

First Nations, Metis communities conducting joint land use study

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SASKATOON — The Saskatchewan government announced a number of grants Wednesday to help First Nations and Metis communities map their traditional territories and consult with the province about the management of natural resources.

The Cumberland House Cree Nation and Metis Local 42 — which are located in the same region roughly 300 kilometres northeast of Prince Albert — will receive \$172,000 from the province to conduct a joint traditional land use study.

Traditional territory mapping allows the province to learn more about First Nations and Metis lands used for hunting, fishing and trapping, as well as ceremonial purposes. It also ensures the government knows which aboriginal groups are affected by resource exploration in a given area.

“Traditional land use mapping is valuable to First Nations and Metis people as well as government as we move forward to develop our rich provincial resources,” First Nations and Metis Relations Minister June Draude said in a press release. “Our government has a keen interest in every consultation grant that we provide, but I am thrilled to see a joint effort going forward.”

Metis Nation-Saskatchewan (MNS) provincial secretary Max Morin said the project is the first time a Metis local and a First Nation in Saskatchewan have joined in a land use study.

“The Metis and the First Nations keep track of where their people traditionally hunt and fish anyway, but a lot of them hunt and fish together. So why not do a joint study?” he said.

In a separate grant, the Big Island Lake Cree Nation, northwest of Meadow Lake, will receive \$250,000 from the province to conduct its own traditional land study.

The government expects both studies will take more than a year to complete.

The province also gave the MNS \$134,000 to obtain technical expertise and consult with its locals on the management of Saskatchewan’s fisheries.

The province says a new fisheries plan is needed to address issues such as access to fisheries, changing climate conditions and increased demand for certain fish species.

Many northern Metis communities rely on commercial fishing for their livelihoods and Morin says he’s glad the province is fulfilling its duty to consult with the MNS.

“It’s been a long time coming,” he said. “We’ve established a better working relationship with the government and have accountability and transparency within our own organization so they’re more willing to work with us.”

Source: The StarPhoenix