



02

Traditional Teachings
Amikwag (Beaver)Niiwin Wendaanimok in
Action

Recent Activities and Meetings

03

Manito Aki Inakonigaawin
Our Teachings, Our Protocol

MAI Documentary

Preserving Culture Through Video

Resource Inventory

Gathering Community Assets

04

Coordinator Spotlight

Cassandra & Davy Redsky

Community Coordinators

Contact Information



NIIWIN WENDAANIMOK

FOUR WINDS

March
2021

Wauzhushk Onigum

Washagamis Bay

Shoal Lake 40

Niisaachewan

Project Recap

Since 2018, the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership has been working to secure the territorial interests of the Anishinaabeg of Wauzhushk Onigum, Washagamis Bay, Shoal Lake 40, and Niisaachewan. Their mandate has been focused on the twinning of Highway 17, which is proposed to be constructed over 3 Phases between the Manitoba/ Ontario border and Kenora ("the Project"). The Partnership is working hard to understand and mitigate the impacts of the Project and to secure economic opportunities for the four Nations.

This is the twelfth newsletter produced since the formation of the Partnership. Stay tuned for future issues where we will provide regular updates as the Project progresses.

2020 saw the completion of Phase 1 of the **Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin (AAK)**, the documentation of the knowledge and practices associated with the care and protection for the lands, skies, soils, and waters. This knowledge has been used to identify and assess potential impacts of Phase 1 of the Project through the **Harmonized Impact Assessment (HIA)**. The HIA was brought into ceremony in the summer of 2020. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been continuing the AAK to inform planning on Phase 2 of the Project.

We are currently in the process of gathering information from community members who may be interested in job or contracting related to Phase 1 construction activities. Please see Page

3 to learn more about the **Resource Inventory** and how to get involved.

The Niiwin Wendaanimok is currently planning to produce a documentary on the **Manito Aki Inakonigaawin (MAI)**. Read all about it on page 3.



Traditional Teachings

Amikwag (Beaver)

The AAK provides a valuable opportunity to safeguard traditional knowledge for future generations. As a key principle of the MAI, newsletters include traditional teachings shared by community members during the AAK. This month's edition will focus on the topic of *amikwag* (beaver).

Amikwag (beaver) are a symbol of resourcefulness because of their ability to modify the environment. In the traditional story of Original Man and his *Nokomis* (grandmother), the tail and webbed feet of *amikwag* (Beaver) were the inspiration for Original Man to design and create the first paddle. *Amikwag* (beaver) also teach and connect the Anishinaabeg through traditional land-based methods of cultural education. "Beaver" and "Family Ties" were mentioned 25 times together during AAK interviews, emphasizing the ways in which traditional activities associated with *amikwag* (beaver) bring families together.

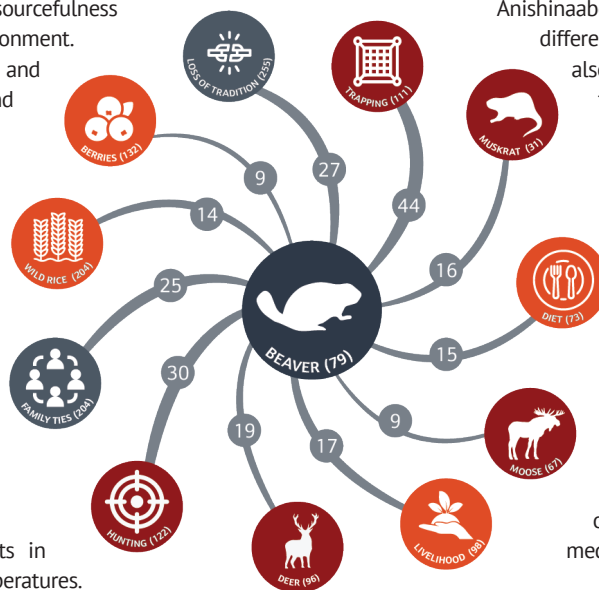
Amikwag (beaver) develop thicker coats in the winter to accommodate colder temperatures. While trapping can be done during any season, it is generally practiced in the winter for this reason. Many continue

to hunt and trap in the spring, as the same quality of pelts can be harvested in more mild conditions.

In addition to the livelihood that came with selling pelts, hunting and trapping *amikwag* (beaver) also offered a source of sustenance.

