



Northern Road Link

Draft Terms of Reference Summary



Thank you for your interest in the Northern Road Link (NRL) Project. This is a summary of the information you will find in the **Draft Terms of Reference (ToR)** for the NRL Project.

What is a Terms of Reference?

The Terms of Reference (ToR) is a **roadmap** or work plan for the Environmental Assessment (EA) process. It proposes the range of studies required to understand the potential effects of the project. The Draft ToR is being presented to Indigenous communities and the public for consultation. Feedback on the Draft ToR will then be used to prepare a Proposed ToR, which will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). The Minister of the MECP will review the Proposed ToR, including the comments and the proponent's responses. MECP then decides to:

- Approve the ToR
- Approve ToR with amendments, or
- Reject the ToR

Once the proponent has an approved ToR, they can proceed with undertaking the EA as set out in the ToR.

What is the Environmental Assessment?

A ToR is a work plan for an Environmental Assessment (EA). An EA is a planning tool to:

- Identify potential effects (positive and negative) to the environment.
- Identify mitigation measures to reduce or remove potential negative effects.
- Facilitate decision-making.

- Provide opportunities to comment on how a project may impact communities and their use of land.

The NRL Project:

- Must be reviewed under the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act* (EA Act). The provincial process is called **Environmental Assessment (EA)**.
- May have to be reviewed under the federal *Impact Assessment Act*. The federal process is called **Impact Assessment (IA)**.



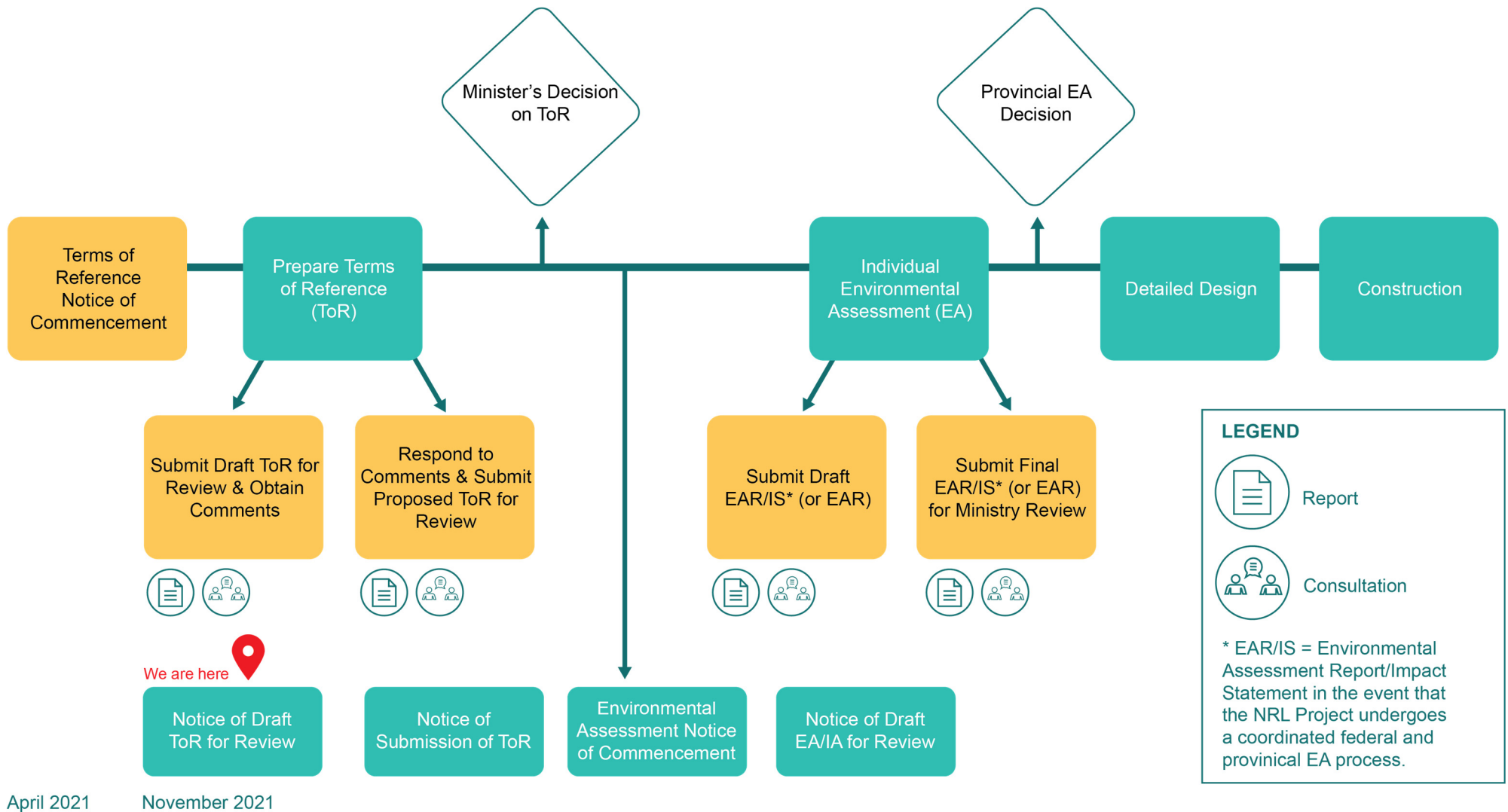
The MFFN and WFN communities' knowledge is important for the EA to protect culture and land use

