



**MACKENZIE RIVER BASIN BOARD
REPORT TO THE MINISTERS**

MACKENZIE RIVER BASIN BOARD
REPORT TO THE MINISTERS
2013 - 2014

Table of Contents

Letter of Transmittal	i
Message from the Chair	ii
Message from the Executive Director	iii
Introduction	1
The Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement	2
Background	2
The Master Agreement Principles	2
The Mackenzie River Basin Board	3
Structure and Operations	3
Finances	3
Status of Bilateral Water Management Agreements	4
Mackenzie River Basin Board Meetings April 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014	6
MRBB Committees	7
MRBB State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report Steering Committee	8
MRBB Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee	8
MRBB Communications Committee	9
Looking Forward	10
Appendix I: Financial Report	11
Appendix II: Board Membership on March 31, 2014	12

>> Photo: Athabasca River, Alberta. Credit: Don Pittman



Letter of Transmittal

December 16, 2014

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq
Minister of Environment
Government of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

The Honourable Mary Polak
Minister of Environment
Government of the Province of
British Columbia
Victoria, British Columbia

The Honourable Bernard Valcourt
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern
Development Canada
Government of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

The Honourable Scott Moe
Minister Responsible for the
Water Security Agency
Government of the Province of
Saskatchewan
Regina, Saskatchewan

The Honourable Rona Ambrose
Minister of Health
Government of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

The Honourable Michael Miltenberger
Minister of Environment and
Natural Resources
Government of the Northwest Territories
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

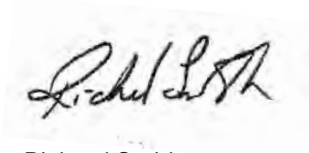
The Honourable Kyle Fawcett
Minister of Environment and
Sustainable Resource Development
Government of the Province of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

The Honourable Currie Dixon
Minister of Environment
Government of the Yukon
Whitehorse, Yukon

Honourable Ministers:

On behalf of the members of the Mackenzie River Basin Board, it is my pleasure to submit the Annual Report of the Mackenzie River Basin Board for Fiscal Year 2013-2014.

Yours truly,



Richard Smith
Chair
Mackenzie River Basin Board


Message from the Chair

This Report to Ministers describes the activities of the Mackenzie River Basin Board (MRBB) in Fiscal Year 2013-2014.

During this past year, the MRBB made progress on a number of important fronts. The MRBB supported bilateral water management agreement negotiations within the Mackenzie River Basin. As bilateral water management agreements have started to take shape, the MRBB began considering how it could support the implementation of these agreements.

The MRBB took important steps to help it improve its ability to consider the needs and concerns of Aboriginal peoples in the Mackenzie River Basin. The MRBB Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee hosted two Traditional Knowledge workshops in support of the Board's work. The Aboriginal Board Members were also invited by researchers to help develop a proposal for a basin-wide Traditional Knowledge Research Project. The MRBB also continued preparatory work in support of the next State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report.

The success of the MRBB depends on the work of MRBB Committees and the MRBB Secretariat. Committee members consist of Board Members, Alternates, or their delegates. Their work helps to ensure that the MRBB and the signatory jurisdictions meet their obligations under the *1997 Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement*. The Board appreciates their professional conduct and dedication to the MRBB.



Richard Smith
Chair

Message from the Executive Director

The Mackenzie River Basin Board (MRBB) was busy in Fiscal Year 2013-2014.

The MRBB met twice, convened one teleconference, and hosted three workshops.

The MRBB State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) Steering Committee hosted a workshop designed to help identify the key environmental and socio-economic indicators that will form the framework around which the next SOAER will be written. The SOAER indicators are intended to reflect both Western Science and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge. The MRBB Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships (TK/P) Steering Committee hosted a workshop to scope potential indicators from a Traditional Knowledge perspective in advance of the SOAER Steering Committee workshop. The Traditional Knowledge workshop participants also attended the SOAER workshop.

The MRBB TK/P Steering Committee championed a Traditional Knowledge Learning workshop for non-Aboriginal MRBB Members. Aboriginal Board Members were also invited to participate as partners in a basin-wide Traditional Knowledge Research Project. The research team, which includes the MRBB Aboriginal Members, will apply to secure funding in 2014-2015.

The MRBB Communications Committee guided the development of the MRBB 2012-2013 Annual Report. The Communications Committee also responded to inquiries to the MRBB from the public, academics, and government agencies on behalf of the Board. In addition, the Committee also provided oversight of the content on the MRBB website.

