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# NIIWIN WENDAANIMOK

FOUR WINDS

June  
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 is now publicly available at <https://niiwinwendaanimok.com/#hia>.

The Partnership is currently beginning to plan for the creation of an Anishinaabe Guardians Program. This will provide opportunities for community members to be responsible

for protecting their traditional lands and waters by enforcing the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin and ensuring all mitigation measures in the HIA are being followed when construction begins. See page 2 to learn more.

# Anishinaabe Guardians Program



The Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership is building an Anishinaabe Guardians Program to support environmental stewardship in the Nation's traditional territories, operationalize and ensure compliance with the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin, monitor and document the communities' lands and waters, provide mentorship and leadership for youth, provide opportunities for Elders and Knowledge Keepers to teach younger generations, and establish strong working relationships between the Nations, MTO, and project contractors. The Partnership is looking for members of the four communities to get involved! If you are interested in becoming a Guardian, sharing land-based teachings and knowledge with the Guardians, or participating

in other opportunities through the program, please email your community coordinator or send us a Facebook message to learn more.



## Traditional Teachings

### Tobacco

The AAK provides a valuable opportunity to safeguard traditional knowledge for future generations. With education as a key principle of the MAI, these newsletters include traditional teachings shared by community members during the AAK. This month we would like to share some teachings on **asemaa (tobacco)**. **Asemaa (tobacco)** is one of the **gichitwaa mashkikiwan (four sacred medicines)** in Anishinaabe culture, holding strong ties to ancestors. It is a symbol of healing and is most frequently used to make offerings to knowledge keepers, Elders, in ceremonies, and to the land. Offering **asemaa (tobacco)** is done for many reasons but it is mainly given to show respect and appreciation for receiving knowledge or in thanks for something that was taken. It is offered when harvesting a resource, such as during hunting, fishing, collecting **mashkikiwan (medicines)**, or picking **miinan (berries)**. Offerings of **asemaa (tobacco)** are also given at the beginning of ceremonies to give thanks to **Kizhe Manitou (the Creator)** and Mother Earth. **Asemaa (tobacco)** offerings are also given after someone passes away.


Burning **asemaans (tobacco)**, either through a sacred fire or through an **opwaagan (pipe)**, creates smoke that becomes the sacred connection between the human and spirit world. In all forms, **asemaa (tobacco)** continues to be a sacred **mashkiki (medicine)** for the Anishinaabeg.



## The Niiwin Wendaanimok in Action

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



Follow us on Facebook! 

Be sure to follow our page for updates, current news on the project, upcoming events and contests, and chance to give your feedback

# Remembering the Children

The Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership stands in solidarity with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation, and all others grieving the devastating news that was recently brought to light about the mass graves at Kamloops Residential School and Brandon Residential School. As we mourn the lives of the 319 children, we also acknowledge and remember all the others who have yet to be found.

We recognize that this recent discovery may be triggering for many of our community members who live with the lasting trauma of residential schools. Please note that a **Residential Schools Crisis Line (1-866-925-4419)** is available 24 hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress because of their residential school experience. We are keeping all survivors and their families close in our thoughts and prayers during this time.



## Manito Aki Inakonigaawin Our Teachings, Our Protocol

As more and more residential school grounds across the country are being searched, the findings highlight the immense need for healing and reconciliation. In this newsletter we would like to discuss how this is relevant to the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin.



The Anishinaabeg have a sacred and inherent relationship with the land. Land is deeply rooted in the Anishinaabe identity and is central to Anishinaabe laws like the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin. A harmonized process guided by the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin sets a foundation for healing by building partnerships and protecting land. Through years of discussion about the meaning of reconciliation, a partnership has been initiated to begin moving forward with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO). As a symbol of the initial partnership, Moccasins were gifted to MTO and now both governments walk together in respecting each other's laws. The partnership translates into a shared responsibility and process for protecting the natural environment. As Anishinaabeg, there is a sacred responsibility to care for the medicines, the berries, the wild rice, the plants, the animals, the insects – everything in the lands, skies, waters, and soils that was harmed by colonization. Healing the environment and preventing further damage according to the principles of the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin is an important step in bringing healing to the Anishinaabeg.

# Coordinator Spotlight

Kristopher Chartrand



*Boozhoo,*

*I look forward to working with this exciting group.*

*My role on this project is to provide technical advice with the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin to assist and support in developing a vision that will strengthen the Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin.*

*The involvement of First Nations is important of this holistic collaboration of working together to achieve our own fundamental laws based on mutual respect.*

*Miigwetch*

Kristopher Chartrand

Thank you so much Kris on behalf of the Niiwin Wendaanimok Team for all your support with our efforts, and welcome to the team!

Our Community Coordinators work hard behind the scenes to organize the logistics of engagement within each of the Niiwin Wendaanimok communities. Over the past few newsletters, we have dedicated a space to recognize each of our Coordinators for the important work they do. This newsletter features an introduction from Kristopher Chartrand, our new Community Coordinator for Washagamis Bay First Nation!

# 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](mailto: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.



# 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 of family member who might (including catering or assisting with distributing fliers or other support), please give your Community Coordinator a call!