NIIWIN
WENDAANIMOK
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
Submission to Award for Planning Excellence 2021
As the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership set out to build the Harmonized Impact Assessment, it became clear that there were very few models that truly reflected what the Anishinaabeg sought to do with respect to understanding impacts on the land whilst incorporating western science.
BACKGROUND

The Harmonized Impact Assessment Model

Since 2010, the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) has been in the process of developing a plan to “twin” (double-lane) Highway 17 between the Manitoba border and Kenora as part of an effort to reduce traffic and increase road safety. As the only east-west road connection between Manitoba and Kenora, Highway 17 is an essential trade and transportation route. The highway is used for various purposes including long-distance commercial and tourist traffic, local community traffic, and access to surrounding lands. The Project will be located within the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg of Treaty 3 between the Manitoba/Ontario border and the City of Kenora. The map above showcases four of the Nations affected - Washagamis Bay, Wauzhushk Onigum, Niisaachewan, and Shoal Lake 40.

The project is divided into three phases. Currently, planning for phase one is complete and construction is expected to commence this year (2021). MTO recognizes that Highway 17 is located on the traditional territory of the Nations of Treaty 3 and has affirmed its responsibility to consult communities who may be affected by the project.
In order to coordinate their shared interests, experiences, and concerns on the proposed twinning of Highway 17, the four Anishinaabe Nations of Wauzhushk Onigum, Washagamis Bay, Shoal Lake 40, and Niisaachewan signed the Unity Agreement in October of 2018. This agreement set the foundation for the Niiwin Wendaanimok (Four Winds) Partnership (Niiwin Wendaanimok). In the spirit of reconciliation, MTO has agreed to partner with the Niiwin Wendaanimok moving forward on the twinning project. This allowed the Niiwin Wendaanimok to consult its own people to understand potential social, environmental, and cultural impacts, provide its own reporting, and directly contribute to future decisions on the project.

As a critical step to this agreement, a Harmonized Impact Assessment based on the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin (The Great Earth Law) would need to be established; a new and innovative approach to understanding the potential impacts of the Twinning Project, co-authored by both the Niiwin Wendaanimok and MTO.

As the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership set out to build this work, it became clear that there were very few models that truly reflected what the Anishinaabeg sought to do with respect to understanding impacts on the land whilst incorporating western science.

Most models represented diagrams that did not do justice to the depth of understanding that was being built through this process. Thus, the Niiwin Wendaanimok built a model that it believes explains this approach by outlining methods used to operationalize the Manitoba Aki Inakonigaawin (the Great Earth Law) and harmonize Anishinaabe teachings and western science.
THE MODEL

Harmonized Impact Assessment

The Harmonized Impact Assessment model is broken down into a series of concentric circles that inform decision-making, process, and components related to the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin (The Great Earth Law). It is informed by the seven Grandfather Teachings, rooted in ancient customary protocols, and enables a groundbreaking contemporary planning process.

The principles of harmonization as informed by the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin (the Great Earth Law) are:

Weweni (Take our time)—This refers to taking our time to undertake due process to make sure our protocols are respected.

Bebekaa (Doing it right)—This refers to making sure we are doing things properly at the onset. It entails building relationships at the appropriate levels of authority: Political, Technical, and Task Forces. It also requires education of the public, governmental agencies and industry, and promotion of the objectives through public forum, media, and other sources at every opportunity. It requires invoking guidance from all our sacred lodges, opawaaganag (pipes), dewe’iganag (drums), songs, traditional laws, and ceremonies.

Biiziindun (Listen)—This represents a commitment that we will listen to our people, our Elders, our men, women, and youth.

Kegofachken (Don’t be afraid)—This reminds us that we have been taught to be afraid. We will not be afraid of implementing our laws and principles.
HOW IT WAS DONE

The process behind the Harmonized Impact Assessment
CEREMONIES
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model

MOU Ceremony, Sweat Ceremonies
COMMUNITY EVENTS
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Pow-wows + Ice-Fishing
STORYWORK
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
NEWSLETTERS
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
SOCIAL MEDIA
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model

Partnership official website and Facebook page
PARTICIPATORY VIDEO
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
GATHERINGS ON THE LAND
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
GATHERINGS ON THE WATER

Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
PROPOONENT MEETINGS
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
FEASTING
Harmonized Impact Assessment Model
The HIA Model outlines practices for traditional planning and emphasizes a responsibility for stewardship and protection of the natural environment. It offers clear direction for following customary engagement protocols and provides a framework for successful partnerships.
The Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership now has a website that illustrates the intensive collaboration between the Four Nations, the engagement process with MTO and decision making. You can learn more at our website www.niiwinwendaanimok.com