Board Members continued to share information related to water management in the Mackenzie River Basin. The MRBB continues to support Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and the Yukon as they negotiate bilateral water management agreements. The MRBB looks forward to the completion and implementation of these agreements.

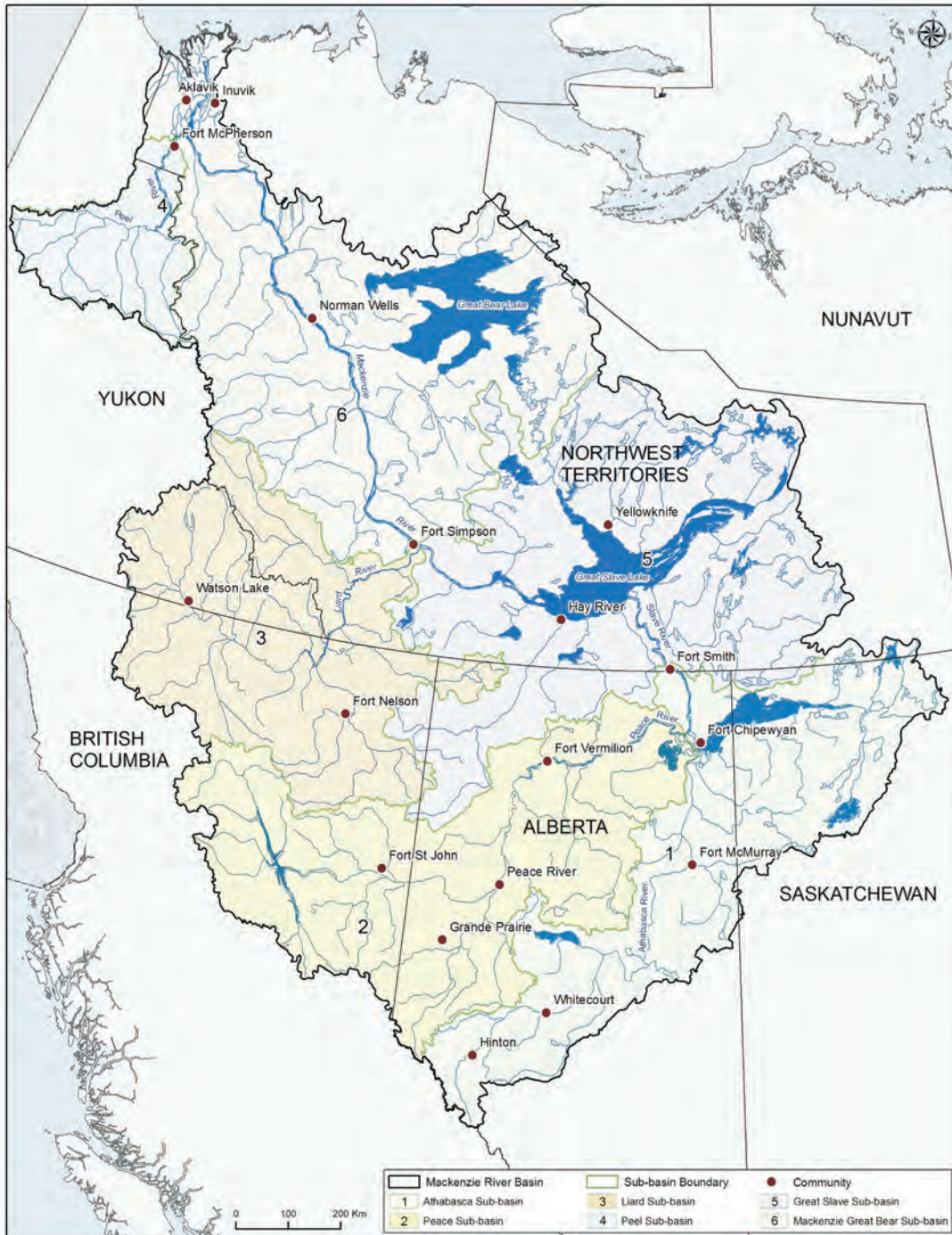


Don Pittman
Executive Director
Mackenzie River Basin Board

Introduction

This report summarizes the activities of the Mackenzie River Basin Board (MRBB), its Secretariat and the Committees that supported MRBB activities for the Fiscal Year April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014.

