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NIIWIN WENDAANIMOK

FOUR WINDS

JANUARY
2022

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 21st 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 opportunities for the four Nations.

In 2021 we were honoured to be able to meet with community members at meetings, events and ceremonies like the Granular Crushing Contract Ceremony and Rock Crushing Ceremony in December. You can learn more about those and other events on our website www.niiwinwendaanimok.com.

2022 will bring the start of the Highway 17 construction. With it will be the implementation of the Anishinaabe Guardians Program. During the

Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin (AAK) knowledge gathering process, the Elders noted the importance of making sure the lands, skies, soils, and water were being protected and the promises being made were kept. The **Anishinaabe Guardians Program** was proposed to monitor how the project is impacting the environment as well as the overall health of the lands, skies, soils, and waters.

The four Nations will play an active role in the Twinning of the

Highway through Guardianship and construction work. **Community Navigators** have been brought on for each of the communities to help connect interested workers with employment and training on the Twinning Project. There will be more opportunities in the coming year as construction begins. See **page 2** for more details.

Community Navigators

Shoal Lake 40

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Niisaachewan

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Washagamis Bay

STEWART SINCLAIR
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Indigenous Residents of Kenora

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Community Navigators are responsible for supporting and assisting community members seeking employment or returning to the workforce. Navigators are here to help you identify your training or workplace goals and needs and to help you gain employment in your chosen field. Reach out today!



New Niiwin Wendaanimok Office!

In December 2021, Niiwin Wendaanimok opened a brand-new office at **130 Main Street South** in **Kenora!** While the team is currently working from home in light of public health measures, we are excited to have a physical space in

Kenora to continue our important work together in person once it is safe to do so. We also look forward to hosting training programs and other events at our office in future.

Now Recruiting for Training

The next round of training courses is underway, including hands-on and remote learning methods. A practical welding course began on **January 10th** and will run until **February 11th, 2022.**

The Community Navigators are currently recruiting for the following upcoming courses:

- Plumbing
- Construction Craft
- Electrical
- AZ Driver
- Camp Services
- Heavy Equipment Operator

Please connect with your community navigators for more information!

Introducing KATHLEEN SKEAD

Kathleen Skead joined the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership on November 1, 2021 as our new Finance Manager! As Finance Manager, she oversees all financial activities of the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership like financial reporting, accounting policies, systems and procedures. Kathleen spent six years as Band Administrator of Wauzhushk Onigum Nation. On joining NWP Kathleen said,

"I'm excited and looking forward to working with Niiwin Wendaanimok and its endeavours!"



Manito Aki Inakonigaawin

OUR TEACHINGS, OUR PROTOCOL

As we enter the new year, we celebrate recent changes like our new Kenora office and new team members and look forward to all that lies ahead – more training, more jobs, and the construction of the highway. We also anticipate that the pandemic will continue to present changes in our communities as we adjust to the “new normal”. The Manito Aki Inakonigaawin helps us navigate change. Its customary protocols have

offered consistent guidance since Time Immemorial, helping us know how to respond and make decisions.

Ceremony is one way in which it does this. For example, a ceremony was held on December 1, 2021, at a rock quarry along the highway to honor the spirits of the rock, the Little People, and the animals that will be displaced by the twinning. The Travelling Song was sung

to ask the Creator for safe travels and the protection of all who will use the highway. For this reason, this song has a special connection to the twinning project.

Ceremony guides change in a respectful way. We will continue to let the MAI guide our process through ceremony as we navigate all the changes that may come our way in the year ahead.

Traditional Teachings

ZESEGAANDAG (BLACK SPRUCE)

The Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin (“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 the **zesegaandag** (black spruce) tree.

Zesegaandagoog (black spruce) and **gaawaandagoog** (white spruce) are both large coniferous evergreens whose needles are blueish green in colour. **Zesegaandagoog** (black spruce) can be distinguished from

gaawaandagoog (white spruce) by their shorter needles and smaller, rounder pinecones.

Zesegaandagoog (black spruce) can grow in soils of different levels of moisture but are common in boggy areas with permafrost or peat moss soils. They are shade tolerant and will grow in partially shaded environments.

Wadabiig (spruce roots) play a role in creating traditional birchbark canoes, as they are used to lace the strips of birchbark together and hold them in a tight seam. Solitary wadabiig (spruce roots) can be dug up, trimmed, peeled,

and split to create a sleek stitching fiber. Flexibility is maintained by soaking the wadabiig (spruce roots) in water, then they harden in place once the birchbark strips are stitched together.

Like many mitigoog (trees), **zesegaandagoog** (black spruce) and **gaawaandagoog** (white spruce) have natural medicinal uses. For example, spruce gum can be used as an antiseptic ointment for cuts. For their traditional uses and their inherent value as part of the ecosystem, spruce trees are important species to the Anishinaabeg.



The Niiwin Wendaanimok in Action

Here are a few of the activities and meetings conducted since the middle of January.



Technical Team
Meeting



Board of Directors
Meeting



Board of Directors
Meeting



Chiefs Meeting



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.



Community Coordinators

Shoal Lake 40

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Niisaachewan

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Washagamis Bay

KRIS CHARTRAND
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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!