Amikwag (beaver) are a traditional food source to the Anishinaabeg that can be prepared in several different ways. Certain parts of the animal can also be used as a medicine. It is customary that parts of *amikwag* (beaver) are used to respect the life of the animal.

Throughout history, *amikwag* (beaver) have had a significant role in influencing the ecology and culture on *Mikinaak Minis* (Turtle Island). Despite changes in hunting and trapping practices, *amikwag* (beaver) remain an important species to the Anishinaabeg for their inherent spiritual value and their use as a tool for education, source of livelihood, source of food, and as medicine.



This image from the HIA shows how many times beaver was discussed in relation to other topics.

The Niiwin Wendaanimok in Action

Here are a few of the activities and meetings conducted since the end of February.



Manito Aki Inakonigaawin

Our Teachings, Our Protocol

In this newsletter we would like to discuss the education component of the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin (MAI) and the importance of understanding Anishinaabe laws. Such laws have been the foundation of survival on the land for generations and they continue to provide guidance that is relevant today. It is important for the Anishinaabeg to know their laws, not only because they are foundational to Anishinaabe history and identity, but also because they provide insight for the future and a clear path forward.

Anishinaabemowin is the key to understanding the MAI. The language is deeply interwoven with the law and it is essential that both be revitalized together in-step. Education on the MAI should not be separated from education on Anishinaabemowin.

When learning about the MAI, it is important to understand that there is both a customary and contemporary law, and both have been in place since Time Immemorial. Customary describes the unwritten part

of the law – the sacred teachings and ceremonies – and contemporary describes the visual representation of it – the things you can tangibly see, like the sweat lodge, the shaking tent, and the offerings. In recent years, the meaning of contemporary has expanded to include writing laws on paper. However, the written portion of the MAI, the Resource Law, is just one part of this sacred law; it cannot fully be captured by what is written. Just as paper became a new way to validate and express Anishinaabe laws, modern technology also presents a similar opportunity to revitalize our traditional ways.



MAI Documentary

Preserving Culture Through Video

Over the next year, the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership will be producing a documentary on the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin – the Great Earth Law of the Anishinaabeg. The Partnership will work alongside Grand Council Treaty 3, as they are currently developing a toolkit on the MAI. The purpose of this documentary will be to educate community members and the broader public on the significance of this sacred law and the widespread benefits that come when we follow its guidance. Using the Highway 17 Twinning Project as an example, the documentary will demonstrate how the MAI can be practically implemented today.

Resource Inventory

Gathering Community Assets

Our Resource Inventory of human assets, equipment and resources is growing! If you haven't had a chance to register your information with our system, please do so by visiting niiwinwendaanimok.com/register/ or by contacting our general manager, Allan Luby at aluby@niiwinwendaanimok.com. Registering your employment, business, or equipment information is important so that we can quickly contact you when contracts are available. March 10-12, 2021 saw another series of virtual job fairs in the communities. Job seekers and business owners had a chance to ask questions and submit their information to the database. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for upcoming job fairs and other opportunities.



04

**Virtual Meeting
with MTO**



05

**Virtual Meeting
with the Chiefs**

Coordinator Spotlight

Cassandra Redsky & Davy Redsky

Our Community Coordinators work hard behind the scenes to organize the logistics of engagement within each of the Niiwin Wendaanimok communities. For the next few newsletters, we would like to recognize each of our Coordinators for the important work they do. This newsletter will highlight Cassandra Redsky and Davy Redsky.

Cassandra Redsky recently joined the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership as a Community Coordinator for Shoal Lake 40. She is from Shoal Lake 40 and currently resides in the community. Cassandra is the Grade 1 and 2 teacher at Ojibway Heritage School. She has been teaching for over 10 years and is pondering the idea of attaining her Master of Education degree in the near future. She also

enjoys assisting the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership in her spare time and looks forward to helping with future functions and gatherings as they arise.

Davy recently joined the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership as a Community Coordinator for



Shoal Lake 40. Davy is a former police officer and the head of the Shoal Lake 40 Pandemic Response Team.

Thank you so much Cassandra and Davy on behalf of the Niiwin Wendaanimok Team for all your support with our efforts!



Community Coordinators

Shoal Lake 40

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The Niiwin Wendaanimok Community Coordinators are responsible for setting up meetings and managing logistics in each community. If you'd like to contribute to the project or know a friend or family member who might (including catering or assisting with distributing flyers or other support), please give your Community Coordinator a call!