate a big meal, everything from the bush. After that we would sit around and tell stories and play games. We always had visitors on Sunday.

Rawhide bags were made from deer or caribou hide. You put some moss in the middle and then you tied up the ends and put a short block about four inches round and about ten inches long in the mouth of the bag. After it was dry you took the moss out and there was the finished bag. We could carry water in it. I remember my dad making a root cellar to keep our veggies for the winter that we got from our garden. To make a root cellar he would dig a hole into the bank of a hill big enough to walk in. He would also lay some hay inside the root house. We used a tarp for a door and cover. On the tarp cover we would put moss using sticks standing up to hold up the moss. Our vegetables would never freeze in such a root cellar.

Trappers killed squirrels and got five cents apiece. But for five cents you could get a lot of things from the store — flour, tea, salt, baking powder and sometime sugar, but not all the time. As long as I could remember we had jump traps. There were no wire snares those days.

... the rabbit would be left hanging about two feet off the ground.

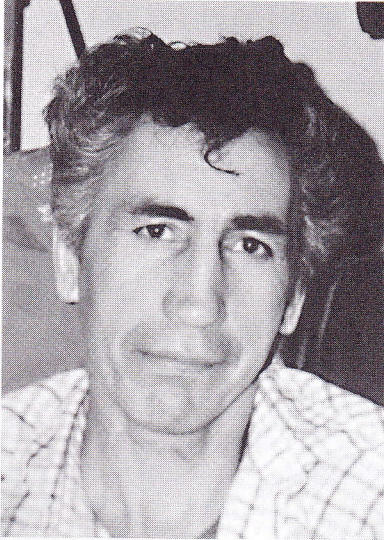
Back in the thirties we got some haywire that we used to make snares for fox and lynx. Snares for rabbits were made with string and we made spring pole sets. To do that you would bend a large willow down so that the top was at the ground; then you would put two sticks across about eight inches high

with another two sticks up and down. There you would tie the string from the top of the willow; then tie a half-hitch with a little stick so that when the rabbit tripped it, it would pull the half-hitch off and the willow would pull him up. In this way, the rabbit would be left hanging about two feet off the ground. I wish the young kids now would try to learn something from this.

Howard Lacorde

I was born in Fort McKay and lived off the land most of my life. I trapped with my dad until I was old enough to get my own trapline. Then I went out on my own — trapping beaver, squirrels, mink and fox. We travelled by dog team in the winter, and walked and packed dogs, and packed ourselves, in the spring. We had two cabins on our trapline. I built a log house with an axe, swede saw and crosscut saw. It was just a line cabin so we didn't peel the logs. We notched the logs with an axe. We never had a floor, just a dirt floor. We used flour sacking for the windows and a tarp for the door.

On the roof we put poles side by side all the way across, and then we put moss on the poles and in the cracks. After that we put dirt on the roof about six inches thick. There are a lot of



Howard Lacorde age 46
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
April, 1994

creeks on my line — lots of beaver in those creeks, but no fish. When we are trapping all we go after is mink, beaver, squirrel, fox and a lynx sometimes. That is why I do not want them to take the poplar. If they do, the beaver will leave. They've already taken all the spruce. So now the squirrels are all gone because the loggers took all the trees.

I remember my dad made a stove out of a forty-five gallon barrel that was cut in half. He put the cut part down, cut a hole for the stove pipes and then a hole in the top for the wood; it surely gave lots of heat. He found the barrels back in the bush where the oil drillers had a camp. As far as I could remember an oil company — Boyle Brothers Drilling — worked all over the place between 1940 and 1951.

*..made a stove out of a
forty-five gallon barrel*

The only trees left on my line are jack pine. There are lots of cranberries. There are lots of moose along the Moose and Athabasca Rivers. But the land is just about all bare with open areas all over. I do not like it.



Fred Marcel
Fort Chipewyan
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
May 1994

Fred Marcel

I was raised in Chip; I made my living in my younger days by trapping, hunting and fishing. When I was old enough I went to work on the steamboat as a deckhand on the Athabasca River and Lake system. A deckhand is the same thing as a labourer. We loaded cord wood (poplar) from wood piles every ten miles or less. We had to load anywhere from twenty to one hundred cords at a time. A cord of wood is four feet by four feet by eight feet, and when the steamer was working hard it burned about four cords an hour. Part of our job was to hand the fireman the fire wood. Our shifts were four hours on and eight hours off unless we had to help on our off shift. We did all this for a dollar a day, room and board; that was in 1939. The next year, 1940, we got two dollars a day.