Figure 1. The Mackenzie River Basin



The Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement

Background

In order to address the fundamental issue of water management cooperation, the governments of Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Yukon (the Parties) signed the *Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement* (the Master Agreement). It came into effect on July 24, 1997. The purpose of the Master Agreement is to establish common principles for the cooperative management of the Aquatic Ecosystem of the Mackenzie River Basin, to establish an administrative mechanism to facilitate the application of the principles set forth in the Master Agreement, and to make provisions for bilateral water management agreements that address inter-jurisdictional water quality, quantity and related issues.

The Master Agreement Principles

Under the Master Agreement, the Parties are committed to:

- Managing the Water Resources in a manner consistent with the maintenance of the Ecological Integrity of the Aquatic Ecosystem;
- Managing the use of the Water Resources in a sustainable manner for present and future generations;
- The right of each to use or manage the use of Water Resources within its jurisdiction provided such use does not unreasonably harm the Ecological Integrity of the Aquatic Ecosystem in any other jurisdiction;
- Providing for early and effective consultation, notification and sharing of information on developments and activities that might affect the Ecological Integrity of the Aquatic Ecosystem in another jurisdiction; and
- Resolving issues in a cooperative and harmonious manner.

>> Photos: Athabasca River, Alberta. Credit: Don Pittman



The Mackenzie River Basin Board

Structure and Operations

The Master Agreement established the Mackenzie River Basin Board (MRBB) with the responsibility to administer the terms of the Agreement and to serve as a forum where all governments can cooperate in an effort to maintain the ecological integrity of the Basin's aquatic ecosystem.

The Board has 13 members, three representing the Government of Canada and two from each province and territory. One of the two provincial and territorial members has been appointed to represent Aboriginal organizations in each jurisdiction and provide an Aboriginal perspective.

The Board is unique because of this interjurisdictional partnership, the presence of members representing Aboriginal interests alongside representatives of the governments, and the commitment by all parties to maintain the ecological integrity of the aquatic ecosystem.

A staff arm for the Board, called the Secretariat, was also set-up to carry out the programs, basic administrative duties and any investigations required by the Board. Currently, the MRBB Secretariat consists of one staff member, based in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

The MRBB is not a regulatory or licensing board, and has no legal or policy basis to regulate resource use in any of the jurisdictions. However, the Board may influence regulatory decisions made in the various jurisdictions by providing factual material, such as the State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Reports, to inform development decision makers, or by participating in and influencing pre- or post-regulatory processes, such as planning, regional or cumulative environmental impact assessment processes.

The MRBB conducts business, shares information, and provides guidance to Board Committees and the Secretariat through a series of formal Board Meetings. Government Board Members typically submit Member agency reports during face to face meetings. These reports provide a mechanism for sharing water-related information amongst the jurisdictions and with Aboriginal Groups, and can support prior notification commitments. Aboriginal Members also share information about First Nation concerns within each jurisdiction.

MRBB Meetings also typically include updates from the Board Committees and the Secretariat. The Board also conducts annual Business Planning. Board Meetings provide a forum to share information on specific issues or projects.

The Environment Canada Board Member has chaired MRBB Meetings by consensus of the other Board Members since the Board's inception. The MRBB Secretariat is responsible for recording and distributing meeting minutes.

Finances

Under the Master Agreement, Environment Canada is responsible for managing the expenditures of the Board, the costs of which are shared equally by the parties. MRBB costs include staffing and operation of a Secretariat office, to provide working-level support for the Board, and ensuring effective Aboriginal participation by paying MRBB-related expenses.

Status of Bilateral Water Management Agreements

The MRBB has identified the completion of bilateral water management agreements as a priority. The completion and implementation of bilateral water agreements is one of the most effective ways to protect the aquatic ecosystem of the Mackenzie River Basin. The bilateral water management agreements will articulate commitments for all transboundary waters shared between the jurisdictions. The water management areas being addressed include Surface Water Quality, Surface Water Quantity, Groundwater, and Biological Components.

Many of the core elements of the bilateral water management agreements will be common to all the agreements. However, each agreement will include provisions that are unique to the circumstances of each transboundary region.

The jurisdictions will adopt a risk informed management framework. This framework will be informed by technical teams who will hold discussions on transboundary water classifications, learning plans, and the criteria required to designate changes in water risk classifications and the associated management actions that will be initiated to address these changes. Risk informed management will guide how the jurisdictions will work together, now and in the future. Additionally bilateral water management agreements commit the jurisdictions to be proactive and forward looking, and to facilitate joint learning that will inform bilateral water management.

