



2013-2015

committee summary report

KISCHI SIPI  
NAMAQ



# profile



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Lake Sturgeon have a social and historical significance in Manitoba and a strong cultural significance to Aboriginal peoples in the province. Over the past 100 years, a combination of intensive commercial fishing and habitat disruption has had serious effects on Manitoba sturgeon populations.

The Kischi Sipi Namao Committee (KSNC), originally known as the Lower Nelson River Sturgeon Stewardship Committee, was established in 2013 to bring together interested stakeholders committed to protecting and enhancing populations of this heritage species. Committee efforts focus on the Lower Nelson River from Kelsey Generating station to Hudson Bay, including the Hayes River system (Hayes, Gods and Echoing rivers).

*"We must protect sturgeon for future generations"*  
– Audrey Ouskan, War Lake First Nation

Membership includes representatives from Fox Lake Cree Nation, Shamat-tawa First Nation, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation and York Factory First Nation as well as Manitoba Hydro and the Keeyask Hydro-power Limited Partnership. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship participates in the committee as a non-voting member.

Manitoba Hydro has committed to a 20 year funding arrangement that will allow the committee to undertake a variety of core activities. Funding for the KSNC is allocated from Keeyask and the existing stations on the Nelson River. The community led, collaborative structure of the KSNC will ensure the incorporation of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) into the important work of protecting and enhancing Lake Sturgeon populations.

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# summary of activities

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Daniel Redhead (Shamattawa First Nation), Stanley Spence (York Factory First Nation) and Allen Spence (War Lake First Nation) listen to Hatchery Worker Meagan Alexander while she gives a tour of the Grand Rapids Hatchery to the Kischi Sipi Namao Committee.

## Committee Member Education

In June 2014, members of the committee traveled to the Nelson River Sturgeon Board spawn camp on the Landing River. By observing, members learned about the collection of sturgeon eggs and milt and the process by which the eggs are fertilized and sent to Grand Rapids Hatchery for incubation and rearing.

In September 2014, members observed 3-month-old fingerlings during a tour of the Grand Rapids Fish Hatchery. Hatchery staff provided a guided tour, explaining the early life history of the species, the hatchery rearing process and the role of these hatchery raised sturgeon in restoring and maintaining healthy populations in the Nelson River.



Marcel Beardy (Tataskweyak Cree Nation) watches over the sturgeon temporarily placed in pools during a visit to the Nelson River Sturgeon Board's spawn camp at the Landing River.



Various community members working in groups at the Kischi Sipi Namao Committee Workshop.

## Strategic Planning Workshop

The KSNC identified a need to develop a stewardship plan to guide future activities. To achieve this, the committee decided to pursue a strategic planning process to define the vision, goals and objectives of the committee and to develop a corresponding short list of priority projects and activities.

As a key part of this process, the KSNC hosted a three day workshop on Lake Sturgeon in the Lower Nelson River from February 24-26, 2015, at the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre in Thompson, MB.

KSNC members from each of Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN), War Lake First Nation (WLFN), Fox Lake Cree Nation (FLCN), York Factory First Nation (YFFN), and Shamattawa First Nation (SFN) invited community members to participate, including elders, resource users and youth. Representatives from Manitoba Hydro, Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership (KHLP), Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, the Nelson River Sturgeon Board, Rainy River First Nations and North/South Consultants also participated. The KSNC has retained a consultant to use the information from the workshop to produce a stewardship plan.

## Logo Development

To identify the committee in a way that is recognizable and memorable, discussion throughout the year led to the development of five potential logos which were based on artwork by Darcy Wastesicoot and Stanley Spence. Each participant at the February workshop was asked to cast a ballot for their first, second and third choice and an overwhelming favorite emerged, which the committee adopted as the KSNC logo.



Community and KSNC members enjoyed presentations from numerous individuals. One of the many outstanding presentations was provided by Daniel Ross from the Nelson River Sturgeon Board.

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The Kischi Sipi Namao Committee members on a tour of the Grand Rapids Fish Hatchery.

### Community Involvement

In spring of 2014, a successful sturgeon release event at the Burntwood River that included youth and Elders from TCN was organized by KSNC member Marcel Beardy. This prompted the KSNC to fund the participation of students from the York Factory First Nation and a researcher from the Fox Lake Cree Nation in the release of three hundred Lake Sturgeon yearlings into the Burntwood River in October 2014. These fish were reared and released for the Keeyask project. Prior to attending the release, Darcy Wastesicoot and Stanley Spence visited the school in York Factory and spoke to the students about the importance of sturgeon and a future for the species that requires active involvement in stewardship. Each student named a yearling and then released it into the Burntwood River. Each fish was implanted with a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag, which serves to uniquely identify each fish. When these fish are captured in future studies, the school will be notified of the date and location of capture, and the length and weight of their Lake Sturgeon.

In January 2015, the KSNC provided funding to send several students from War Lake First Nation to the Grand Rapids Fish Hatchery. Hatchery staff showed the students how sturgeon are cared for at the facility, provided educational videos on sturgeon biology and discussed conservation efforts for the species in the province. The highlight of the visit was a relay where students participated in a race that incorporated various production activities including egg collection and stocking. The students learned about sturgeon conservation in an enjoyable tour of the hatchery, and left with a better understanding about sturgeon and the role that the hatchery has in conserving Lake Sturgeon populations in Manitoba.

## meetings

Meetings were held every two months and alternated between Winnipeg and either Thompson, Gillam, or one of the member First Nation communities, as called for in the Committee's Terms of Reference. The following meetings were held during the 2013/14 and 2014/15 fiscal years:

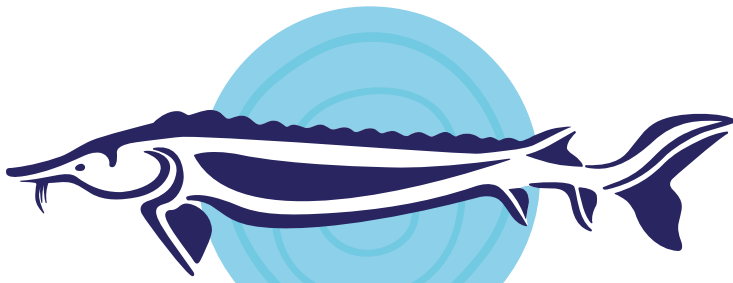
- May 23, 2013 in Thompson
- August 1, 2013 in Winnipeg
- October 3, 2013 in Thompson
- December 12, 2013 in Winnipeg
- January 28, 2014 in Thompson
- March 25, 2014 in Winnipeg
- May 15, 2014 in Thompson
- July 17, 2014 in Winnipeg
- September 11, 2014 in Grand Rapids \*
- November 13, 2014 in Winnipeg
- January 15, 2015 in Thompson
- March 19, 2015 in Winnipeg

\* this meeting was combined with a tour of the Grand Rapids Hatchery facility and Generating Station

## future initiatives

The KSNC is developing a stewardship plan to guide the activities of the committee over the next number of years. The stewardship plan will reflect and accommodate both western and Cree stewardship approaches.





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