



Culture and Heritage Monitoring Report 2021

Birtle Transmission Project



Qu'Appelle Valley west of St. Lazare

Acknowledgments

Trevor Barker – Manitoba Hydro

Sarah Coughlin – Manitoba Hydro

Jade Dewar – Manitoba Metis Federation

Ariane Dilay – Manitoba Hydro

Roberta Flett – Peguis First Nation

Duane Hatley – Manitoba Hydro

Jim Keil – Manitoba Hydro

Maria M'Lot – Manitoba Hydro

Marci Riel – Manitoba Metis Federation

Mike Sutherland – Peguis First Nation

For their invaluable presentations and support:

Amber Flett – InterGroup Consultants Ltd

Dr. Kisha Supernant – University of Alberta

And thank you to the rest of the HCR Team!

Authorship

This report was prepared by Keith Kowall and Jeff Sutherland with support from Ariane Dilay. The HCR Team was given the opportunity to review the draft report and provide feedback, which was incorporated into this final report.

Photos

All photos are taken by Keith Kowall and Jeff Sutherland.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Project description	5
HCR team	6
The monitors	7
Overview of the report	9
Culture and heritage	10
Culturally important places	11
Pre-construction heritage surveys	16
Culture and heritage monitoring	17
Monitor role	17
Successes and challenges	17
Conclusion	21
Summary	21
Recommendations for future projects	21



Tower 113 (foreground) looking east across the Assiniboine River



Future site of Tower 130 looking southeast across the pasture

Introduction

Project description

The Birtle Transmission Project is a 230-kV transmission line from the Birtle Station, south of the community of Birtle, to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. The project received a Class 2 Development Licence (Licence #3314) under The Environment Act (Manitoba) on January 14, 2020. Construction began in July 2020 and was completed in March 2021. The line came in service on March 29, 2021. The purpose of the Project is to facilitate the sale of 100MW of electricity to SaskPower to help them achieve their goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meet climate change targets through renewable energy sources.



A look at the junction of Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle valleys in St. Lazare

HCR Team

A Heritage and Culture Review (HCR) Team was formed in September 2020 before the start of construction in the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture. Representatives from Anishinaabe Agowidiwinan (Treaty 2), Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation, Canupawakpa Dakota Nation, Gambler First Nation, Manitoba Metis Federation, Peguis First Nation, Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and Waywayseecappo First Nation were invited to become members of the HCR Team as well as five Manitoba Hydro employees, the Project Archaeologist and the two Culture and Heritage Monitors.

The purpose of the HCR Team was to:

- Support Indigenous participants effective and meaningful participation in the monitoring of the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture during the construction of the Project;
- Create a platform for understanding issues of concern to Indigenous participants, Manitoba Hydro and the Project Archaeologist in order to collaboratively provide informed advice on how to address issues of concern; and

- Share information in a cooperative and transparent manner relating to cultural and heritage resources on the Project;
- Meet commitments included in the environmental assessment report for the Project.

The HCR Team met four times with the following topics of discussion:

- Introduction and overview of the Project (September 2020)
- Heritage and Cultural training and introduction of monitors (November 2020)
- Monitor update and sharing (January 2021)
- Final monitor update (March 2021)



North side of the Community Pasture

The Monitors

During Manitoba Hydro's engagement process and during Section 35 consultation, communities expressed concerns with the potential for cultural and heritage discoveries in the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture. To address these concerns, condition 22 of the provincial licence #3314 stated that: *"The licensee shall employ Metis and First Nation monitors to be present during construction*

within the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture where there is potential for the discovery of historic resources. The Licensee shall provide the necessary training to be a monitor for the identification of historic resources in relation to implementation of the cultural and heritage resources plan." To meet this licence condition, two Culture and Heritage Monitor positions were created to be present during construction within the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture where there is potential for the discovery of historic resources. Two communities were provided support to hire an Indigenous Culture and Heritage monitor, one First Nation and one Metis. Each Monitor was hired by their community and trained on a suite of relevant topics, including:

- Safety
- Outcomes of engagement on the project and learnings from Indigenous Knowledge studies
- Details of Project construction
- Training from both the Project archeologist and a Metis-specific archeologist
- Project Environmental Protection Planning, and specifically the Cultural and Heritage Resource Protection Plan
- Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training



Overlooking the Assiniboine Valley near Tower 115 looking southeast



Partially cleared right-of-way looking east from Tower 115

This training was aimed at providing the necessary skills and abilities to be a monitor for the identification of historic resources in relation to implementation of the cultural and heritage resources protection plan.