Northwest Territories/Yukon:

The Peel River Watershed bilateral water management agreement was completed in 2002. Planning related to the management of transboundary water resources continued through the development of the Northwest Territories Water Stewardship Strategy and the Peel River Watershed Planning Commission. This agreement does not currently include a risk informed management framework and the agreement will be revisited after the current round of bilateral negotiations has been completed.

British Columbia/Alberta:

The British Columbia/Alberta bilateral water management agreement will cover the Peace, Liard and Hay River watersheds, with the main focus of negotiations on the Peace River.

Alberta and British Columbia met several times in fiscal year 2013-2014. Alberta and British Columbia have shared information, discussed their respective interests, and discussed the components for each section of the Bilateral Water Management Agreement.

The jurisdictions have not yet identified a target completion date.

Alberta/Northwest Territories:

The Alberta/Northwest Territories bilateral agreement will cover all watersheds shared by the Northwest Territories and Alberta in the Mackenzie River Basin, with the main focus of negotiations on the Slave and Hay Rivers.

Alberta and the Northwest Territories met several times in fiscal year 2013-2014. Alberta and the Northwest Territories have shared information, discussed their respective interests, and discussed the components for each section of the Bilateral Water Management Agreement.

The bilateral water management agreement is expected to be completed in fiscal year 2014-2015.

Alberta/Saskatchewan:

The Alberta/Saskatchewan bilateral agreement will cover all watersheds shared by Saskatchewan and Alberta in the Mackenzie River Basin.

Alberta and Saskatchewan met several times in fiscal year 2013-2014. Alberta and Saskatchewan have shared information, discussed their respective interests, and discussed the components for each section of the Bilateral Water Management Agreement.

The bilateral water management agreement is expected to be completed in fiscal year 2014-2015.

British Columbia/Northwest Territories:

Discussions on the Liard River Watershed were initiated in early 2014 and will continue into 2014-2015.

The bilateral water management agreement is expected to be completed in fiscal year 2014-2015.

British Columbia/Yukon:

Discussions on the Liard River Watershed have been initiated will continue into 2014-2015.

The bilateral water management agreement is expected to be completed in fiscal year 2014-2015.

Saskatchewan/Northwest Territories:

Negotiations on shared watersheds have not yet been initiated.

>> Photo: Cameron River, NWT. Credit: Don Pittman



Mackenzie River Basin Board Meetings

April 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014

The MRBB met twice and held one teleconference during the period April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014.

MRBB Meeting 43 was a teleconference that was held on May 14, 2013. Board Members reviewed the final budget numbers from Fiscal Year 2012-2013. The Board identified workplanning priorities based on information provided by the MRBB Committees. The Board also discussed plans for the next MRBB face to face meeting.

MRBB Meeting 44 was held in Whitehorse, Yukon on June 5-6, 2013.

The MRBB held workplanning sessions for the next Mackenzie River Basin State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) and for the MRBB Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships (TK/P) Steering Committee. The SOAER workplanning session was informed by the results of a workshop held the previous day by the SOAER Steering Committee. The Board, on the recommendation of the SOAER Steering Committee, began planning a workshop to be held in December 2013, which would be designed to identify environmental and socio-economic indicators. The work of the TK/P Steering Committee had been challenged by the ongoing lack of a Committee Chair, and the Board discussed options to identify a Chairperson. The Board, informed by its Aboriginal Members, also laid the groundwork for a Traditional Knowledge Indicators workshop that would be held in advance of and in conjunction with the December 2013 SOAER Indicators workshop.

The Board was briefed on the status of the Bilateral Water Management Negotiations. The negotiating jurisdictions were developing a structured, risk-based management approach. Options for the potential role of the Board following the completion of the bilateral agreements were also discussed.

The Board reviewed Fiscal Year 2012-2013 activities and expenditures, discussed and approved a work plan and the budget for Fiscal Year 2013-2014. The Board also confirmed workplanning priorities for fiscal years 2013-2015.

The MRBB dedicated the second meeting day to a Traditional Knowledge Learning Session. The session was based on a report commissioned by the TK/P Steering Committee entitled *Towards a New Current of Thought: Best Practices for Gathering and Incorporating Traditional Knowledge into Environmental Ecological Knowledge Monitoring and Assessment*.

