

**Abstract Submission for 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian River Heritage Conference**

Title of Presentation:  
Knowing Where We Live

Category: Community Engagement

Presenter:

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## Abstract

In 2004 Elders of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation assisted by the NCN Future Development Research team and Northern Lights Heritage Services Inc., began a 9 month memory mapping project to identify and name lakes, rivers and features within NCN's resource management area according to their Cree name. A series of 1:50,000 NTS maps were used for the initial mapping. An Excel spreadsheet was created and the English and Cree names along with their meanings and UTM coordinates recorded. These data were transferred to GIS format and a composite map created. Out of the 660 lakes, rivers and features identified on the maps over 400 were re-identified by their Cree names. This has become a powerful resource tool for education as well as management of traditional lands.

Biographical sketch:

Virginia was born in Winnipeg, MB and raised in Red Lake, Ontario. After a career as a Health Record Administrator at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora, Ontario she returned to university graduating with degrees in Native Studies, Anthropology and Education from Lakehead University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Manitoba.

After a short career with the Manitoba Provincial Government she established Northern Lights Heritage Services in 1991. Since that time she has conducted field research and study in archaeology and anthropology across Manitoba, northwestern Ontario, northern Saskatchewan and Nunavut.

Virginia accredits her big break in archaeology to Gary Dickson, Historic Resources Branch, who in January 1987 popped his head around the corner of her office and asked her if she wanted to go for a trip on the Hayes River. That trip, which she considers to be the thrill of a lifetime, strengthened her commitment to First Nations and Aboriginal people.

Virginia is the recipient of the Prix Manitoba Award in heritage for communication and education. She has developed an Indoor Excavation© edu-kit which is used as a teaching aid in northern and inner city schools.