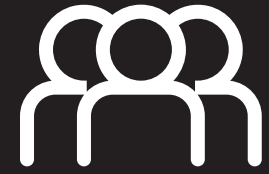




ABORIGINAL AND / OR TREATY RIGHTS AND INTERESTS PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Issued February 2026



An assessment of Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests was undertaken with 23 Indigenous communities potentially impacted by the development of the Community Access Road. Areas of Interest were identified for each Indigenous community to illustrate where they exercise / hold Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests and practice culture, and therefore, where potential Community Access Road-related impacts could occur.

The following sources of information were used to inform each community's assessment:

The Indigenous Knowledge Program:

Governed by Indigenous Knowledge Sharing Agreements, the Program is a method for communities to share information on current, traditional and cultural land and resource use. Participation opportunities included meetings, topic-specific forums, webinars, and document reviews.

The Consultation and Engagement Program:

Communities were invited to share knowledge about land use, cultural practices, and areas of importance by reviewing draft reports, providing feedback, and participating in forums, webinars, and meetings.

Literature Review:

Historical and cultural information from public sources.¹ Topics covered Indigenous land and resource use, cultural values, rights and interests, historical context, and regulatory and policy guidance. For further information, please see **Section 4.3.4** of Appendix O.

¹ If information was not provided by communities, publicly available sources were used.

Valued Components (elements of the environment that could be affected by the Community Access Road) for assessing Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests for the Community Access Road include:

Indigenous Current Use of Lands and Resources for Traditional Purposes:

Potential changes to access, availability and quality of resources, and disturbance or loss of sites and areas.

Cultural Continuity and Well-being:

Changes to the experience of being on the land, connection to the land, practice and transmission of culture, and the ability to exercise governance and stewardship rights.

Each Indigenous community received a confidential, community-specific report discussing existing conditions (e.g., history, language, governance, cultural practices, and current use of the land, including hunting, fishing, plant gathering, travel, habitation, and culturally important places) as well as potential Community Access Road impacts. Although these detailed reports will be submitted to the regulator to support the assessment process, they are not being made public because they contain sensitive information.

Existing Conditions

Before sustained contact with Europeans, the region that is now northern Ontario was home primarily to the Anishinaabeg and Cree peoples. The *Anishinaabeg* in this region of Ontario have been referred to as the Northern Ojibwa. The Cree people of this region are known as the *Omushkegowuk*.

The *Northern Ojibwa* lived according to a sixseason cultural calendar and followed seasonal, landbased ways of life centred on hunting, fishing, plant harvesting, and moving across the landscape. Their worldview emphasized respect, reciprocity, and kinship with the land and all beings. Governance was rooted in clans or kinship systems and guided by consensus based decision making. Learning was holistic and grounded in language, ceremony, storytelling, and direct experience on the land. Their stewardship practices reflected natural law and moral responsibilities to Creation.

The *Omushkegowuk* also lived within a sixseason cultural calendar, with seasonal movements shaped by hunting, fishing, plant harvesting, and family based travel. Their worldview, like that of the *Anishinaabeg*, emphasized relational responsibilities to land, water, and all beings, and their governance systems were grounded in kinship and consensus. Their learning systems drew on language, storytelling, ceremony, and landbased knowledge, and their stewardship practices reflected obligations to Creation.

When Europeans arrived in the seventeenth century, Indigenous societies faced major disruptions. The growth of the fur trade and the establishment of Hudson's Bay Company



trading posts changed long standing travel and exchange patterns. Although trade brought new goods, it also led to overharvesting that reduced wildlife populations. Communities experienced new hardships, including hunger cycles and disease outbreaks introduced from outside. At the same time, missionaries imposed restrictions on cultural and spiritual practices.

During this period, the Métis emerged as a distinct People through relationships between European traders and Indigenous women. Along major trade routes, Métis communities developed their own culture, language, and political identity. Despite their longstanding presence, Métis Peoples later faced exclusion and were not meaningfully recognized in Canadian law until the late twentieth century.