MRBB Meeting 45 was held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on November 19 - 20, 2013.

The MRBB was advised of the status of preparations for the SOAER and Traditional Knowledge Indicators workshops that were scheduled for December 2013. A Chairperson for the TK/P Steering Committee was identified and the Steering Committee's updated Terms of Reference was approved. The Board was briefed on the status of the Bilateral Water Management Negotiations. Members presented their respective Member Agency reports. The Board reviewed and approved the 2012-2013 Report to Ministers. Board Members were briefed on the status of Devolution planning within the Northwest Territories. The Board discussed budget and workplanning priorities.

MRBB Committees

In order to administer the Master Agreement, the MRBB created a number of working committees. The committees are comprised of members of the Board, or their appointed delegates, selected to promote and lead these activities and support

specialists from jurisdictions and federal agencies to assist with work of the committees. Each committee is tasked with specific responsibilities. The activity level of individual committees varies over time according to need.

Table 1: Mackenzie River Basin Board Committees and Mandates

Committees	Responsibilities
<p>State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) Steering Committee</p> <p>Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships (TK/SP) Steering Committee</p> <p>Communications Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage information • Determine options for format of SOAER • Establish process for report preparation and subsequent updates • Determine recommendations for content of report • Prepare and review SOAER reports • Provide Traditional Knowledge oversight • Incorporate Traditional Knowledge into MRBB operations • Develop a communication strategy • Prepare the annual report • Arrange public forums as required • Prepare presentation materials and literature for the general public

MRBB State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report Steering Committee

The MRBB State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) Steering Committee met by teleconference eight times during Fiscal Year 2013-2014 and convened two workshops.

The SOAER Steering Committee activities were focussed on developing the foundations for the next SOAER. During the first workshop, held in June 2013, the Steering Committee developed recommendations to the Board on the SOAER structure, the themes that the SOAER will be intended to address, and timelines.

During the second workshop, held in December 2013, the Steering Committee invited scientists, socio-economic experts, and Traditional Knowledge holders and practitioners together to identify and evaluate potential environmental and socio-economic indicators that are of value to scientific investigators and to people and communities within the Mackenzie River Basin. The SOAER Steering Committee also reiterated the need to coordinate its work with the work of the MRBB Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee to integrate Local and Traditional Knowledge into the SOAER instead of treating them as a separate set of indicators.

MRBB Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee

The MRBB Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships (TK/P) Steering Committee met once during Fiscal Year 2013-2014. The TK/P Steering Committee also sponsored a Traditional Knowledge Learning Session for the MRBB. The TK/P Steering Committee hosted a Traditional Knowledge Indicators Workshop in conjunction with the SOAER Steering Committee. In addition, the MRBB Aboriginal Board Members, acting on behalf of the MRBB, and researchers from the University of Alberta initiated a partnership on a research proposal intended to gather Traditional and Local Knowledge across the Mackenzie River Basin. The research project includes many other partners and includes some international components.

The TK/P Steering Committee sponsored a Traditional Knowledge learning opportunity for the

MRBB as part of MRBB Meeting 44. The session was based on a report commissioned by the TK/P Steering Committee entitled *Towards a New Current of Thought: Best Practices for Gathering and Incorporating Traditional Knowledge into Environmental Ecological Knowledge Monitoring and Assessment*.

The TK/P Steering Committee invited Traditional Knowledge holders and practitioners from across the Mackenzie River Basin to participate in a Traditional Knowledge Indicators workshop in December 2013. Participants discussed key Traditional Knowledge Indicators that could potentially be incorporated into the SOAER. The Traditional Knowledge workshop attendees then participated in the SOAER Steering Committee Indicators Workshop which was held over the following two days. The TK/P Steering Committee then began drafting a workshop report and a list of recommendations to guide the meaningful inclusion of Traditional Knowledge into the SOAER

Researchers from the University of Alberta approached the MRBB through its Aboriginal Board Members as a potential partner in a research proposal that, if successfully funded, would gather Local and Traditional Knowledge from across the Mackenzie River Basin. There would also be some international components to the project as well. The Aboriginal Members would provide in-kind support on behalf of the MRBB, primarily through regularly scheduled meetings of the TK/P Steering Committee.