Training began in November 2020 and the monitors began monitoring construction in December 2020 until March 2021. One monitor worked until the end of December 2020 and was replaced by a new Monitor in January 2021. The new monitor was provided the same training as noted above in January 2021.

The purpose and role of the Monitors were to:

- Monitor for cultural and heritage resources in the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture;
- Work closely and collaboratively with the Birtle construction team to ensure the Culture and Heritage Resources Protection Plan is implemented;
- Communicate culture and heritage findings in the community pasture to the Manitoba Hydro monitor liaisons, Licensing & Environmental Assessment liaison and the HCR Team; and
- Share knowledge in a manner that develops trust between the HCR Team Communities and the construction team.



Jeff Sutherland – Culture and Heritage Monitor

Hello my name is Jeff Sutherland. I am from Peguis First Nation and I was one of the two Culture and Heritage Monitors out on the Birtle Transmission line. It was a great experience to get out there. I'd like to say I gained knowledge and experience working with a great team. My past construction site experience was on pipeline sites. I worked many positions on the main line with Enbridge and with other subcontractors such as SubCan Ltd. I have worked as a labourer and have done remediation digs. I have seen various



sites doing these digs. I am very interested in these projects and believe that the land needs to be taken care of always! There were always environmental monitors on site so I took them on as mentors and asked a lot of questions. A lot of reclamation took place as well as replacing all materials and restoring all sites back, or close to, where they were before construction started.

I have learnt a lot from working on these sites. I always wanted to get into monitoring to gain experience and knowledge to protect our lands. Therefore, I think the experience and knowledge I gained is very important. For the Birtle Transmission Project, I was out on the Spy Hill's pasture area from towers 113 to 130 filled in a monitor position on short notice. I would like to acknowledge Mike Sutherland for setting up the opportunity. Looking forward to future projects and a huge thank you to name a few co-workers: Keith Kowall, Duane Hatley, Trevor Barker, Sarah Coughlin, Jim Keil and Ariane Dilay.

Keith Kowall – Culture and Heritage Monitor

My name is Keith Kowall and I am a lifelong resident of Manitoba and a citizen of the Manitoba Metis Federation. My past

Keith Kowall



monitoring experience includes safety monitor, environmental monitor, and compliance and environmental monitor on civil, pipeline, and hydroelectric construction projects respectively. My interests are varied, including history, following the Jets and Bombers, environmental concerns, and getting in as many rounds of golf as I can in our summer months. This is my second project with Manitoba Hydro with the first being hired as Compliance and Environmental Monitor on the Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project which I found very rewarding on many levels. Although my education in the past and

continues to be in the environmental field I had to jump at the opportunity to monitor the culture and heritage interests of the communities surrounding the construction of the Birtle Transmission Project. This was not only because of my interest in Manitoba's rich history, but more importantly to monitor the effects and size of footprint this project would bring and then sharing this information with the communities involved.

Overview of the report

This report is written by the Culture and Heritage Monitors with support from the HCR Team. It represents the experience of the Monitors on the Birtle Transmission Project. The report first describes the culture and heritage in the Project area from Traditional Knowledge studies submitted by Indigenous communities. Next, a summary of the pre-construction heritage studies that were conducted on the Project is shared. The report then highlights the role of the Monitors including challenges and successes on the job. The report concludes with a summary and recommendations for future projects.

Culture and Heritage

Written by Keith Kowall

It is my personal opinion that the most important stage of a construction project of this scope is the Indigenous engagement process (IEP). Not to oversimplify the process but essentially it is to find out what the concerns are of the diverse Indigenous communities affected by, in this case, the Birtle Transmission Project.

This information is gathered by a number of means including, but not limited to surveys, leadership meetings, open houses, workshops, letters and phone calls. It is extremely important for affected communities to engage in the Traditional Knowledge (TK) studies so that voices are heard and concerns addressed. There can be no positive change, say in a transmission line being re-routed, if one's concerns aren't known by those planning the route, which is why engagement is so important.