*[The steamboat] burned
about four cords an hour.*

Then I went to work for the Chipewyan Band as a pilot on their little gas boat and barge. We went up and down the river visiting the band members and hauling building material for houses and shacks. We went to Fitzgerald. That is down

the Slave River one hundred miles north of Fort Chipewyan. And we went east on the Athabasca Lake to Black Bay, Fond du Lac, Stony Rapids and Camsell Portage. On the Athabasca River the stops were Jackfish Lake, Embarras Portage, Point Brule, Poplar Point, Lobstick Point, Fort McKay and Fort McMurray. We also delivered the carpenters and their material to build the houses and shacks. So we took them to wherever they had to build. Carpenters were making about one hundred and fifty dollars a month but they had to feed themselves.

There used to be people living along the river every five to ten miles in both the summer and winter. Their kids would go to school at Fort Chipewyan at the RC mission; then in the summer they would all go back to the bush for the two months of holidays. Then it was back to school in September. I think there were more jobs then. Everybody was working and having a good time. There were house dances all the time. Nobody got drunk; not like they do now. I remember in the summer they travelled by small boats; some had outboards, others just oars. In the winter they had dog teams. Those were the good old days.

Roy Rolland

I trapped with my dad, Sammy Rolland, for only one year before he passed away. Then after that I stayed and trapped with my uncle Archie Ahyasou until I got sick at the age of thirty. I have been sick for twenty-four years with MS. I can't get up very well any more. I surely miss the bush life. I learned every thing from Archie Ahyasou. When I was trapping, it was squirrels in the winter and beaver in the spring. I remember skinning the beaver; you had to flesh them and stretch the pelt on a stretcher made from a willow bent in a circle and laced up with needle and heavy string. You would make a knot on the stick with your string and then go through the edge of the beaver pelt and then back over the stick and through the pelt again. You did that all away around until you had a nice egg-shaped circle that you hung out to dry. Now you just use nails — nail it on a piece of plywood; that's too easy. We ate the meat. I never did kill a wolverine but my grandpa did; I saw them. I never got a black fox but other people did.

I quit school when I was fifteen years old to go trapping with my dad. He made a living for the rest of the family. We used to sleep outside — sometimes in a tent. Boy, there surely were some cold nights. Now that I am sick, all I can do is think about the bush life I once loved so much. That's why I sure hope they wouldn't log this area any more. Maybe some day the young people will try out the bush life. I surely hope someone would show the kids all about



Roy Rolland age 54
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
May 1994

trapping and living off the land.

We played a lot of horseshoes for fun.

I remember one time my brother was really mad when he came home. I asked him what was wrong; he said he got a mink in a trap. The poor thing was nearly starved because he had a tight collar on him — put on by some white man. I don't think that was nice! The poor mink couldn't eat because this collar was cutting right through his skin. My brother also killed a moose that was wearing a collar, and the poor moose was skin and bones because of the tight strap collar and a cow bell. The bell made him nervous. Trees and animals were put on earth for the people's use: hunting and medicine. They are not for sale. The government can't sell them; they don't belong to the government! We were here first.

...was just about starved because he had a tight collar



Veronica Rolland age 77
Interviewed by Fred MacDonald
23 March 1994

Veronica Rolland

Born at Wabasca, I spent all my life in the bush. As long as I can remember I was never sick. Dad's name was Joe Ahyasou. My granddad and grandma were Moise Orr and Marie Orr. They had cows and a big garden. She grew potatoes and some vegetables. That was at Chip Lake; the ground was so good. We used to buy all our store things in the spring — enough to last us all summer until fall. We travelled all over where there were moose, rabbits and berries. We stayed at a spot for awhile then moved on. When I was older I started to trap on my own for fur like fox, rat, beaver and squirrel. I cut wood with an axe and then we got a swede saw; then I was okay. When we were young, I had to be with my sister or brother or I couldn't go out to play. Young women were not allowed to smoke until they went out on their own. When I was twenty years old I still had to be home by 9:00 pm. We never had pots and pans like today. We had a lot of hard times; sometimes, there was not too much to eat. Some years there was not much fur around; maybe it was too

cold. That's when the animals didn't move around much. Fruit berries were always good — mostly cranberries — they grow everywhere. We had to live on wild meat and sometimes the moose were hard to get because in the winter you had to wait for a big wind to go hunting. Those days you had to outsmart the moose to get one. You had to walk very slowly and watch where the wind came from. You always had to be downwind from the moose.

