



St. Lawrence Islands National Park

Akwesasne Snapshots – What We've Done

Over the past two years, St. Lawrence Islands National Park (SLINP) and the Mohawk community of Akwesasne have made concerted efforts to establish respectful and productive relationships. As a result of this mutually beneficial and continuously evolving friendship, the park and the community of Akwesasne have jointly participated in a number of projects. The following is a short description of some of the accomplishments and successes that have resulted from this relationship.

Smoky Fire Ceremony

The Mohawks of Akwesasne and Parks Canada celebrated a commitment to working together by taking part in a traditional Smoky Fire ceremony in the summer of 2007. The event marked the beginning of a relationship that has continued to grow since last August. After the ceremony, park staff and community members from Akwesasne camped out on Grenadier Island, sharing food and stories, participating in a social, learning about medicinal plants, black ash baskets, and lacrosse, and spending time getting to know one another.



Management Plan

St. Lawrence Islands National Park went through several consultation processes with the Mohawks of Akwesasne during the development of the new park management plan. As a result of these consultations, the management plan will guide the park's work with the Aboriginal community in a meaningful way using Mohawk principles of respect, equity and empowerment. The park will work to establish mutually rewarding relationships, raise public awareness of the traditions and history of Aboriginal peoples in the region, share knowledge between SLINP and Akwesasne that leads to the integration of naturalized knowledge systems, and ensure that our friendship contributes economic and social value to both communities.



Voices of Akwesasne

Together with the Mohawks of Akwesasne, St. Lawrence Islands National Park is working on the *Voices of Akwesasne*, a video record of Akwesasne community members telling stories about their connection to St. Lawrence Islands National Park and the greater park ecosystem. The end product will be a series of highly educational, emotionally moving, and sometimes humorous vignettes that will be shared with the Mohawk community of Akwesasne and screened in the park visitor centre.



Deer Herd Management

A tobacco burning ceremony at six o'clock in the morning on January 12th of this year marked the beginning of a joint effort by the Mohawks of Akwesasne and St. Lawrence Islands National Park to restore the forest ecosystem on Hill Island. Studies concluded that the deer population was threatening the entire island forest ecosystem. With the support of Hill Island residents and in partnership with the Mohawks of Akwesasne, the park began herd reduction measures. Deer herd reduction was only one of the positive outcomes of this partnership. The relationships that developed during the hunt led to new opportunities for the park and the community of Akwesasne. Employment opportunities, the youth camp, the Elder visit, and the relationship workshop are but a few examples of the opportunities that arose as a result of this initiative. In addition to this, the deer herd reduction provided opportunities for the park and the Traditional Council to forge a stronger relationship.



Akwesasne Exhibit at the Visitor Centre

The exhibit *We Are From Akwesasne*, on loan from the Akwesasne Museum, was on display at the St. Lawrence Islands National Park Visitor Centre in Mallorytown Landing during the summer of 2008. Local residents and visitors to the park had the opportunity to view the exhibit and learn about Mohawk culture and the community of Akwesasne.

Medicinal Plants

Together with the Department of the Environment of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, St. Lawrence Islands National Park is working on the medicinal plant project. The purpose of this project is to provide the community of Akwesasne with access to medicinal plants that are not found in and around Akwesasne. By consulting with members of the community, the Department of the Environment and the park hope to identify the types of plants to which the community would like greater access and work toward finding or planting them in the park so that the community of Akwesasne can harvest these important plants as needed.

Turtle Recovery Strategy

Consultation with the Department of the Environment of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, the council itself, and St. Lawrence Islands National Park took place to share information and find opportunities for collaboration on a turtle recovery strategy. In addition to this, the process pulled together stewardship councils from across eastern Ontario to network with the Mohawks of Akwesasne and St. Lawrence Islands National Park, starting discussions on how to address issues pertaining to turtle populations.



Aboriginal Sensitivity Training

The Department of the Environment of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne hosted a workshop titled "The Zeal to Deal" in the spring of 2008. Partners from both government and non-government organizations, including a large group from St. Lawrence Islands National Park, had an opportunity to learn more about the community of Akwesasne and how to collaborate with respect, equity and empowerment.



Youth Camp

Youth from the Freedom School and the community of Akwesasne had an opportunity to participate in a two-day youth camp at St. Lawrence Islands National Park in August. The youth were given the opportunity to familiarize themselves within their traditional Mohawk territory. Activities included games, campfires, the Island Quest program, a medicinal plant walk and a tour of the islands.



Akwesasne International Powwow

After an amazing experience at the Akwesasne International Powwow as visitors in 2007, St. Lawrence Islands National Park requested permission to attend the powwow in 2008 to share information with Akwesasne. During the event, park staff shared stories and information about the park and the many species found within it, encouraging members of the community to visit the park and the 1000 Islands region.

Mallorytown Landing

Work has been done to rehabilitate the natural landscape at Mallorytown Landing where the SLINP Visitor Centre is located, and the park has consulted with the communities of Akwesasne and Mallorytown. As a result of these consultations, input from these two communities will be incorporated into new site plans for the Visitor Centre and Mallorytown Landing.



Thompson Island Cultural Camp

The Thompson Island Cultural Camp is an established camp for youth and elders managed by the Department of Environment of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. Recognizing the value of this camp, St. Lawrence Islands National Park worked cooperatively with the Department of the Environment to assist them with preparations for the 2007 summer season.



SAR Habitat Availability

Early discussions on how the Mohawks of Akwesasne and St. Lawrence Islands National Park can collaborate on a Species At Risk (SAR) habitat availability program took place in 2008.

Elder Visit

In October, Akwesasne Elders visited St. Lawrence Islands National Park and participated in a cruise ship tour of the islands. The purpose of the visit was to give Akwesasne Elders an opportunity to re-familiarize themselves with their traditional territory, to learn more about St. Lawrence Islands National Park, and to enhance relationships and trust between the two communities.

Tri-Council Working Relations Workshop

Recognizing the need to understand each other's communication channels and establish protocols and procedures that enable effective decision-making, Parks Canada supervisors and managers attended in August the "Positive Working Relationship between First Nations and Parks Canada" workshop. The workshop, being jointly delivered by the St. Regis, Elected, and Traditional Councils, enabled the park to continue to build and strengthen effective and mutually beneficial working relationships with the community of Akwesasne.

Connecting to the park

With the hopes of encouraging the community of Akwesasne to visit and continue to connect with St. Lawrence Islands National Park and the 1000 Islands region, the park has created a pass that will exempt members of the community of Akwesasne from parking, launching, mooring, and camping fees within the park.