To that end I will speak to those who indicated an interest in the Project and their rationale for doing so. In alphabetical order they are as follows:

- Anishinaabe Agowidiwinan (Treaty 2): Historical and contemporary connection to the study area
- Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation: Historical and contemporary connection to the study area and interest in the project
- Canupawakpa Dakota Nation: Historical and contemporary connection to the study area and interest in the project
- Gambler First Nation: Historical and contemporary connection to the study area and interest in the project
- Manitoba Metis Federation: Historical and contemporary connection to the study area and interest in the project
- Peguis First Nation: Historical and contemporary connection to the study area and interest in the project
- Sioux Valley Dakota Nation: Historical and contemporary connection to the study area and interest in the project
- Waywayseecappo First Nation: Historical and contemporary connection to the study area and interest in the project



Tower 112 being erected on the east side of the Assiniboine Valley

Culturally important places

Four places described as culturally important by more than one community include the Assiniboine River and areas adjacent, Fort Ellice and the area surrounding the site, the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture and areas within it, and Ste. Madeleine specifically and its surrounding area.

The transmission line crossed the Assiniboine River at a single location, between towers 112 and 113. The clearing process was monitored on both the east and west sides of the river from start to finish and documented in the daily reports with text and photos. Clearing protocols were adhered to and no cultural concerns were found during the process.

A lot of attention was paid to tower 113 on the west side of the river given the amount of earth that was excavated surrounding the four legs of the tower. This was to allow the building of barriers to protect the tower from the nearby Assiniboine River. The spoils from the excavation were monitored for any culturally significant artifacts with none being found.



Pictured above: Earth excavated for the construction of the base of Tower 113



Tower 112 as seen looking west from near Tower 111



Fort Ellice

Fort Ellice and the area surrounding the site was visited and documented in both my daily report and commented on in my second biweekly report. Participants from Gambler First Nation, Waywayseecappo First Nation, and Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation discussed the importance of this site through community workshops and other engagement activities. It is with pleasure I can report that the project did not affect this area as the routing of the transmission line excluded it entirely.

Pictured left: Fort Ellice commemorative monument and attached plaque giving a brief history of the fort: *"Fort Ellice – Established at Beaver Creek, 1831, by the Hudson's Bay Co. replacing earlier posts of this and North West Companies. Esperance, 1783, Cuthbert Grant's House, 1793, Montagne a La Bosse, 1794, Beaver House, about 1817, and others– depots for Indian trade, and pemmican. Rebuilt on this site, 1862, as a strategic point in North West trails and trade."*

The Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture is by far where the bulk of the monitoring on the project took place. There are 16 towers that were erected from the west side crest of the Assiniboine Valley through to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

Members of Waywayseecappo First Nation, Gambler First Nation and the Manitoba Metis Federation expressed interest and concerns about the project going through the pasture, each unique but none less important given their past ties to the history of the pasture. Although each tower involved the removal of earth in the form of installing screw-piles as well as the excavating of a channel at tower 130 to enable the installation of fiber-optic cable, no cultural/heritage concerns were found.



Excavation at Tower 130



Installation of conduit fibre optic cable



Channel digging for fibre optic cable installation

Ste. Madeleine

The fourth and certainly not the least site considered culturally important is Ste. Madeleine and surrounding area. Ste. Madeleine is located 5 km from the Project site, but was visited several times over the course of monitoring by Keith Kowall, and other MMF representatives due to its cultural importance. Gambler members, indicated that the Ste. Madeleine site is sacred, as well as another area in the Gambler First Nation property. There are two burial sites within this area, with one belonging to Gambler First Nation where ancestors were laid to rest and is part of the community. The second is the cemetery located at Ste. Madeleine, at the north end of the pasture which I had the privilege of visiting and documenting in one of my daily and biweekly reports. The Manitoba Metis Federation provided substantial information on the cultural occupation and history of Ste. Madeleine. I was also made aware of celebrations held annually called Ste. Madeleine Days where meals and traditions are shared in the summer.



Entrance and cemetery at Ste. Madeleine





St. Hubert Roman Catholic Church Bell

1947-2016

In the early 1930s the land of the Ste. Madeleine community was made into a community pasture under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act. The people of Ste. Madeleine were dispersed to the surrounding areas like Selby Town and Foulard Corner, they had to leave everything behind. The people travelled to each other's homes to have church service because they didn't have a Church to worship in.

In later years, some of the descendants of Ste. Madeleine met with Chief Louie Tanner, known as Chil le Wei from Gamblers First Nation who had family ties to members from Ste. Madeleine. He gave his word and with a handshake the people from Ste. Madeleine began to build a Church on Gamblers First Nation, known as St. Hubert's Roman Catholic Church. Around 1947, 4 acres were set aside for the Church and together the people of Ste. Madeline and Gamblers started to build the St. Hubert Church. The people of Ste. Madeleine and the Gamblers First Nation had a Church that was theirs to use for many gatherings, weddings, funerals, meetings, and of course Sunday Mass.

