



2024

Kischi Sipi Namao Committee
Annual Report



Profile



Lake Sturgeon have a social and historical significance in Manitoba and a strong cultural significance to Indigenous 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) was established in 2013 as a partnership committed to protecting and enhancing Lake Sturgeon populations in the lower Nelson River. 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).

Membership includes representatives from Fox Lake Cree Nation, Shamattawa First Nation, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, York Factory First Nation, as well as Manitoba Hydro and Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership. Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures participates in the committee as a non-voting member.

In 2013, Manitoba Hydro 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 Traditional Knowledge (TK) into the important work of protecting and enhancing Lake Sturgeon populations.

Committee Executives



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Committee
Chair



Darcy Wastesticoot,

York Factory First Nation

"During my childhood, Mom and Dad taught the lessons of life, Cree views and traditions, and how to survive off what the land and water has to offer."

Committee
Vice Chair



Gilbert Beardy,

Tataskweyak Cree Nation

"Harvesting of sturgeon by our Elders was limited to what was needed immediately. Today KSNC is still promoting conservation of all sturgeon migrating through our area."

Plan



THE LAKE STURGEON STEWARDSHIP PLAN

The KSNC Stewardship Plan was accomplished through a series of community and committee workshops, with the objective of plan development through committee consensus. This document sets overall measures, objectives and strategies for protection and enhancement of Lake Sturgeon in the lower Nelson River for the immediate, medium and long term future. The objective of the plan is to provide guidance and set priorities for the Committee.

During these workshops and meetings the Committee collaborated to develop their purpose, vision, goals, and priorities.

Purpose

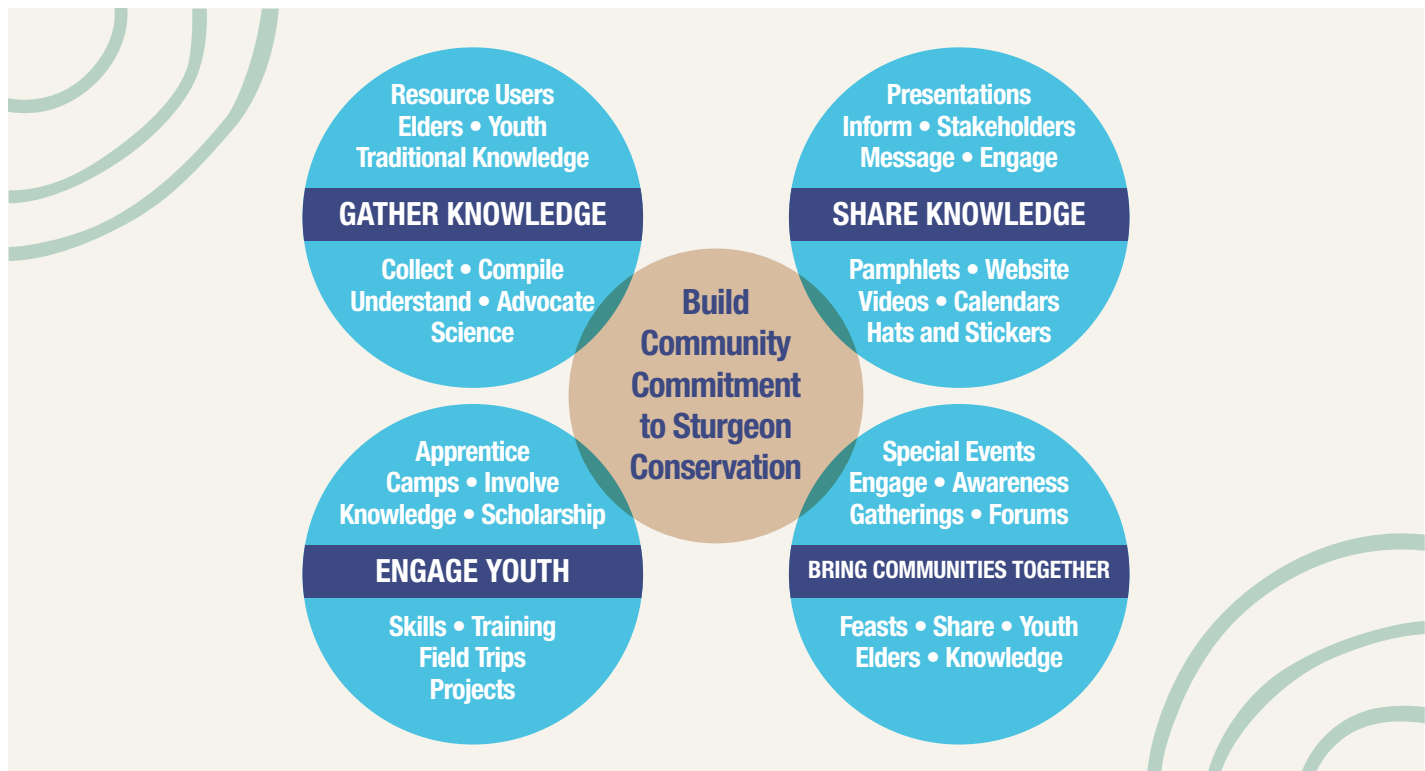
Provide a community-oriented, proactive approach in implementing stewardship activities. The collaborative structure of the KSNC ensures the incorporation of Traditional Knowledge (TK) into the important work of protecting and enhancing Lake Sturgeon populations.

