

Mishkeegogamang Trappers

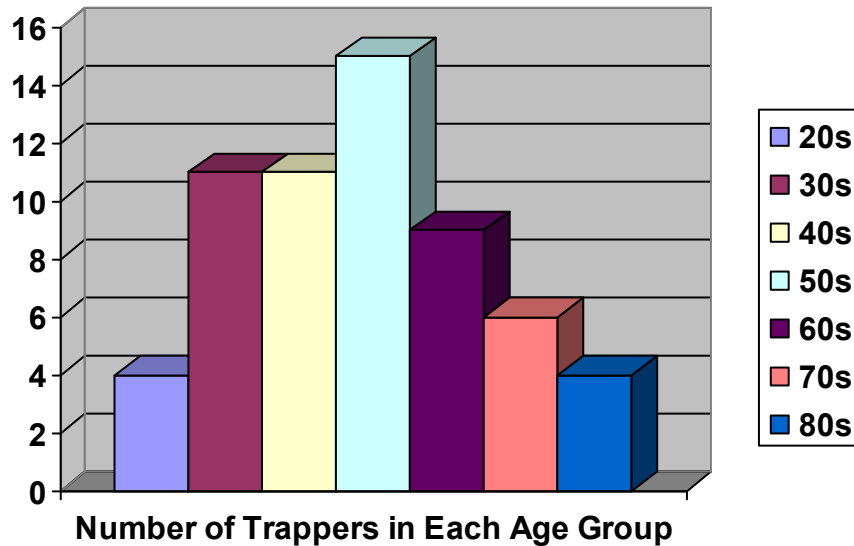


Figure 1 Mishkeegogamang Trappers, 2002-2003

Study the bar graph above, then answer the following questions:

1. What age group has the most trappers? _____
2. What two age groups have the fewest trappers? _____

2. Of the 61 trappers who got applied for a 2002-2003 license, 12 are women between the ages and 30 and 84. Write a sentence or give a fraction or a ratio that compares the number of women trappers to the number of men.

3. 48% of the members of Mishkeegogamang First Nation are under the age of 25. Suggest why there are not more trappers in their 20s.

4. On a separate paper, write a paragraph about a trapper you know. To what age group does this trapper belong? _____

Read the article on Mishkeegogamang trapping on the following page, then write some responses to the reading.

1. Don Wassaykeesic, in describing his trapping, includes both facts and feelings. List some of each in the boxes below:

<u>Facts</u>

<u>Feelings</u>

2. If you have ever trapped or snared, use the space below to describe your experiences, then share these with your classmates. If you haven't, use the space to draw one of the traps that Eva Skunk describes in the article.

Trapping

Osnaburgh trappers today trap mostly beaver, mink, otter, lynx and muskrat, and send the furs to auction houses such as the Fur Harvester's Auction of North Bay, Ontario, which sells furs all around the world. Jeff Loon, the councilor responsible for trapping, says 200 people qualify for trapping licenses, but only about 100 people usually pick them up each year. Trappers who requested trapping licenses for the 2002-2003 season ranged in age from 27 to 89, and about one-fifth of them were women.

The trap lines belonging to the band cover a large area, but it is generally only the areas along the roads that are trapped because of the difficulty of getting into remote areas. Most trapping happens from mid-October until mid-December and late March until late May.

Don Wassaykeesic says, "I am still trapping. This year I trapped five beavers, two foxes, two otters, 21 martins and one muskrat. They will be sent to the Toronto auction on Feb. 24. I will get \$50 and up for Martins, \$100 - \$150 for the otter, \$5 for a muskrat, \$35 and up for a fox and \$45 - \$50 and up for a beaver."

Don applies to the game warden for a trapping license. His clan's traditional territory is at Little Fort Lake, a 35-minute flight to the Atoskwini River, connected to the Bow River. It is too inconvenient and expensive to get to his traditional trap line, so Don applied for and got one of two trap lines available in Pickle Lake. Permission was also issued from the band to trap in that area. The trapping license doesn't imply any kind of ownership of an area to Don; to him it just means he has a right to lay a trap on the land. He says not too many people are trapping these days, so there are lots of beaver around. Don skins the animals he traps, and eats the meat. He also snares rabbits for food.

He lives at the Big Tarp area called Gamawaching, 16 kilometres past Pickle Lake. He expresses a strong commitment to his home: "I live there. God put me to live in that area. I will stay there. Mines and Natural Resources comes and asks me about that kind of thing, and I tell them they can put me in jail, but I'm staying."

In the early days, trapping outfits were relatively simple, with mainly flour, sugar and tea being brought from the store, along with an axe and snare wire. Even the traps were homemade. Eva Skunk tells how to set up martin trap in the traditional way: "Put little trees around to make a little wigwam. Then you put a bait at back of the little wigwam. Set the trap. It's easy to trap martin because they're not really scared of people." She also has lots of experience with beaver and rabbits. "It is harder to trap a beaver in winter than in springtime. There are two different ways to kill a beaver - either by a snare or a trap. When you snare a rabbit, if an owl steals your rabbit, just leave any leftover on the snare. Then you make two other snares and make a little wigwam so the owl can go in there and you can snare it. Make two snares, one on each end so next morning when you check you find the owl dead."

-excerpt from Mishkeegogamang: The Land, the People and the Purpose