Colonial policies and legislation increasingly restricted Indigenous autonomy and reshaped daily life. Laws such as the *Crown Lands Protection Act*, *Gradual Civilization Act*, *Gradual Enfranchisement Act*, and the *Indian Act* centralized government control over identity, governance, land, education, and resources. These laws disrupted governance systems, suppressed cultural expression, and removed legal status from many people, particularly women. They also restricted movement and economic activity while promoting assimilation through enfranchisement. Treaties, including Treaty Number 9 and the Robinson Superior Treaty, further changed relationships to land, often failing to reflect oral commitments made during negotiations and excluding Métis communities entirely.

In the decades that followed, government actions further altered the landscape and affected Indigenous ways of life through major hydrological diversions, the reserve system, residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop. While legal and policy developments in the late twentieth century, including the *Constitution Act of 1982* and subsequent court rulings, began to better recognize Indigenous rights, historical and ongoing forces have created cumulative impacts on culture, language, governance, land based practices, and well-being. Despite these atrocities and outcomes, Indigenous Peoples across the region continue to reclaim their rights and reconnect to their cultural roots.

Potential Impacts and Mitigations

Each confidential, community-specific *Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests: Impact Assessment Report* examined how the proposed Community Access Road may affect Indigenous communities whose Areas of Interest overlap with the Community Access Road.



To understand how the Community Access Road might influence these rights, the assessment reviewed technical studies about wildlife, fish and fish habitat, plants, air and noise, surface and groundwater, cultural heritage, and land and resource use. These studies helped identify “impact pathways,” or ways that Community Access Road activities could lead to changes affecting rights; for example, land clearing that may disturb sites used for traditional purposes, habitat changes that could affect the availability of species harvested for food or cultural practices, temporary changes to access during construction, or shifts in the experience of being on the land due to noise, visual changes, or increased public access.

For each community, the assessment considered the extent, duration, magnitude, and likelihood of residual impacts after mitigation measures were applied. These residual impacts were evaluated for both key valued components: Indigenous Current Use of Lands and Resources for Traditional Purposes and Cultural Continuity and Well-being. The results, including levels of severity and prediction

confidence, are documented in each community's confidential *Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests Impact Assessment Report*.

Mitigation measures described in the confidential *Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests Impact Assessment Report*, focus on reducing how Community Access Road activities may affect the exercise of Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests. These may include: providing advance notice to Indigenous communities and trapline holders about the timing and location of construction activities; applying measures such as dust suppression, noise management, and maintaining vegetated buffers to reduce changes to air quality, noise, and visual conditions; and managing construction of bridges and aggregate sites in ways that minimize temporary disruptions to travel routes and navigation. Environmental measures like erosion control and protecting wildlife habitat help limit changes to animals, fish, and plants before those changes can affect rights. Together, these mitigation measures are meant to lessen disruptions to land use, cultural practices, and the overall experience of being on the land.

Residual Impacts

Residual impacts—on Indigenous land use, culture, and the ability to exercise Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights—are those that remain after mitigation measures are applied. These impacts may be expected during the construction and / or operations and maintenance of the Community Access Road. Impacts are characterized using criteria such as context, magnitude, geographic extent, duration, frequency, reversibility, and likelihood. Residual impacts may affect the experience of being on the land, access to preferred harvesting areas, resource availability and quality, cultural continuity, and governance or stewardship roles.

Possible residual impacts are carried forward into the Cumulative Effects Assessment. Predicted severity ranges from low to high depending on the how the Community Access Road may hinder Indigenous current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes, and cultural continuity and well-being.



Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts occur when the residual impacts related to the Community Access Road overlap with the effects of other past, current, or reasonably foreseeable activities in the region. These activities include other road projects, mining projects, forestry, broadband installations, powerlines, and community infrastructure upgrades. When activities take place in the same areas or at the same time as the Community Access Road, their combined effects may influence Indigenous current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes, as well as cultural continuity and well-being. Residual impacts related to harvesting areas, culturally important sites, access routes, resource availability, and the experience of being on the land are carried forward into the cumulative assessment because overlapping disturbances such as changes to access, wildlife movement, noise, or land availability may further affect opportunities to hunt, trap, fish, gather, travel, or practice cultural traditions.



Due to the sensitive nature of community specific information, only the overall approach is shared publicly.



Want to learn more?

If you are interested in learning more about this topic, please review the technical report available in the appendix of the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement.

Contact Info

You are welcome to contact the Marten Falls First Nation Community Access Road Project Team at any time with questions or comments.

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