By 1980 the Church was not being used enough because families were starting to move out of the community. The artefacts, pictures, statues and organ were removed. The Church was slowly being neglected and deteriorating to a state where it needed be demolished for safety concerns to the members of Gambler First Nation.

In 2016, Ste. Madeleine descendent Roger Smith and Chief David Ledoux negotiated to restore the St. Hubert Church Bell and move it to the Ste. Madeleine cemetery in honour of the Ancestors of Ste. Madeleine. Many community members helped with the Commemoration of the Bell. Today the Ste. Madeleine cemetery is still used by both the Metis Community and Gamblers First Nation.

Miigwetch, Marci, Thank you

This Bell is dedicated to the Ancestors of the Ste. Madeleine Metis Community and Gamblers First Nation

Families

ALLAIRE	DEJARLAIS	FLAMOND	GREGORY	SANDERSON
BELHUMEUR	DEMERY	FLEURY	GRUMBO	SMITH
BERCIER	DEMONTIGNY	LECLERC	MACKENZIE	TANNER
BOUCHER	DUCHARME	LEDoux	MORRISSETTE	VENNE
BUCKLE	FISHER	GENAILLE	PELLETIER	VERMETTE



SAINTE-MADELAINE

MÉTIS FAMILIES SETTLED PERMANENTLY IN THIS AREA IN THE 1880S. HOWEVER, MÉTIS HUNTERS WERE PRESENT IN THIS REGION IN THE EARLY 1800S. BOTH FORT ELLICE - CARLTON TRAIL ARE LOCATED NEAR SAINTE-MADELAINE.

THE MISSION OF SAINTE-MADELAINE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1902 BY FATHER JULES DECORBY. A LOG CHURCH WAS BUILT BY THE RESIDENTS IN 1913. IT BECAME THE MAIN LOCATION OF THE COMMUNITY'S RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CELEBRATIONS.

AT ITS PEAK IN THE LATE 1920S, OVER 400 MÉTIS LIVED IN SAINTE-MADELAINE. ITS PEOPLE SURVIVED BY DIGGING SENECA ROOT, CUTTING SHRUB, AND BY WORKING AS HIRED LABOUR ON SURROUNDING FARMS. SOME MANAGED SUCCESSFULLY ON THEIR OWN FARMS. THEY EXPERIENCED A LIFE RICH IN MÉTIS CULTURE UNITED BY LANGUAGE, FAITH, MUSIC AND SHARED HARDSHIPS.

BELVEAU SCHOOL WAS BUILT IN 1922 AND GRADES 1 TO 8 WERE TAUGHT UNTIL 1939, WHEN THE LAST FAMILIES LEFT THE AREA. THE PEOPLE OF SAINTE-MADELAINE WERE DISPERSED FROM 1938 TO 1940 BY THE PRAIRIE FARM REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION (P.R.F.A.). THE LAND WAS FENCED IN AND USED AS PASTURE.

SAINTE-MADELEINE

DES FAMILLES MÉTISSES S'INSTALLENT DE FAÇON SÉDENTAIRE DANS CETTE RÉGION VERS LES ANNÉES 1880. CEPENDANT, LES MÉTIS CHASSAIENT DANS LES ENVIRONS DEPUIS LE DÉBUT DES ANNÉES 1800. LES PISTES DE FORT ELLICE ET DE CARLTON SE SITUENT TOUTES DEUX À PROXIMITÉ DE SAINTE-MADELAINE.

EN 1902, LE PÈRE JULES DECORBY ÉTABLIT LA MISSION DE SAINTE-MADELEINE. EN 1913, LES HABITANTS CONSTRUISSENT UNE ÉGLISE DE RONDINS QUI DEVIENT LE CENTRE DES FÊTES RELIGIEUSES ET SOCIALES DE LA COLLECTIVITÉ.

À SON APOGÉE, À LA FIN DES ANNÉES 1920, SAINTE-MADELEINE COMPTE PLUS DE 400 MÉTIS. SES HABITANTS SURVIVENT EN ARRACHANT DES RACINES DE SENECA, EN COUPANT DES BROUSSAILLES ET EN EFFECTUANT DES TRAVAUX RÉMUNÉRÉS DANS LES FERMES ENVIRONNANTES. CERTAINS EXPLOITENT AVEC SUCCÈS LEUR PROPRE FERME. UNIS PAR LA LANGUE, LA FOI, LA MUSIQUE ET LES RUDES ÉPREUVES, ILS CONNAISSSENT UNE VIE RICHE DE LA CULTURE MÉTISSE.

