

# AT WORK



GIS  
Spring 2010

## A map of hope



Alexis O'Keese and Wabin plotting the sandbar.

*Article provided by Courtney Strutt, camp counselor for the Fort Hope literacy camp.*

In today's increasingly interconnected global society, geospatial technology is revolutionizing the way we interpret the world around us. In July and August of 2009, 12 young people from Fort Hope, an isolated First Nation's reserve in Northern Ontario, Canada, took a giant step into the technological world of global positioning systems by exploring their own community through a geographic lens.

The community mapping project in Fort Hope began with my offer of employment from Frontier College, a Canadian non-profit organization that has played a part in the development of literacy across Canada since 1899. One such initiative is the Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camp program, where I served as a counselor. The program which has operated for four years in more than 40 communities in northern Ontario, provides more than 2,000 children the opportunity to

**Company:** Frontier College

**Location:** Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camp

**Project:** Fort Hope, an isolated First Nation's reserve in Northern Ontario, Canada

**Project Scope:** Provided children the chance to learn about GIS mapping and technology through collection of raw spatial data while attending the Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camp program.

**Topcon Products Used:**

GMS-2 receivers, provided by Topcon

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## A map of hope



(LEFT) Nathaniel Roundhead and Joshua Baxter inputting the fire hydrant into their map. (RIGHT) Toni Shawinimash mapping the roads.

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engage in creative literacy each summer.

As the daughter of Michael Strutt, TPS manager of training and support and network/infrastructure products, the idea of developing a community mapping project presented itself as an exciting and viable option. Topcon made my idea a reality by providing two loaned GMS-2 receivers to use in the community project.

The purpose of conducting a community mapping project with youth in Fort Hope was multifaceted. Primarily, it clearly demonstrated a point that Frontier College's programming promotes – literacy is about more than having the skills to read and write. In today's society, literacy means being able to engage in a global society, grasp the possibilities and advantages of around-the-corner technologies, and grow as an individual and as a community.

"There remains a huge disparity in

terms of access to resources and services between children and youth living in the isolated First Nations that take part in the summer camps and those that live in urban centers," Casey Sabawi, Frontier College's community coordinator for Aboriginal Programs, said. "The GPS equipment that was loaned by Topcon Positioning Systems was extremely valuable in providing the children and youth living on reserves the opportunity to experiment and avail themselves with technology that they would otherwise been unable to access.

"Activities with the GPS equipment take place outdoors and complement Frontier College's philosophy that every place is a learning place, and that literacy extends beyond the classroom."

Alongside the value of new forms of learning, the project also aimed to

engage youth in social issues facing their community. By asking them to conceptualize their community spatially, the mapping project was providing a new avenue for youth to discuss what their environment means to them and what they need to combat the obstacles facing life on a reserve.

It provided the opportunity to learn about a technology that is increasingly becoming more important for First Nations people, especially in relation to land claims and resource management issues. The exposure to such technology may spark an interest for one youth's future career or provide an incentive to further their education.

*Courtney Strutt's article appears in the February issue of POB magazine and is posted on the TPS site.*

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## Topcon's GMS-2

**The GMS-2 truly represents the next generation of a compact satellite positioning receiver.**

Topcon engineers have incorporated our industry leading dual-constellation satellite tracking into a small hand-held GPS receiver, the GMS-2.

This innovative system also provides an integrated electronic compass and digital camera powered by Topcon's revolutionary imaging technology. This powerful combination of dual-constellation satellite performance and digital imaging technology has set a new standard for GIS field mapping.