Vision

The Committee worked together to create a vision statement they feel communicates their purpose:

**“Wetatoskehmitowin,
Namao Kakekeh”**

“Working together to conserve sturgeon for
future generations”



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Priorities

The following priorities were selected to lead the committee toward achieving their vision:

- **Increasing KSNC Functionality**
- **Gathering Information;** Community & Traditional Knowledge
- **Sharing Our Message;** Educating our communities
- **Bringing Communities Together;** Building cohesiveness
- **Engaging Youth;** Involving the sturgeon stewards of the future
- **Conserving and Enhancing the Lake Sturgeon Population**

Summary of Activities



Gathering Information

The KSNC facilitated compilation of information, Traditional Knowledge, stories, quotes and photos from each of the participating communities. This information is used for planning, communications, and publications by the KSNC such as presentations and brochures.

"Sturgeon was not only food to the Cree. The women who were expecting or had a baby were encouraged to eat the sturgeon and drink sturgeon broth. That way they passed on the medicine to their babies through breast-feeding making them strong and healthy."

— Flora Beardy, York Factory First Nation

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"We speak for the sturgeon. We must protect them for future generations. They are an important part of our culture. Without them we lose part of our culture"

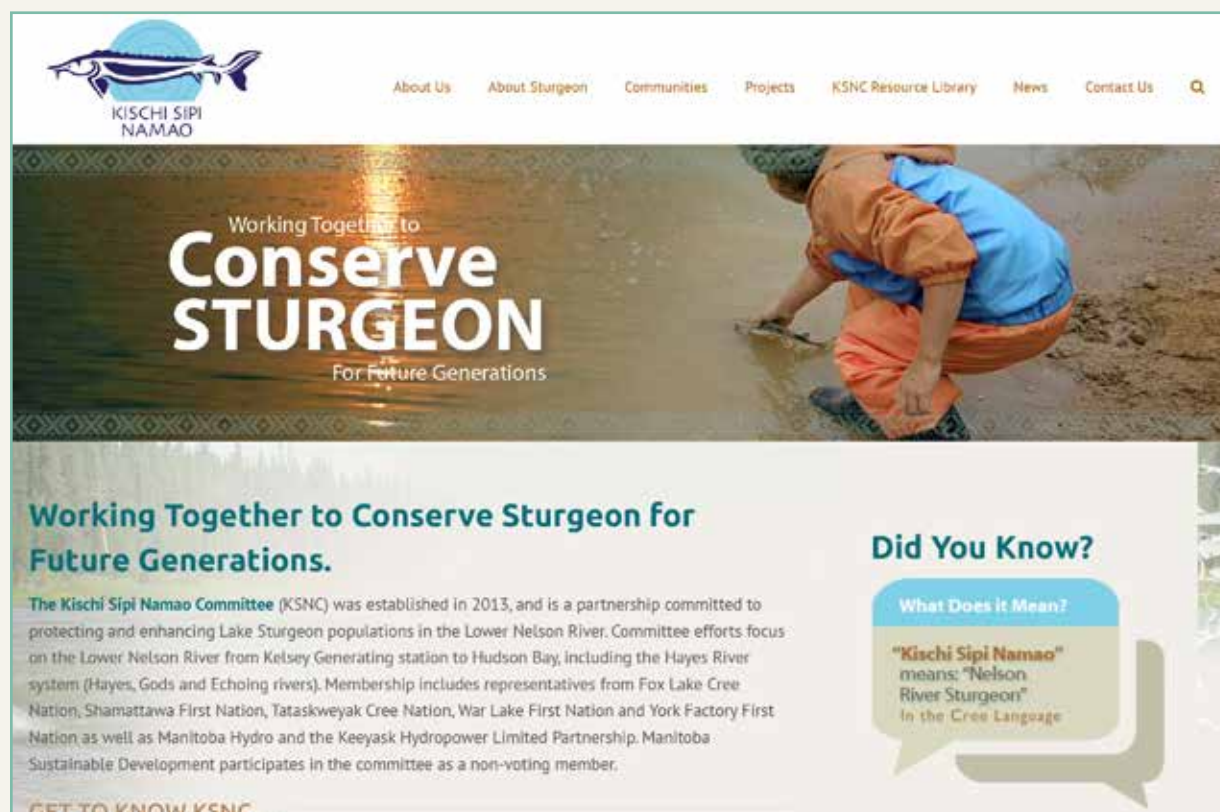
— Chief Betsy Kennedy, WLFN



KSNC Website

The KSNC's comprehensive website is a source of information on Lake Sturgeon and committee activities and priorities, including descriptions and photos of meetings, stocking and other events and links to Lake Sturgeon resources.