The initial response from Committee Members and the MRBB was positive. The goals of the research proposal were seen as compatible with the following duties of the MRBB, as articulated in the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement:

- 2.a. Providing a forum for communication, coordination, information exchange, notification, and consultation.
- 2.c. Considering the needs and concerns of Aboriginal People through,
 - i. The provision of culturally appropriate communication, and
 - ii. The incorporation of their traditional knowledge and values.
2. o. Submitting to the Ministers a report on the State of the Aquatic Ecosystem.

The goals of the research proposal were also seen as compatible with the goals of the TK/P Steering Committee, as articulated in the Committee's Terms of Reference, which were finalized in fiscal year 2013-2014.

- To assist the MRBB in establishing common principles for the cooperative management of the Aquatic Ecosystem in the Mackenzie River Basin. This includes the collaborative application of Traditional Knowledge in appropriate reports and documents and ensuring full Aboriginal participation in the administration and application of these principles.
- To recognize the inherent value of full Aboriginal participation and governance in the Mackenzie River Basin Board activities and encourage the meaningful integration of Traditional Knowledge and effective engagement practices into the MRBB's activities.
- To provide an advisory function to the Mackenzie River Basin Board with respect to Aboriginal partnership functions and activities including those related to Traditional Knowledge.

- To monitor the jurisdictions' levels of Aboriginal participation and engagement in the Board's activities, providing advice and guidance when asked and when necessary.

Further discussions regarding MRBB involvement in the research proposal are scheduled to occur in 2014-2015.

MRBB Communications Committee

The MRBB Communications Committee was able to complete its work by e-mail and phone in Fiscal Year 2013-2014.

The Communications Committee oversaw the completion of the MRBB 2012-2013 Report to Ministers. The Committee helped develop responses to six inquiries to the Board. The Committee also guided the maintenance of the MRBB website.

Looking Forward

In Fiscal Year 2014-2015, the Mackenzie River Basin Board anticipates its activities will be directed towards the following priorities:

- Several bilateral water management agreements will be completed and progress will be made on several others. The Mackenzie River Basin Board will discuss its possible role(s) in the implementation of these agreements, and develop communication materials in support of the completion of the agreements.
- The State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report Steering Committee and Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee will continue their work on the next Mackenzie River Basin State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report.
- The Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee will continue to work with the University of Alberta and other partners to secure funding for the proposed Traditional Knowledge Research Project in the Mackenzie River Basin.

>> Photo: Mackenzie River, NWT. Credit: Don Pittman



Appendix I: Financial Report

Mackenzie River Basin Board Financial Report April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014

		Comments
Budget	\$ 280,000.00	As specified in the Master Agreement
Carry Forward	\$ 263,490.00	2011-12 carry forward
Total	\$ 543,490.00	
MRBB Expenditures		
Personnel	\$ 139,593.00	Wages and benefits for the Executive Director
Service Contracts	\$ 68,279.00	Honoraria and Expenses for Aboriginal Members
Transportation and Telecommunications	\$ 11,217.00	Travel, transportation, postage and telecommunications
Information Services	\$ 2,726.00	Publishing/Printing services, information IM/IT
Professional Services	\$ 59,879.00	Operational Contracts
Rentals	\$ 1,950.00	Facilities, vehicles and equipment
Purchased materials, parts and supplies	<u>\$ 144.00</u>	Miscellaneous
Total 12-13 Expenditures:	\$ 283,788.00	
12-13 Carry Forward:	\$259,702.00	

Appendix II: Board Membership on March 31, 2014

Alberta

Member: Brian Yee
Alternate: Vacant
Aboriginal Member: Cleo Reece

Northwest Territories

Member: Ray Case
Alternate: Meghan Beveridge
Aboriginal Member: Sonny MacDonald

Yukon

Member: Jon Bowen
Alternate: Heather Jirousek
Aboriginal Member: Sharon Peter

Health Canada

Member: Ward Chickoski
Alternate: Mary Frances MacLellan-Wright

British Columbia

Member: Lynn Kriwoken
Alternate: Pieter Bekker
Aboriginal Member: Vera Nicholson

Saskatchewan

Member: Jim Gerhart
Alternate: Gary Neil
Aboriginal Member: Don Deranger

Environment Canada

Member: Cheryl Baraniecki
Alternate: Mike Renouf

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

Member: Kathryn Bruce
Alternate: Robert Jenkins

>> Photo: Maligne Lake, Alberta. Credit: Don Pittman





Mackenzie River Basin Board

P.O. Box 2310 Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7

www.mrb.ca