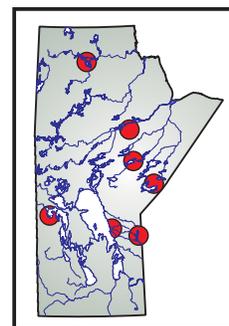


## GS-19 Community liaison program: bridging land-use perspectives of First Nation communities and the minerals resource sector in Manitoba

by L.A. Murphy



Murphy, L.A. 2011: Community liaison program: bridging land-use perspectives of First Nation communities and the minerals resource sector in Manitoba; *in* Report of Activities 2011, Manitoba Innovation, Energy and Mines, Manitoba Geological Survey, p. 180–181.

### Summary

The Manitoba Geological Survey (MGS) community liaison program provides a geological contact person for Manitoba First Nation communities and the minerals resource sector. The mandate for this program acknowledges and respects the First Nation land-use perspective, allows for an open exchange of mineral information, and encourages the integration of geology and mineral-resource potential into the land-use planning process. Timely information exchange is critical to all stakeholders, and open communication of all concerns regarding multiple land-use issues reduces timelines and mitigates potential impacts to Aboriginal and Treaty rights. Schools, communities and mineral industry stakeholders throughout Manitoba access the program during land-use planning processes, encouraging a balanced approach to economic development in traditional land-use areas.

### Introduction

In 2011, the MGS expanded the community mapping program (Murphy and Carlson, 2009, 2010) to encompass a community liaison program, a move designed to meet the departmental mandate of providing meaningful mineral information to the public, including First Nation communities. The Government of Manitoba recognizes it has a duty to consult when any proposed provincial law, regulation, decision or action may infringe upon or adversely affect the exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty rights. Accordingly, the liaison program may at times work in conjunction with the consultation process. The main purpose is to facilitate pertinent geological, mining and ancestral information exchange between communities in Manitoba and the minerals resource sector.

Although, at this time, First Nation communities have a large presence in the program, the intent is to make this service available to any Manitoba community and mineral industry explorationist upon request. Information sharing during 2010–2011 occurred in the following areas:

- Sayisi Dene First Nation traditional land-use area in Manitoba's Far North
- Pimachiowin Aki proposed World Heritage site with Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi and Bloodvein First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg

- Model Forest Junior Rangers program, Nopiming Provincial Park on the east side of Lake Winnipeg (Figure GS-19-1)
- Red Sucker Lake First Nation in the Island Lake traditional land-use area
- Bunibonibee Cree Nation in the Oxford House traditional land-use area
- Sapotaweyak First Nation Community Interest Zone
- Gods Lake First Nation in Gods Lake Narrows
- Tataskweyak Cree Nation in Split Lake
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) representing Manitoba's northern First Nations and Tribal councils
- College Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau, Transcona School Division, career symposium

### Methodology and success

The community liaison initiative in the areas listed above provides timely information to stakeholders. The work is not purely geological, nor always mining related; the main purpose is to build dialogue to ascertain and address community concerns during the land-use planning



**Figure GS-19-1:** 'Geology' day with some of the Model Forest Junior Rangers in Nopiming Provincial Park, Manitoba. Starting clockwise at top left: Jeff Wozny, Geological Society of Manitoba (hidden); Junior Rangers Brandon Gladue, Dakota Redsky and Donald Young; and Linda Murphy, Manitoba Geological Survey.

process and include the mining-community perspective. Concerns, misgivings and misconceptions regarding the mining cycle and the potential impacts of mineral exploration on ancestral, cultural and modern land-usage can be effectively voiced and addressed.

MGS provides First Nation communities with customized topographic and geological maps that include and, in some cases, surround their traditional land-use area. MGS shares technical information (in the form of maps, reports, posters, presentations, summaries regarding mineral potential) during formal and informal meetings, which may include First Nation leadership, community elders and members, as well as representatives from industry and the provincial government (Murphy, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Murphy and Carlson, 2010a, b). Information provided by community members and representatives of the minerals resource sector during these meetings help program representatives advise government and community leaders of areas where mineral potential will impact land-use planning.

Questions most often asked by First Nation leadership, men, women, youth and elders via meetings, phone calls or e-mails:

- What does the information on the geological map mean and why is it important to our land-use planning process?
- What and where are the mineral resources in our traditional land-use area?
- Which companies are in our area and what are they looking for?
- What are the companies doing when they work on the land and where are they working?
- How, for the sake of future generations, do we protect our environmental, cultural and sacred areas from the impacts of mineral exploration and/or mining?
- Will the companies provide training and jobs, and when?

This proactive process, together with the personal contact provided by the MGS, help improve communication and minimize potential negative impacts for the mineral sector and first Nation communities.

Relationship building includes large-scale projects, such as community mapping with the Sayisi Dene at Tadoule Lake (Murphy and Carlson, 2009, 2010a, b), and small-scale outreach initiatives, such as joining the Model Forest Junior Rangers program in Nopiming Provincial Park (Figure GS-19-1). The community liaison program accepts and respects First Nation knowledge and perspectives of traditional land-use areas, while integrating the ancestral knowledge with geoscience information and mineral exploration techniques. Overall, longer visits among the communities, such as those undertaken during the community mapping project, encourage industry investment, increase employment capacity and achieve

the most success for long-term relationship building (Murphy and Carlson, 2009, 2010a, b).

## Economic considerations

It is essential to the mineral-resource planning process to include First Nation perspectives in First Nation traditional areas. The open exchange of information, including the integration of ancestral and modern land-usage with geology and mineral-resource potential, encourages a respectful, balanced approach providing, over the long term, economic benefits for all stakeholders. Community liaison through government initiatives, or within the mining industry, serves to encourage problem identification and mitigation of potential impacts to Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

## Acknowledgments

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