Visit us at
www.KSNC.ca



"Sturgeon has a unique place in the lives of Tataskweyak and War Lake Members for spiritual and practical reasons. The Cree feel an inherent responsibility to care for sturgeon because it is seen as a special gift from the Creator"

— Tataskweyak Cree Nation and War Lake First Nation

Summary of Activities



The KSNC continues to engage youth and encourage and facilitate the transfer of knowledge within families. The youth are the stewards of the future, and the long-lived Lake Sturgeon will need their help!

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Engaging Youth & Bringing Communities Together

Fox Lake Cree Nation Community Engagement Info Session & Career Fair

The KSNC was represented at the Fox Lake Cree Nation Community Engagement Info Session & Career Fair held at the Gillam Rec Centre on February 13, 2024. KSNC shared their message of the committee's goals to provide a community-oriented, proactive approach in implementing stewardship activities while ensuring the incorporation of Traditional Knowledge (TK) into the important work of protecting and enhancing Lake Sturgeon populations. The scholarship was promoted, and students took applications. A fun filled day ended with closing remarks from the Fox Lake Chief, and Town of Gillam Mayor.



"I am participating in this stewardship initiative to ensure that Lake Sturgeon are present for my children and future generations."

— James Lockhart, FLCN

Sturgeon stockings by the Grand Rapids Fish Hatchery for the Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership

No sturgeon were stocked for the Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership in 2024. Efforts by field crews to collect a spawning female were unsuccessful at Birthday Rapids in spring 2023. As a result, the spawn camp location was moved to Stephens Lake in 2024. Several females with eggs were captured during the 2024 spring spawn; however, the eggs were not yet fully developed to be collected and fertilized.

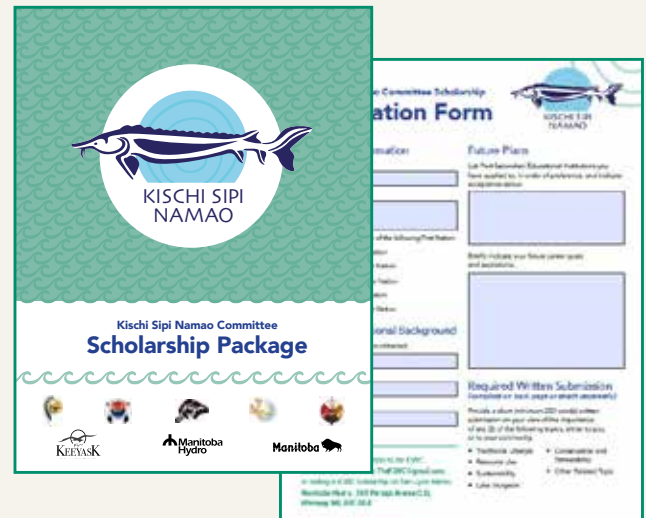


Summary of Activities

Scholarship Program

In 2017, the Committee established a post-secondary scholarship program available to students from each of the five participating First Nations. The following six scholarships were awarded for the 2024 year:

- Abbey Allan – FLCN
- Jordan Allan – FLCN
- Vanessa Sandberg – FLCN
- Kiersten Buck – TCN
- Dwight Beardy – TCN
- Stella Flett – TCN



Meetings



- February 28, 2024 – Thompson
- June 7, 2024 – Winnipeg
- November 7, 2024 – Grand Rapids Fish Hatchery



Future Initiatives



The KSNC will continue to pursue strategies and activities that contribute to their priorities and are consistent with the Stewardship Plan. Some of the strategies planned for the next year are:

- Continued Lake Sturgeon release events
- Increase programming opportunities for school children in the KSNC member communities
- Getting sturgeon aquariums into communities
- Continued offering of the Post-Secondary Scholarship



Noah Massan (FLCN, 2012) recalled his grandmother using rendered namao fat to prepare bannock, pemmican, or any other food that required lard. A welcome treat was pemmican made from rendered fat, dried namao, and cranberries.

**"Working
together,
sturgeon
forever."**



**"We must protect
sturgeon for
future
generations."**

**— Audrey Ouskan,
War Lake First Nation**



KISCHI SIPI
NAMAQ

“Working together, sturgeon forever”

