

Guiding Interview Questions Tracking Change in the Mackenzie River Basin

SUMMARY

Tracking Change: Local and Traditional Knowledge in Watershed Governance is a six-year research program funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and led by the University of Alberta, Mackenzie River Basin Board, and the Government of the Northwest Territories in collaboration with many other valued Aboriginal organization partners and universities. The broad goal of the project is to create opportunities to collaboratively document and share local and traditional knowledge (LTK) about social-ecological change in the Mackenzie River Basin, in 2016 on key themes and priorities identified collectively by the same Aboriginal organizations.¹

Themes and Priorities for *Tracking Change*... Sub-Projects in 2016-2017

- ✓ historical and contemporary observations and perceptions of conditions and change in the health of the **aquatic environment** (e.g., water quality, quantity, flow, groundwater, permafrost conditions);
- ✓ historical and contemporary observations and perceptions of conditions and change in **fish species** (population, movements, diversity, invasive species) and other **aquatic species** (e.g., geese, beaver);
- ✓ sustainability of **fishing livelihoods** (e.g., harvesting levels and practices, diet, health, access issues, perceptions of change in the health of valued fish species);
- ✓ implications of change for **governance** (e.g., how to maintain healthy relationships to the aquatic ecosystem, maintaining respectful and spiritual relationships, respecting treaty rights);

¹ *These priorities were recommended in a workshop with the NWT Water Stewardship Strategy Aboriginal Steering Committee and the Mackenzie River Basin Board (MRRB) Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Committee (TKSPC), Feb. 10, 2016. Additional input was asked of the partners and other members of the Project Team by email in October 2015.*

Oral Histories about Social Ecological Change

- *How did you and your family used to travel on the Mackenzie River? What travel routes were most important? Have you noticed any changes in the areas of the river system where people can travel? What kinds of changes have you observed? Are there some areas that have changed a lot? Do you know any stories about these places from grandparents or others from very olden times? What were these areas like in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s... etc. the past five years?*
- *What are your earliest memories of where, when and how people used to fish in this region?*
- *Why were these important areas for fishing? (Can these be identified on a map)? Why were these places important to you/your family/your community?
For example, are there fish camps that you can identify that used to be important or are still used today?*
- *Do you remember these fishing locations changing seasonally, from year to year or over time? If people have stopped fishing in some areas, why did people stop fishing in these areas? What do these changes mean for people (i.e., food, wellbeing, way of life, passing of knowledge, etc.)? How did people cope with the changes going on in these areas? How should these areas be cared for in the future?*

Place Names Interview Questions

Using point data locations or polygons, demarcate the place names on a map of 1:50000 scale. The following questions are guides for interviewing elders about each place that is demarcated.

- *Why is your community/this place important to you?*
- *What does it mean to be from this community/place?*
- *What changes have you seen in your community/this place? What do these changes mean to you or your community? What can you/your community do about these changes?*

Fish Harvesting and Livelihoods

- *Was fishing an important part of the community's economy in the past? Is it still important today? Were there time historically when people only ate fish (for example, because there were fewer caribou or fewer moose to harvest?)*
- *Did men and women have the same roles in fishing?*
- *What types of fish do you harvest nowadays? (Location, Time/year)?*
- *Are people catching fewer, more same of each species as in the last 2 years, 5 years, 10 years etc.?*
- *Is it more / less difficult to fish in these areas than in the past? Why?*
- *How much of the harvest of each species do you share outside your immediate family? (some, none, all)?*
- *If you don't fish, do you receive fish from other people in your community? How often?*
- *How many meals/week do you eat fish that has been caught from the region?*
 - *In the spring, In the summer, In the fall, In the winter*
- *How concerned are you about the health of the fish you are catching? (very concerned, somewhat concerned, not concerned, don't know)? Why?*
- *Are there areas or aspect of fish harvesting that should be protected or better managed?*

Indicators for Monitoring

- *Where and when can people find the cleanest drinking water in your area? When and where would you never drink the water in this area? Can you tell me what you see/taste/smell that would tell you the drinking water is are good or not good?*



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- *When/when would you find the healthiest fish in this area? Are there places where people never fish now people the fish are considered unhealthy? Can you tell me what you see/taste/smell that would tell you the fish are healthy/unhealthy?*
 - *When and where would you find good places to travel on the river? If these places have changed in recent years, can you tell me why you think that these area are no longer good for travel? What do you see/experience that tell you these areas are safe/unsafe or easy / not easy for travel?*
 - *When and where are the water levels changing? Are there areas where the water levels are much lower than they were in the past (5, 10, 20 years)? Are there areas where water levels stayed the same?*