

Aroland First Nation #242

AFSAR Sturgeon Project

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Introduction

Who are we?

- Aroland is located roughly 4 hours North of Thunder Bay.
- We have roughly 700 members with 400 living on reserve and the rest living in city centres

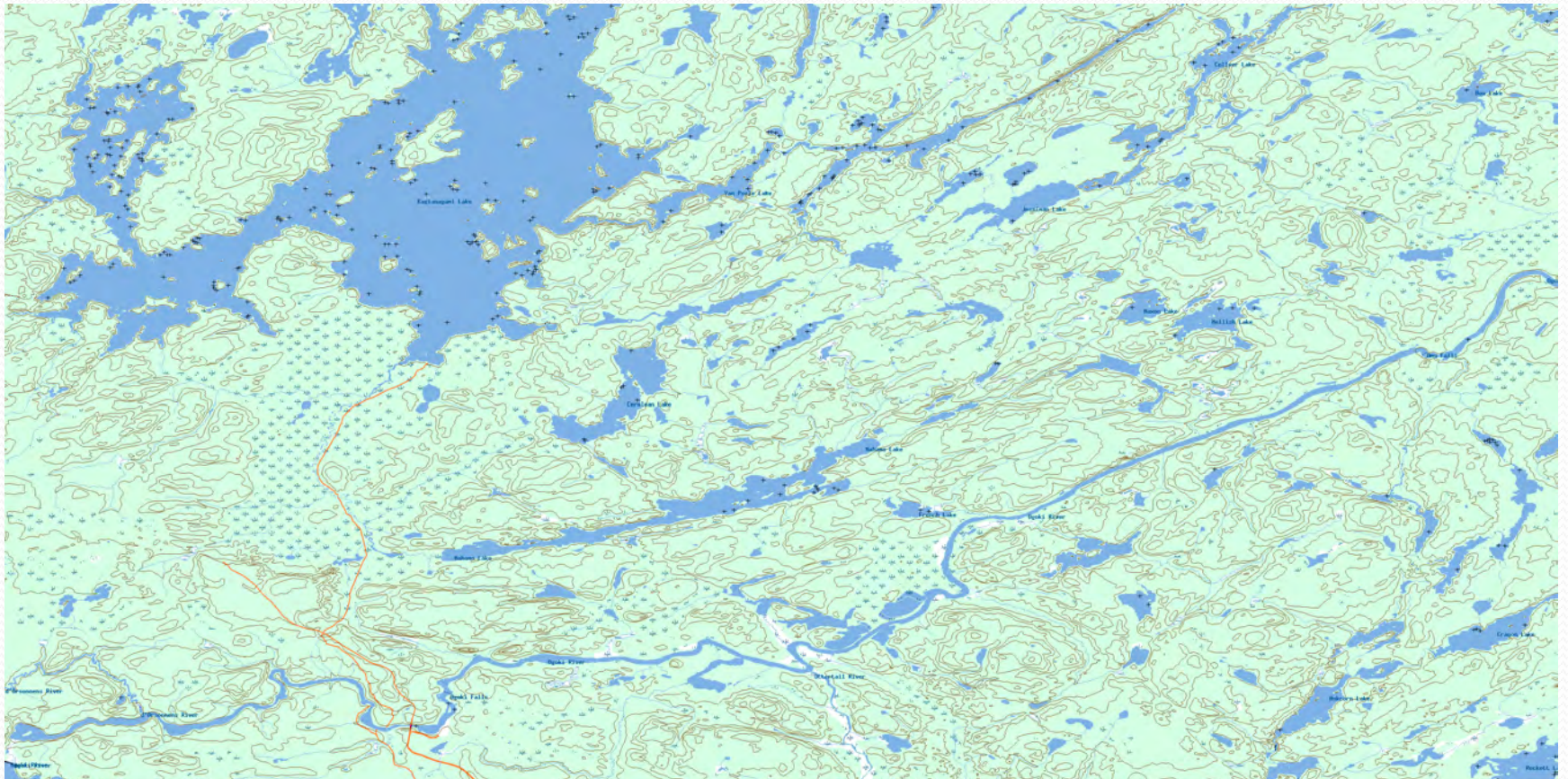
Land Based Community

- Our members are a land based community with many of our on reserve members relying on Land Based foods to complement store bought foods.

The Ogoki River

- Located about 1.5 hours down the Ogoki Road.
- Access to the areas located along the Ottertail River and Mileage 73 Bridge
- Ogoki Falls and Amy Falls in the Albany River watershed are considered highly important areas for Aroland First Nation. Many community members have used these areas since time immemorial to carry out traditional activities.
- Because of their deep connection to the lands and waters, Aroland members are aware that a once thriving population of Lake Sturgeon has apparently declined significantly.

Map of the Ogoki River



The Fishery

- The Ogoki River is home to a World Class Fishery
- Walleye, Pike, Speckle Trout and most importantly Sturgeon



What is happening with the Sturgeon?

- As a young boy my Grandparents would go out on the river and always come home with fish.
- But those catches slowly dwindled to the point where our members were catching very little fish.
- As my grandparents got older it was soon my turn as a young man to start to provide for my family.
- In 6 trips to the River I never caught a Sturgeon.

So why no fish?

