

## **TRAPLINE CH1 (FG1)**

### **Land Use Before the La Grande Complex**

#### **Trapline Background Information**

The trapline CH-1 is located on the north shore of La Grande River and bordered by the James Bay to the west. The trapline is situated on land of Category I in its western extremity and on land of Category II on the rest of it, and is configured as a long strip of land stretching over about 60 km long by 8 to 13 km large. Malcolm House age between 60 and 65 years has been the tallyman since the 1980s and before, his father was the trapline tallyman.

#### **Impacts Related to the La Grande Complex:**

- La Grande-1 generating station, dam and reservoir
- Increased flow in the La Grande River
- Robert-Bourassa power station (before the construction of La Grande-1)
- Road to Longue Pointe

#### **Trapline Land Use Before the La Grande Complex**

Before the community moved from Fort George to Chisasibi and the start-up of the La Grande project access to the trapline was possible by the coastal routes of James Bay, by the winter trails across La Grande River and by plane. The canoe routes on the bay, connected with the Guillaume River mouth, which was an important gathering and resource harvesting area. The canoe route followed the Guillaume River further inland and allowed the tallyman to reach the easternmost sector of the trapline. Paddling up the river was difficult because of the portages. In order to access to the eastern sector of the trapline, the tallyman could also take the plane. The fly-in sites were located on Nichuchakan Lake, Kaumisipanaw Lake, and the lakes associated with the main campsites.

During the winter, the tallyman could reach the trapline by walking on snowshoes, leading a dog team or driving a snowmobile. Numerous trails were opened up connecting Fort George to the northern shore across La Grande River. Along the river shores there was also a trail that went east and that was also used by the trappers that were traveling to traplines beyond CH1. The dog team was used until 1968-69 and since then, the snowmobile became the principal means of transportation. During the winter many trails were used depending on the conditions and the purpose of travel. And the tallyman noted that they only mapped the most important and frequently used trails. .

The tallyman left Fort George in September but if he was staying at a campsite across the river he could to come back often. He also spent Christmas in the community and returned to his trapline in January where he stayed until April.

In the 1970s, there were more than a dozen campsites on CH1. About half of them were located on the coastal area, more precisely, on or near the shores of Des Oies bay. The main campsite was referred to as a winter lodge or *mihtukuan* where as many as 6 families, around 30 to 35 persons, spent some time at this camp that was habitable all year round. Across Des Oies bay on the southern shore there was another campsite made up with a teepee and tents and another on one of the islands of Des Oies Bay. Two other campsites were located on the shores of the James Bay, south of Des Oies Bay. Both consisted of teepees and tents.

In the central section of the trapline there were three living sites along the canoe route on the Guillaume River or the snowmobile route with canvas tents and served as permanent camps for two families that trapped in the area. In the eastern sector of the trapline there are five other campsites: four teepee canvas and a log and moss cabin. These camps were mainly used during the winter while the log cabin was inhabited during the fall and winter.

The location of the activities on the trapline depended very much on the resource the tallyman was looking for and the season of the year. The tallyman didn't subdivide his trapline into specific trapping areas among which he will alternate from one year to another because it's relatively small and he could cover most if it in one day on snowmobile. Thus, the whole trapline was normally covered after a year and he rather applied a small-scale management of the beavers alternating between very small areas, creeks or lodges. He avoided to trap the beaver for two years in a row in the same place, and left a time gap of 2 to 3 years in order to let the resource grow again.

The people from Fort George also exploited this area but they restricted themselves to small game and goose hunting or fishing. As is customary on other traplines, the tallyman and other trappers appointed by him were the only ones allowed to trap the beaver. If a beaver lodge was found in the bordering area with another trapline, the first tallyman to find it had the prerogative to trap the beaver in it or he could leave it for his neighbor.

Other activities on the territory were more localized and related to the season of the year. During the spring and again in the fall, goose hunting was carried out in the James Bay area. On the shores of Des Oies Bay and Stromness Haven, the tallyman had many specific spots where he hunted geese using decoys. The camps located in this area were mainly intended for this activity.

The coastal area of James Bay was valued by the tallyman and his relatives and could be exploited in all seasons of the year. During the summer, fishing was particularly good, especially for cisco, whitefish and turbot. The tallyman could also start his trapping season in this area and move inland later on or, in the fall, start paddling up the Guillaume River towards the central and eastern sectors of the trapline where the trapping was more extensive. While he followed the canoe route, the tallyman inventoried the beaver lodges he found on his way and thus determined where he would set his traps. During this journey, the tallyman relied on small game and fish for his subsistence before the trapping season started. The lakes along Guillaume River and Awisaskutach, Nichuchakan, Awichina and Kaumispanaw lakes offered abundant suckers, pike, and lake trout.

The La Grande River estuary was also a good resource area for fishing during the spring, summer, and fall. Speckled trout was abundant but, in the fall, cisco was most important when it

came upstream from the bay to spawn. The tallyman and the people from Fort George would set their nets just downstream from the island and then in August, the tallyman paddled up the river to the first rapid where they set up a temporary camp near the rapids to set their nets for cisco. They could reach the com in a day to bring fresh fish back. The La Grande River also offered recreational activities like swimming.

The tallyman described the trapline as being plentiful for beaver and small game like rabbits, lynx, porcupine and fox and also ptarmigan. For big game, only black bear was abundant in the 1970s and caribou wasn't present on this trapline. Moose started to be seen only in the 1980s. Marten wasn't common but there were some other fur bearing animals such as weasels, muskrats and mink. Ducks were abundant in the coastal area.

### **Valued Areas**

The tallyman considers the whole trapline as valued for resources although he did point out certain special areas. The creeks running into La Grande River, across from Fort George, for instance, were especially plentiful in beaver. All of the river and its shoreline was intensively used. Other than the shoreline of the La Grande River, Des Oies Bay was and is still the most valued family area on the trapline. It the birth place of four of the tallyman's brothers and near the camp there are several burial sites. Elsewhere on the trapline, there are several areas valued by the family such as the shores of Guillaume River where there additional birth places.

