

Tracking Change... Youth Knowledge Fair

Tracking Change... Local and Traditional Knowledge in Watershed Governance

Feb 1, 2016

**Background Information and Request for Sponsors for the Tracking Change... 2016 Youth Knowledge Fair
Edmonton Alberta (May 24-27, 2016)**

Background: The University of Alberta, the Mackenzie River Basin Board, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and many other Aboriginal governments and organizations and universities in Canada and internationally are working together on a 6-year, \$2.5 million dollar research initiative called 'Tracking Change – Local and Traditional Knowledge in Watershed Governance'.

The **Tracking Change...** project developed in recognition that many peoples in the Mackenzie River Basin, particularly Indigenous peoples, have valuable insights about the social and environmental sustainability of the Basin. Many land users (hunters, fishers, berry harvesters etc.) have been observing and experiencing what is going on with the land, water, fish, geese/ducks, wildlife in the same way, using the same signs/signals for many generations. Such tracking of change, has been more than a technical process of monitoring; people watch, listen, learn and communicate about change because they care about the health of the land and the health of their communities. While much of this knowledge is based on sacred oral traditions, there is a growing need to bring this knowledge forward to ensure the continued health and sustainability of the Mackenzie River Basin. **Tracking Change...** would provide the Mackenzie River Basin Board Traditional Knowledge Steering Committee, communities, co-management boards and NGOs an opportunity to work together to learn more about land user observations, experiences and oral histories about many kinds of ecological and related socio-economic and cultural change. Many previous studies were very local in nature and not linked to other research in other areas. Today, efforts to develop a broader, regional perspective are being facilitated through the efforts of co-management boards, regional organizations as a result of land claim settlements and related legislation (e.g., *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*). Research is already being documented in some areas, but many communities do not have the resources to document their local and traditional knowledge (LTK) in ways that will contribute to watershed policy at regional, provincial/territorial and federal levels. Through this study, we hope to network with existing projects in the Basin, assist some communities in doing studies specific to their regions as well as facilitate a coordinated LTK study across the whole basin.

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Why: Partners and collaborators involved in *Tracking Change...* identified the importance of engaging youth in all aspects of our research project including the definition of research priorities and key issues for study. Some of the youth/young adults involved in the project will be graduate students from different universities. But given that post secondary enrollment in the north is low, finding ways to engage with other students at the junior and high school level is also a key priority. Through the Knowledge Fair, they can learn more about research, science and gain exposure to a university environment. But we can also learn from youth; they are our future leaders and their ideas matter! It is anticipated that outcomes from the student projects could help to identify key areas for future research to support the goals of *Tracking Change...*

Where/When: The event will be held May 23-36, 2016, in Edmonton, Alberta at the University of Alberta and the *Telus World of Science*.

Planning for the **Tracking Change Youth Knowledge Fair (May 24-27, 2016)** is currently underway. The format of the fair builds on a successful pilot project held in 2015 as part of



the *International Association for the Study of the Commons Global Conference*. [iasc2015.org](http://www.iasc2015.org) At this event, we hosted 60 students from 7 communities from northern Alberta with support from Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Alberta. More details about the past pilot project event are at: <http://www.iasc2015.org/indigenous-youth-science-fair.html>

Objectives of the Youth Knowledge Fair

The project aims to document new knowledge through community-based and regional research projects. The sharing of knowledge among the partner organizations and representatives of communities throughout the basin is also critical to the project. Among the knowledge sharing activities in 2016 is a Youth Knowledge Fair that will bring together youth from the various jurisdictions of the Mackenzie River Basin including the Northwest Territories. The objectives of the knowledge fair would be:

- Create opportunities for junior high and high school aged youth to **connect with each other** in Edmonton for three days of educational activities including knowledge sharing activities, educational workshops, keynote presentations from inspirational youth and Aboriginal leaders, tours of the University of Alberta;
- Support students to **learn about their own histories, ecosystems and communities** from elders and their communities and through their schools through submissions of poster projects; and
- Encourage the **development of research and written/oral communication skills** by through a poster project related to the health of water, fish, fishing livelihoods and well-being of communities in the Mackenzie River Basin.

Who can apply to attend? The Youth Knowledge Fair is open to applications from junior/high school groups and individual students from the five provincial and territorial jurisdictions of the Mackenzie River Basin. Our aim is to host between 25-100 students from Grades 7-10. The event will be held over three days. Accommodation will be available at the Lister Hall Conference Centre and student residence at the University of Alberta main campus (Edmonton) with events being held both at the University of Alberta and at the *Telus World of Science*.

To learn more visit our website:

www.trackingchange.ca



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