

2010 ENR Aklavik TAKT Activity Report

*Completed by Renewable Resource
Officer (RRO) Ian McLeod*

Moose Kerr School (MKS), Aklavik, NT

December 6th to 17th, 2010.

The 'Take a Kid Trapping Program' (TAKT) is a Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) initiative that provides funding for on the land programs. ITI works in conjunction with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR).

Moose Kerr School, with assistance from Aklavik ENR, applied for and received funding to implement a *TAKT Program*. The goal of the program was to introduce students to traditional and cultural winter harvesting activities such as ice fishing, hunting, trapping and winter travel and survival skills. The students also gained invaluable knowledge related to harvesting, such as tool making, small engine maintenance, fur pelt preparation, making pelt stretcher boards and introductory first aid.

TAKT Program Instructors:

Samuel McLeod, a local trapper and a graduate of Moose Kerr (2008), was hired as the Youth Leader to assist the Aklavik RRO Ian McLeod to implement the program. Also assisting the program was Danny C. Gordon a local elder, trapper and craftsman who provided instructions on tool making, and traditional and cultural knowledge. The Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee (AHTC) also sponsored local elder Joe Arey for one day to take the students out on his trapline and teach them traditional and cultural knowledge.

TAKT Program Students:

The ten students who took part in the program were Jerald Joe, David McLeod, Ocean McLeod, Tyson Whitbread, Arnold Archie, Shaun Firth, Riley Furlong, Jessi Pascal, Billy Tyrrel and John Jake Koe. All youth are MKS Junior High students.

Daily Activities – WEEK ONE:

Monday, December 6 - Introduction and Ice Fishing:

After a thorough safety lecture the group travelled out on the land with snowmobiles. We travelled up Aklavik Channel where we observed a moose in its natural habitat. We then went up Taylor Channel where we checked a few beaver houses but they were not active as a result of overflow. We stopped at a few creeks and tried ice fishing but we did not catch anything. On the way back we set two beaver traps along the creek near the MKS Bush Camp, which is about five kilometres from Aklavik.

Tuesday, December 7 - Mountain Trapping:

The group travelled into the Richardson Mountains to First Creek where RRO McLeod had set traps in advance of the program. One lynx was caught and the students learned how to dispatch a lynx and then reset the trap.



Students with lynx trapped at First Creek.

The group then travelled further down the creek and set up a wolverine trap and built a fire to warm up. The temperature that day with the wind chill was -40°C so the youth warmed up, had their lunch and dried their neck warmers around the fire.

Wednesday, December 8 - Pelt Handling:

Due to the extreme cold temperatures the group completed indoor activities. In the morning local elder Nellie Arey taught traditional wolverine pelt preparation and stretching. Samuel McLeod also skinned and stretched the lynx caught the previous day.



Samuel McLeod teaches Jerald Joe how to skin a lynx.

In the afternoon the class watched trapping videos available on DVDs and the Internet.

Thursday, December 9 - Beaver Trapping:

The outside temperatures continued to be very cold so we focused our program closer to the community. In the morning the group travelled up Mountain Trail to Bridge Lake where they set several beaver traps and a lynx trap.

In the afternoon the group crossed the Peel River to the MKS Bush Camp where they caught one small beaver and set a few more traps.

Friday, December 10 - No TAKT activities, too cold weather:

Due to the extreme cold weather the program was cancelled for the day. The students went to school and caught up on their other school work.

WEEK TWO

Monday, December 13 - Check Traps & Ice Fishing:

The group checked the traps they set the previous week on Mountain Trail but did not catch anything. We also set an additional beaver trap. The group then went to Martin Creek and did some ice fishing. The students caught ten inconnu and two Northern pike.

Tuesday, December 14 - Inuvialuit Elders Day:

The AHTC sponsored local trapper Joe Arey to take the group out for the day. The group followed Joe up Mountain Trail to his trapline along the foothills. Joe caught a mink and the students harvested a fox. He demonstrated different sets along his line. We also did a detour up First Creek and checked the traps there. Unfortunately we did not catch anything. Joe caught a fox in his last trap where we re-entered the MacKenzie Delta.



Joe Arey with the TAKT students checking his lynx trap at Joseph Creek (Myers Lake).

Wednesday, December 15 - Red Mountain:

The group travelled up Mountain Trail to a gravel pit in the foothills above Willow Creek. From there they climbed down the mountain to a creek and crossed over to Red Mountain (Mount Gifford). When we climbed up behind Red Mountain we came upon the front range where two sheep were observed. Samuel and some of the older boys attempted to hunt the sheep but they never got close enough.



Picture taken during mid day on top of Red Mountain.

The group followed the top of the ridge, glassing around occasionally for caribou or other animals. After crossing several very deep creeks the group climbed to the crest of Jurassic Butte where they descended back down to the MacKenzie Delta. They then travelled along the Husky River back to the Peel River then onto Aklavik.

Thursday and Friday, December 16-17:

For the last two days of the program the class split into two groups. One group went to Danny C. Gordon's shop for tool making, the other group went to the ENR shop to make fur stretcher boards and learn small engine maintenance.

The first group with Danny C. Gordon had a choice of making a hunting knife, an ulu or a fishing hook. The second group worked with MKS teacher Ed Hartley on snowmobile maintenance in the morning and in the afternoon they worked with carpenter Wally Tyrrel on building stretcher boards for wolf, wolverine, lynx and fox.



David McLeod making a lynx stretcher.

Conclusion:

Attendance throughout the program was very good with a majority of the students attending most of the time, with only a few exceptions due to cold weather. The weather during most of the program was extremely cold, mainly around -30°C below. Some days the wind chills exceeded -40°C below.

Despite this the students showed great enthusiasm for the TAKT Program. No one complained about the cold and the students did not want to go home most days. Snowmobile safety was stressed throughout the program.

The elders who participated in the program felt the students were very well behaved and respectful and they were very happy to see a cultural program such as this promoting trapping awareness and traditional knowledge.

Trapping safety issues and concerns, related government trapping legislation and international trapping agreements were discussed and addressed during the trap line visits.

We have been implementing this cultural program for several years now and each year we try to improve the program. I am very pleased we provide the community youths an opportunity to learn about the trapping industry, their heritage, traditional knowledge and I look forward to this cultural program each year.

For more information please contact:

Ian McLeod
Renewable Resource Officer II
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Government of the Northwest Territories
Aklavik, NT X0E 0T0
Tel: (867) 978-2248
Fax: (867) 978-2061
E-mail: Ian_McLeod@gov.nt.ca