The people were more friendly and always happy then, and they would visit one another on Sundays. But at my house we couldn't go anywhere on Sundays; we had to stay home, sing Indian church songs and say our prayers. My dad and granddad would tell us not to go out

*The people were more friendly
and always happy then.*

on the trapline or work on Sunday. That was the Lord's day, a day to rest. After that we would cook a big meal and then my dad and grandpa would tell stories about how to do things in the bush. That was our schooling. Now that I think about it I'm glad that I did listen. I now can tell my grandkids everything I know. I remember a long time ago when the men sat around and told stories and had a few shots of home brew. The women were not allowed to be with them; they had to sit by themselves. In my days you had to listen to them; whatever they said for you to do you had to do it right away. If not, you got a licking with a big stick right up until you were twenty, twenty-five or thirty years old, it didn't matter. When we went camping and cooking outside, the food tasted so good. We made bannock; we mixed our flour, baking powder and moose grease or bear grease until it was really thick. Then we wrapped it around a stick for cooking over a camp fire, or in a pan if it was to be baked. The way you used a pan was to pull some hot coals from the fire and kind of flatten them out so you could set your frying pan on them. You did that for awhile then you would stand the pan up close to the fire. The pan would be held up by a little stick stuck in the handle. To cook a rabbit we would put it on a stick — right through it — and cook over an open fire. Sometime we made soup from a rabbit with added flour or rice if we had any. I remember seeing a mud stove but I never saw anyone build one.

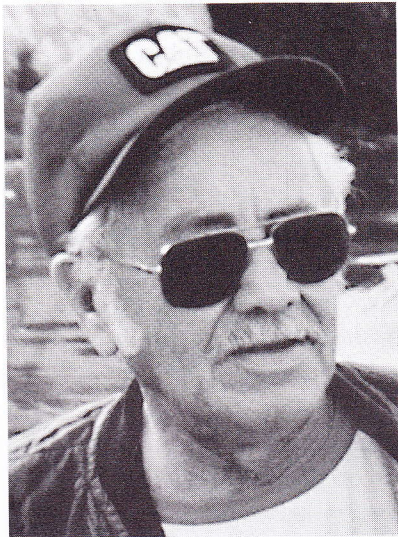
I remember my dad and my husband, Sammy Rolland, going to Fort McKay for store stuff. They used horses for packing all the things they got from the store to take back home to Spruce Lake or Moose lake. Often they used two horses, sometimes three or four. One horse could pack up to four hundred pounds all day as long as it was well fed and had lots of water. Packing a horse was about the same as packing a dog. First you laid your tarp or moose hide out on the ground folded out. For a horse you made a tarp about seven feet long; you only loaded each end and you made sure the weight was even on each side when you put it on the horse with a load on each side about half way down the horse's side. Then you tied it. All you did then was to walk and lead the horse.

I remember we used to play a lot of games. We had a lot of tea dances those days. My family weren't Treaties until the 1940s. My husband was chief for about four years. I know about the graves in Spruce Lake.

I just wish they would leave this bush alone.

Fred MacDonald

I was born in Fort McMurray on 5 March 5th 1935 to Harry McDonald and Mary Cardinal. My mom died when I was eight years old. We lived 14 miles north of McMurray until her death in 1944. In 1948 my dad, brothers Norman McDonald and Harvey McDonald and I moved to Lobstick Point. My son, Rick McDonald, and I still trap at Lobstick Point. When I was growing up our family had a hard time. We were very poor. We did not have



Fred MacDonald age 59
Interviewed by Flora Grandjambe
May 1994

dogs; we walked wherever we went in the winter. We packed all our firewood on our back, sometimes a half a mile every day. After mother died, dad and my brothers and I did our own cooking and our own laundry. We ate rabbits and chickens mostly; sometimes we ate beaver, muskrat, lynx and lots of white beans.

We were very happy all the time. The rest of my family are dead and gone but not forgotten; the memories will always be there. I remember that just about every fall season as the river was freezing we travelled by boat from Fort McMurray seventy-six miles to our trapline. The trip took us three days. It was a cold ride and we kept paddling to keep warm. While drifting down the river, not making too much noise, we could see many animals as they drank or ate along the river. On our trapline we caught fish with a net, year round. Setting a net under the ice in the winter was a efficient way of catching fish but it was also the most difficult. The net could be any length