L'ÉCOLE BELVEAU EST CONSTRUITE EN 1922 ET LES CLASSES DE LA PREMIÈRE ANNÉE À LA HUITIÈME ANNÉE Y SONT OFFERTES JUSQU'À CE QUE LES DERNIÈRES FAMILLES QUITTENT LA RÉGION, EN 1939, DE 1938 À 1940, LA COLLECTIVITÉ EST CONTRAINT DE DÉMÉNAGER DE SAINTE-MADELEINE PAR L'ADMINISTRATION DU RETABLISSEMENT AGRICOLE DES PRAIRIES (A.R.A.P.). LES TERRES SONT CLÔTURÉES ET UTILISÉES COMME PÂTURAGES.

KISH KISHIN STE MADELEINE

MANITOBA CULTURE HERITAGE AND RECREATION
HISTORIC RESOURCES & BINSICARTH METIS ASSOCIATION

Plaques
found at
Ste. Madeleine

Pre-construction heritage surveys

Heritage Resource Impact Assessment for the Project was conducted by InterGroup Consultants Ltd. in 2017 and 2019 with the purpose of determining if heritage resources were located within the Project footprint. In 2017, 31 quarter-sections of the project area were investigated by pedestrian survey and shovel testing. A total of 62 shovel tests were performed and two new archaeological sites were discovered and documented. In 2019, 31 quarter-sections of the Project area and 63 tower locations were investigated, which resulted in 184 shovel tests. Three new archaeological sites and a new cultural component of an existing site were discovered and documented.

Pre-construction heritage investigations and on-site monitoring were conducted in 2020 by heritage teams that included experienced archaeologists from InterGroup Consultants Ltd., Manitoba Hydro and representatives from Anishinaabe Agowidiwinan (Treaty 2), Canupawakpa Dakota Nation, Gambler First Nation, Manitoba Metis Federation, Peguis First Nation, Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and Swan Lake First Nation. Seven tower locations were inspected during construction activities and nine towers were investigated through pre-construction assessments and subsurface testing. Heritage resources were discovered

at only one of the 16 tower locations which consisted of fragments of lithic (stone) likely associated with a nearby recorded site.

The full Heritage Resource Impact Assessment Technical Report is found on the Government of Manitoba website: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/eal/registries/5950birtle/Proposal/appendixf.PDF>



An abandoned homestead found directly across from Tower 40

Culture and Heritage Monitoring

Monitor role

Written by Jeff Sutherland

To mention a little on my role on the Birtle Transmission line, it was to protect our lands as contractors have to do their jobs crossing it. I think it is very important to have monitors on-site making sure all equipment is equipped with spill kits and ready to use if needed. This is one way of protecting our environment and making sure sensitive areas are marked up before ground disturbance occurs. We were also watching for all cultural and heritage findings and reporting if needed.

To speak a little about culture and heritage, I myself didn't get to see the heritage site of Ste. Madeleine. I would have liked to get some pictures as there are awesome photos shot by Keith Kowall. Thanks to Mr. Keith Kowall for trying to get me to site but yet again, the weather was the factor in the area.

I would like to speak a little about the site of tower 108. One week before I was on the line, prayer flags were set up on or close to the right-of-way that crews did not remove. Once the prayer flags were found on the Project site, Manitoba Hydro stopped work in the area and took steps to determine who placed the flags. Manitoba Hydro worked with the HCR Team to find a way to handle the flags respectfully. The right-of-way was not cleared until the

flags were properly removed. Mr. Duane Hatley had the chance to take me out to 108 so I could have a closer look at the site. Later in the week supposedly the flags were taken down by the person that put them up. Crews then proceeded clearing of 108. A ceremony is to follow at the end of the project. Mr. Mike Sutherland suggested that ceremonies take place before any projects start so that prayers can be said for the project to go smoothly and for the work to get finished in all safe matters.

Written by Keith Kowall

My role as a Culture and Heritage monitor was to follow the daily progress of the construction of the Birtle transmission line specifically as it ran through the Community pasture. (The only exception was when I paid close attention to activities surrounding the Assiniboine River because of it being considered sacred by more than one Indigenous community involved with the project). The focus was on monitoring the cultural concerns of the surrounding Indigenous communities. Daily reports were written and photos taken of each tower construction site visited on a daily basis. From these daily reports a biweekly report was put together and shared with the HCR Team.