- Many factors could account for the lack of fish.
 - Natural Resource development
 - Forestry, Mining
 - River diversion at Waboose Dam?
- Through input and discussion with community members and discussion with my peers our community decided to try to look into some of these reasons



Project Development

- Discussed issues with community members to get a direction on where they wanted to see a project go.
- Then engaged some assistance from a community partners which included Matawa Four Rivers and Shared Value Solutions.



Goals and Objectives of the Project

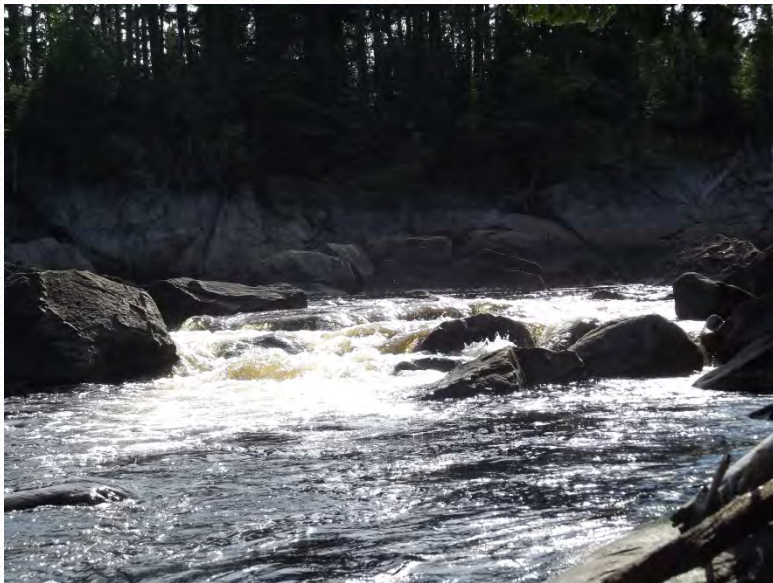
- Aroland Lake Sturgeon Management Plan
 - his project will assess the baseline status of Lake Sturgeon, including population and health status; genetic sampling; basic hydrology, including water flow and water depth; critical habitat; and habitat concerns.
 - This project will entail working with professional biologists to train two community research technicians and two volunteers to carry out biological survey fieldwork.

Project Goals and Objectives cont.

- Aroland Lake Sturgeon Documentary
 - ATK consultants and documentary film makers will film knowledgeable community members as well as the biologist on the land about the importance of the species, ATK surrounding this species, the particular issues surrounding the species in these locations, the fieldwork process, and what the community plans to do in terms of conservation work.
 - This film will be used to conserve ATK, increase knowledge about the species, as well as used for relevant consultation and educational purposes - overall helping with the conservation of Lake Sturgeon. Aroland community members have a rich understanding of the complex ecology that surrounds and makes up the community.
 - While previously Ogoki Falls and Amy Falls were rich in Lake Sturgeon, the past several years has seen their population decline dramatically. Aroland needs to understand what the issues are surrounding this species and what they can do to bring it back, both to prevent the loss of biological diversity and Aroland's traditional activities that surround it.



Amy Falls



Our Project Includes

- Outreach
 - 2 Community Meetings to educate community members as well as engage community elders to expand knowledge of the project
- Outcome
 - Build capacity within the community to better understand the project and threats and issues related to Lake Sturgeon conservation and management, as well as actions their community is taking to address them.

Study Area

Ogoki Falls, Amy Falls, Waboose Dam and Gogogoma Rapids

- This area has since expanded due to the protocols and land based work hours put in by our Research Technicians.
 - Inform Aroland of the Lake Sturgeon population and health status within their traditional territory
 - Inform Aroland of any conservation issues facing Lake Sturgeon within their traditional territory
 - Inform Aroland of locations of critical Lake Sturgeon habitats within their traditional territory
 - Contribute to a culture of community-led conservation initiatives
 - Contribute to the MNRF Lake Sturgeon Provincial Database
 - Gain community capacity and expertise at Aroland for undertaking fisheries assessments.

Traditional Knowledge

- Interviews with 7 community elders
 - Documentation of ATK surrounding Lake Sturgeon
 - Documentation of scientific knowledge surrounding Lake Sturgeon in Amy Falls and Ogoki Falls
 - Documentation of status of Lake Sturgeon in Amy Falls and Ogoki Falls
 - Documentation of any conservation efforts and/or plans
 - 15 minute documentary that can be utilized for educational as well as consultation purposes

Project Support

- Matawa Four Rivers
 - Assisted with a great biologist and Gear for the duration of the project
- Shared Value Solutions
 - Project development and ongoing assistance including documentary
- Ministry of Natural Resources
 - Advice and Gear for the duration of the Project
- Aroland First Nation Leadership
 - Loads of In-kind support including Project Leader and Co leader.

Outcomes

- To develop a clear and concise baseline study on all species of Fish including Walleye, Northern Pike and Sturgeon.
- To look into the rivers past to work to best identify issues that are affecting the fisheries of this great river
- To develop a management plan so we can bring this great species back for future generations



What have we Learned so Far?

- That the Ogoki River is very healthy with populations of very Large Walleye with very abundant populations
- There are very large Pike in the river as well
- Catching Sturgeons is not so Easy (Caught 10 from around 200+ efforts)
- That our community members are great technicians that are very knowledgeable
- And that we have great Partners in this project.