but 45 to 60 feet was common. Floats made from dry wood were attached to the top of the net and weights (stones) to the bottom. Holes were made in the ice in a straight line approximately 15 feet apart; the distance between end holes equalled or slightly exceeded the length of the net. A 15-foot pole was used to feed the net under the ice. A rope, longer than the distance between the two end holes, was attached to one end of the feed pole and to one end of the net. At this point the net was stretched out on the ice ready to be fed through the hole. The pole was pushed through an end hole and directed toward the opposite end hole by feeding it past each of the holes between the end holes. When the pole reached the end hole it was pulled through and the rope attached to it lay connected under the ice: one end to the pole, the other to the net. In each end hole a dry pole was set on the river or lake bed sticking up out of the ice hole. Using the long rope, the net was pulled through the opposite hole until it was all under the ice in the water. The ends of the net were attached by short ropes to the vertical poles which were in the end holes and anchored to the bottom of the lake or river. The long rope on the feeding pole could be taken off. Dry poles were used to anchor the nets because green wood and fresh bark was beaver food; therefore, beaver often chewed and removed such poles. After the net was in the water the holes froze shut. To check the nets for fish, the end holes were reopened and a long rope tied to one end of the net, temporarily replacing the rope tied to the anchor pole. The net, with the fish, was pulled up through the hole. The fish were removed and the net was pulled back under the ice using the long rope. This procedure was repeated as long as fish were needed. Fish could not be left in the net under water for more than two days, otherwise they died in the net and started to rot.

Setting a net under the ice in the winter was the most difficult way to catch fish.

When we travelled in a bush area that was not familiar to us we used moss or muskeg as trail markers by hanging it on tree branches at selected points along the trail.

When we travel, I and my sons, and many of the elders, study the stars at night so we know where we are and where our cabins are located. The stars give useful direction if we are not sure where we are while we travel. On cloudy and snowy nights we look for the moss on poplar trees and willows. Moss grows on the north side of trees and willows, and in this way we know our direction. There are always willows in open areas in bush land regions. Direction is indicated also by willows leaning to the south because of prevailing north winds. March 21st is spring on the calendar but for us spring is when we hear the red-headed woodpecker hammering away on dry trees. You can hear that sound for miles. They do that only in the spring.

I made a few pairs of snowshoes and I also helped some old trappers make them. First, birch wood is taken from a tree close to water — usually on an island. An old man told me that the birch was better from a tree near the water because moisture gets into the tree and the movement of the tree caused by the wind helps the wood bend easier. There are fewer knots in that type of tree. At home the tree is split four ways with an axe; most of the time the tree splits straight up and down. After that the board is chopped or planed with an axe until it is one and a half inches square and even. With a stone or piece of metal plane it is smoothed some more. We made a planer out of a twelve-inch file by curling it up at one end and sharpening it; the handle for the planer was made from moose horn. After the board was shaped and sized, the two pieces were tied together at each end. Then two strips of wood about the length of the inside width of the widest part of the snow-

First you get birch wood from a tree close to water...

shoe, about middle distance between the ends were cut and the side strips stretched and spread to take the cross strips. To form the curve at the toe of the snowshoe a six-inch rounded block, cut in half, was used, one for each snowshoe. A hole was drilled in this block and in it was placed a twelve-inch stick to act as a lever. The stick in the block was attached to the toe of the snowshoe and tied with a string. The toe of the snowshoe was slowly bent up by tightening the string pulling the lever back. Young moose or caribou hide made the best babiche for lacing snowshoes. The elders talked about getting water from water holes in the muskeg. They often said that the water was not good to drink if there was a bug in it. It is now not good to drink from the rivers or lakes in this area. The Athabasca River is not safe to drink from now, either.

I cannot understand the government; many years ago they made the leg-hold trap legal and passed a bylaw that it was alright to use it. The Hudson's Bay Company made millions of dollars selling the traps to the trappers and buying the tappers' fur. We are the people who made them rich. Before the steel leg-hold trap was invented, the aboriginal trappers used dead-fall sets and snares. There is still a good living to be made out there in the bush, but leave our land alone.