Successes and Challenges

Written by Jeff Sutherland

Looking back at first arriving on the line it was pretty bare on the pasture. I thought it was a success that contractors did a great job on site. Towers were assembled and erected and the contractors worked efficiently and safely as they completed the work.

Good ol' Mother Nature that we take care of made sure that any task was not going to be easy. At some sites we did not move and work couldn't take place because of the frigid weather. Not to mention the wind that blew at high speeds to make it even harder on crews!

Written by Keith Kowall

Every construction project is going to have its successes and challenges. That's a given fact. The Birtle Transmission Project was no different as it had both. The big takeaway here is that there were many more successes on this project than challenges. I'll begin with the challenges. Although the weather for the most part was very agreeable there were days where either the extreme cold or the excessive wind caused delays to the progress of the project. Extreme cold is heavy equipment's worst enemy as it is very hard on the hydraulic system. This could lead to fluid spills contaminating Mother Earth. Thankfully no major spills were encountered through these culturally sensitive sites. There were however

a few cases of heavy equipment breaking down resulting in delays. Tower erection relies heavily on the use of cranes. Wind speed is a crucial factor in a crane operator being able to safely erect tower sections. The presence of excessive winds on a number of days delayed tower erection, particularly on tower 113. The placement of prayer flags near tower 108 found on the return of Christmas holiday placed by person(s) unknown provided a challenge to find out who placed them and their intent.



Prayer flags found at Tower 108



Clearing at Towers 108-109



Community pasture blanketed in hoar frost on this day



Clearing at Towers 108-109

Finally, a huge challenge to monitoring anything that may be culturally sensitive was the presence of snow. The ongoing snowfall throughout the winter made inspecting the right of way and exposed earth from digging/drilling extremely difficult if not altogether impossible.

The biggest successes I can think of to be taken from this project was that it was completed on time in spite of all the above challenges. This meant that heavy equipment was able to leave the pasture before warm weather would have necessitated plenty of mitigating measures to prevent ground disturbance. The use of mulch from cleared trees was spread liberally along the right of way providing a bio-degradable carpet protecting against said disturbance. Equally important to me and what gave me the greatest pleasure in seeing was the presence of wildlife throughout the pasture as the construction continued on a daily basis. Pictures were taken of tracks left by several inhabitants of the pasture proving they still consider this area home and remain here. It proved to be challenging to find the owners of these tracks in the flesh but some deer and moose provided us with photo-ops.



Wildlife tracks found throughout the community pasture



One of a number of wood stockpiles saved as a result of clearing the right-of-way



A pair of deer crossing the right-of-way near Tower 115

To conclude, it is obviously far too early to understand what the long-term effects this project will bring to the pasture, but I consider it a success that we were unable to report any cultural/heritage concerns being unearthed.



Cow moose and calf found strolling near Tower 122



A few deer striking a pose in the pasture

Conclusion

Summary

As Culture and Heritage Monitors, we were able to observe and monitor construction of the Birtle Transmission Project in the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture from clearing of the right-of-way to tower erection and stringing. Although frigid weather brought some challenges, we were able to successfully monitor construction activities for any cultural and heritage findings. Other than the prayer flags for which we were unable to determine their origin, no culture or heritage findings were discovered or reported on the Project. The HCR Team greatly appreciated learning about our experience on the Project through biweekly reports and virtual presentations and important discussions were had during HCR Team meetings. A post-construction ceremony was planned but changes in public health orders related to COVID-19 prevented us from having the ceremony. The ceremony will be rescheduled for a later date when it is safe to gather outdoors.

Recommendations for future projects

Written by Jeff Sutherland

It was brought to our attention by a community representative during a HCR Team meeting that GoPros could be used to record some of the wildlife and plants that are rare and to better record some observations we see as monitors as projects are being built. Members of the HCR Team also recommended that a ceremony precede construction of every project.

Written by Keith Kowall

Looking forward my strong recommendation would be that there continue to be a close engagement between Manitoba Hydro and Indigenous communities affected by future projects. Indigenous monitoring must continue to be a part of any projects going forward to provide transparency between Manitoba Hydro and affected communities.



For more information about the Birtle Transmission Project

Website: LEAprojects@hydro.mb.ca

Phone: **1-877-343-1631 or 204-360-7888 in Winnipeg**

Mail: Manitoba Hydro
Licensing & Environmental Assessment
360 Portage Ave. (5)
Winnipeg MB R3C 0G8