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NIIWIN WENDAANIMOK

FOUR WINDS

May
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**. This is the fourteenth newsletter produced since the formation of the Partnership. The Partnership's 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 has been working hard to understand and mitigate the impacts of the Project and to secure economic opportunities for the four Nations.

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 presented to the Ministry of Transportation Ontario in a **sacred ceremony** that occurred virtually on April 30th, 2021. See **Page 2** for more details on the ceremony.

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



Sacred HIA Ceremony Provides Conditional Consent for Phase 1!



Given the COVID 19 stay-at-home order and strict restrictions on gatherings, the representatives of the respective governments participated in the ceremony virtually. However, several members of Wauzhushk Onigum met in the Roundhouse to offer drum songs for the ceremony.

Visit <http://bit.ly/20210430PressRelease> to read the press release or check out <http://bit.ly/ConditionalConsentCeremony> to watch a video of the ceremony. Additional videos of the drum songs from the ceremony are viewable on our Facebook!

The leadership of the four Nations and the Government of Ontario (represented by the Ministry of Transportation) entered a sacred ceremony on April 30th, 2021, conducted under the law and guidance of the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin. This ceremony confirmed the parties' understandings and solemnified conditional consent from the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership to Ontario to enter Anishinaabe territory under Anishinaabe guidance to undertake construction of Phase 1 of the Project. Ontario also received a copy of the unique Harmonized Impact Assessment.



About the Harmonized Impact Assessment



Rooted in the MAI, the Harmonized Impact Assessment is based on a ground-breaking model developed by the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership that continues to receive national recognition for its innovation in bringing together Anishinaabe understandings and processes with western science to assess impacts and mitigation. *"This document tells the story of the Anishinaabeg, the history of our relationship to the land, the skies, the soils, and the waters, but most importantly it was done through ceremony,"* said Elder and Protocol Advisor George Kakeway.

"Under our laws, our ceremonies, we do things right, we are never afraid, we take our time, and we always listen, and that is what we did. It is our consideration of the proposed project, done in our way and according to our laws. This document is the result."

We are very proud to announce that the Harmonized Impact Assessment is available for everyone to view on our website: <https://niiwinwendaanimok.com/#hia>

This document represents countless hours of community interviews and traditional knowledge from the Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin using Manito Aki Inakonigaawin, harmonized with the best principles and practices of Impact Assessment from the International Association of Impact Assessment for a truly revolutionary way of completing an impact assessment.

Chii miigwetch to the Elders, to our Technical Team, to our Board of Directors, to everyone who ever sat down with the AAK team, reviewed maps, coordinated community members, met with the province, provided catering, rides, tobacco, and so much more. We couldn't have done it without each and every one of you. Your presence is felt on all 892 pages.

Traditional Teachings

Eagles

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. In honour of the **migiziwigwan (bald eagle feather)** that is being kept with the official HIA document, we would like to share some teachings on **migiziwag (bald eagles)**.

Migiziwag (bald eagles) are a sacred animal in Anishinaabe tradition with profound cultural significant and spiritual symbolism. In general, **migiziwag (bald eagles)** are respected as a symbol of courage, strength, honor, and foresight. One of the many traditional stories about **Migizi (the bald eagle)** tells of the courage it showed by acting as a messenger to **Kizhe Manitou (the Creator)**. Each day **Migizi (the bald eagle)** was said to have flown over **Aki (Earth)** to ensure people continue to respect the use of the **dewe'igan (drum)**, **asemaa (tobacco)** and **opwaagan (pipe)**. Some stories say **Migizi (the bald eagle)** sits in high places to notify **Kizhe Manitou (the Creator)** of Anishinaabeg who have moved



on to the spirit world. For many people of the Niiwin Wendaanimok Nations, **migiziwag (bald eagles)** continue to hold these ties between family and the spirit world. The sacredness of these birds can also be understood through the many ways in which the Anishinaabeg honour the physical parts of **migiziwag (bald eagles)**. For example, parts such as the **migiziwigwan (bald eagle feather)** may be offered as a gift, while bones can be used to make a sacred whistle. These cultural uses and stories of **migiziwag (bald eagles)** have been in place for generations upon generations, yet they continue to demonstrate the sacredness of this animal to the Anishinaabeg.

HIA Handoff for Safekeeping



On May 7th, 2021, the authoritative copy of the Harmonized Impact Assessment was given to Narratives Inc. for safekeeping until such time as a permanent location is identified. This historic document was verified in a sacred validation process

through ceremony at the Wauzhushk Onigum Roundhouse on April 30th, 2021. Elder and Protocol Advisor, George Kakeway handed off the document along with the gift of an eagle feather at the Residential School Memorial in Wauzhushk Onigum.

The Niiwin Wendaanimok in Action

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



Resource Inventory

Our Resource Inventory of skills and workers, equipment, and resources is growing! If you haven't had a chance to register your information with our system, please do so on our website or contact our general manager **Allan Luby** at aluby@niiwinwendaanimok.com. Registering information on your employment, business,

or equipment is important so we so we can contact businesses and workers when their equipment and services are needed. Keep an eye on our Facebook page as we have been holding recurring Job Fairs to answer your questions about the Partnership and our projects, and to register your information with our system.



Coordinator Spotlight

Bernice Major



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 Bernice Major, our Community Coordinator for Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation.

Serving as a Councillor of Niisaachewan for her second term, Bernice is a warm individual with a passion for community and getting things done. In early 2020, Bernice spear-headed a community initiative to open a public library in Niisaachewan, thus benefiting many children and increasing local opportunities for learning. As well as being a representative to the Technical Team, Bernice is the Community Coordinator for Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation, organizing workshops, interviews and gatherings.

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

Community Coordinators

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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 fliers or other support), please give your Community Coordinator a call!