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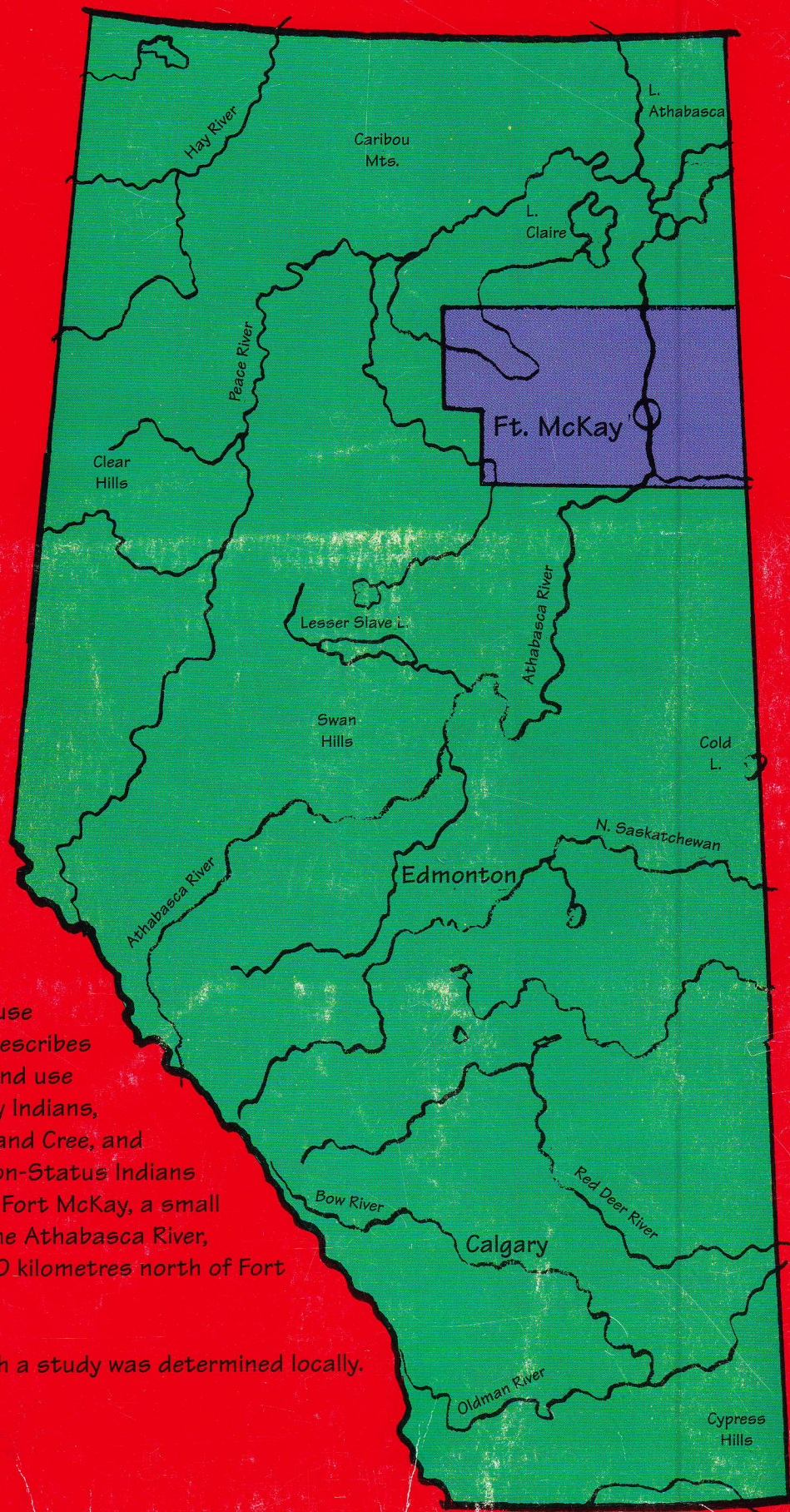
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This study of traditional land use and occupancy describes the pattern of land use created by Treaty Indians, both Chipewyan and Cree, and the Metis and non-Status Indians who today live in Fort McKay, a small settlement on the Athabasca River, approximately 60 kilometres north of Fort McMurray.

The need for such a study was determined locally.

TRADITIONAL LAND USE MAP

R10W4

R5W4





BIG GAME

- woodland caribou
- barren land caribou
- moose
- deer
- buffalo
- salt lick (SL)

BIRDS

- Canada goose
- crane
- eagle
- owl
- duck
- loon
- seagull
- swan
- grouse
- pelican

FISH

- chub
- grayling
- lingcod
- pickeral
- trout
- goldeye
- jackfish
- perch
- sucker
- whitefish

FUR BEARERS

- bear
- fisher
- marten
- otter
- skunk
- weasels
- coyote
- lynx
- muskrat
- rabbit
- weasels
- beaver
- fox
- mink
- skunk
- weasels

SPIRITUAL (Grave) & HISTORICAL SITES

Numbers within the circles indicate number of graves (if more than one) at those locations.

Historical site

TREES & PLANTS

- white spruce (WS)
- alder (A)
- black spruce (BS)
- balsam poplar (BP)
- willow (W)
- balsam fir (BF)
- jack pine (JP)
- white poplar (WP)
- lodgepole pine (LP)
- rat root (Rt)
- sweet grass (Sg)
- mint (M)
- seneca root (Sr)
- muskeg moss (Mu)
- wintergreen (Wt)

FISH

- chub
- grayling
- lingcod
- pickeral
- trout
- goldeye
- jackfish
- perch
- sucker
- whitefish

BIRCH MOUNTAIN - FIREBAG R11111

R20W4

R15W11

