



# Culturally Important Wetland Plants Project

## What

The Culturally Important Wetland Plants Project, funded under the Oil Sands Monitoring Program is working to co-produce knowledge about culturally important wetland plants through community-led, traditional environmental knowledge-based monitoring in the Athabasca and Peace oil sands regions.

## Why

Access to healthy culturally important wetlands is a key concern for Indigenous communities in the oil sands region. These communities have voiced concern that industrial development is having an impact on wetlands. More specifically, the Indigenous communities have expressed concerns about reduced water levels and the introduction of contaminants to the water and air.

The Culturally Important Wetland Plants Project was established in response to these community concerns.



Source: Dyck, T. and A. Garibaldi (2018). Cultural Importance of Wetland Plants: Fort McMurray 468 First Nation.

## How

The project is rooted in a collaborative approach to environmental monitoring and will:

- Continue to support Indigenous community involvement in wetland plant monitoring program design, implementation, evaluation, reporting, and communication to ensure the project is based on community-specific priorities.
- Co-produce information (Indigenous and scientific knowledge, as appropriate) to provide insights on the level of contamination on traditional wild food in the oil sands region of northern Alberta.
- Provide opportunities for relationship building, knowledge sharing, and time on the land.
- Provide opportunities for all participants involved to learn new perspectives and skills.

## Where

Territories of Indigenous communities in the Athabasca and Peace oil sands regions.

## When

The program began in 2017-2018 with the aim of becoming a long term monitoring program.

## Who

Indigenous communities, Alberta Environment & Parks, and external researchers (academia and consultants).

Learn more at [environmentalmonitoring.alberta.ca](http://environmentalmonitoring.alberta.ca)

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## Progress to Date

The program is entering its third year. In 2017, the Wood Buffalo Environmental Association hosted a workshop to discuss wetlands with four Indigenous communities located in the Athabasca oil sands region. This resulted in an inventory of wetland plant species, sites and focal areas of concern.

Those Indigenous communities who expressed interest at the workshop and those interested in the Peace oil sands region were then invited to co-design a project and collect preliminary data associated with a wetland plant monitoring program.

In 2017-2018, the following communities worked with ethnographers and researchers to identify key indicator species and important sites:

- Fort McMurray 468 First Nation
- Conklin Métis
- Tall Cree First Nation
- Beaver First Nation
- Little Red River Cree Nation



Source: Dyck, T. and A. Garibaldi (2018). Cultural Importance of Wetland Plants: Conklin Metis.

## Next Steps

- Communities are continuing to design monitoring initiatives and additional interested communities have been invited to participate.
- Ethnographic research support funding has been applied to work with communities and seek methodological alignments from a local to regional scale.
- Elders, land users, and youth will continue to spend time in the field with western wetland scientists to share information and approaches.



Source: Dyck, T. and A. Garibaldi (2018). Cultural Importance of Wetland Plants: Conklin Metis.

## Contact

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