An EA will be undertaken to determine the preferred route for NRL Project and to assess how the project may affect the environment, including Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests, physical, biological and socio-economic environment, cultural heritage resources, and human health. Studies will be carried out and data will be collected to understand how best to avoid and/or minimize negative project effects.

Provincial Process

We are starting the provincial EA process by submitting the **Draft ToR** to Indigenous communities and others for review and comment. Next, using the comments received we will prepare and submit the **Proposed ToR** to the Minister of the MECP for a decision. If the Proposed ToR is accepted, we will initiate the EA process. As an Indigenous community-led Project, the NRL Project will provide many opportunities for consultation and engagement.

Provincial Environmental Assessment Process



Federal EA Requirements

It is not known yet if the NRL Project will have to complete an Impact Assessment (IA) under the federal *Impact Assessment Act*. If so, it is expected that the project would undergo a coordinated Environmental Assessment/Impact Assessment (EA/IA), which incorporates both the provincial and federal processes along with MFFN's and WFN's community processes. We use the term '**EA/IA**' in the Draft ToR to account for a potential joint provincial/federal process, and the term 'Environmental Assessment Report/Impact Statement (EAR/IS)' to refer to single document that would be prepared for review for both processes.

Who is Leading the NRL Project?

The NRL Project is being led by two Indigenous communities from a remote area in northern Ontario:

- **Marten Falls First Nation (MFFN)** is an Anishinaabe community located on the north bank of the Albany River, approximately 175 km southeast of Webequie First Nation and 430 km northeast of Thunder Bay.
- **Webequie First Nation (WFN)** is an Ojibway community, located on a peninsula on Winisk Lake, approximately 540 km north of Thunder Bay and 175 km northwest of Marten Falls First Nation (MFFN).

Together, MFFN and WFN are the "**Proponent**" of the environmental assessment (EA) and preliminary design for the NRL project. They have assembled a team of two Project Co-Leads (one from MFFN and one from WFN) and a Working Group (two from MFFN and two from WFN) to provide overall strategic direction. They have also engaged a Technical Team to prepare the ToR.

Project Co-Leads

- Michael Fox, Indigenous & Community Engagement (ICE), WFN Lead
- Qasim Saddique, Suslop Inc., MFFN Lead

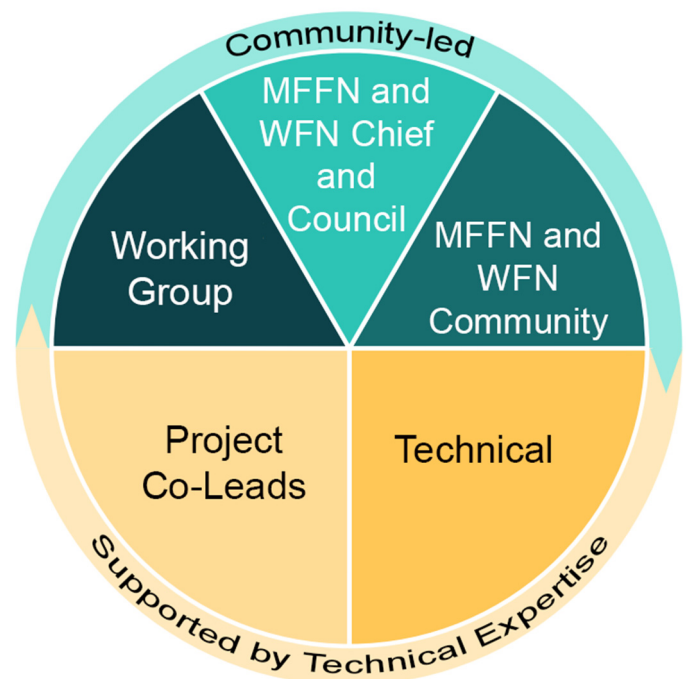
Working Group

- Lawrence Baxter, MFFN Representative
- Alanna Downy Baxter, MFFN Representative
- Roy Spence, WFN Representative
- Gordon Wabasse, WFN Representative

Technical Team

- SNC-Lavalin Inc., Project Manager: Angela Brooks
- Dillon Consulting Limited

Community-Led Environmental Planning



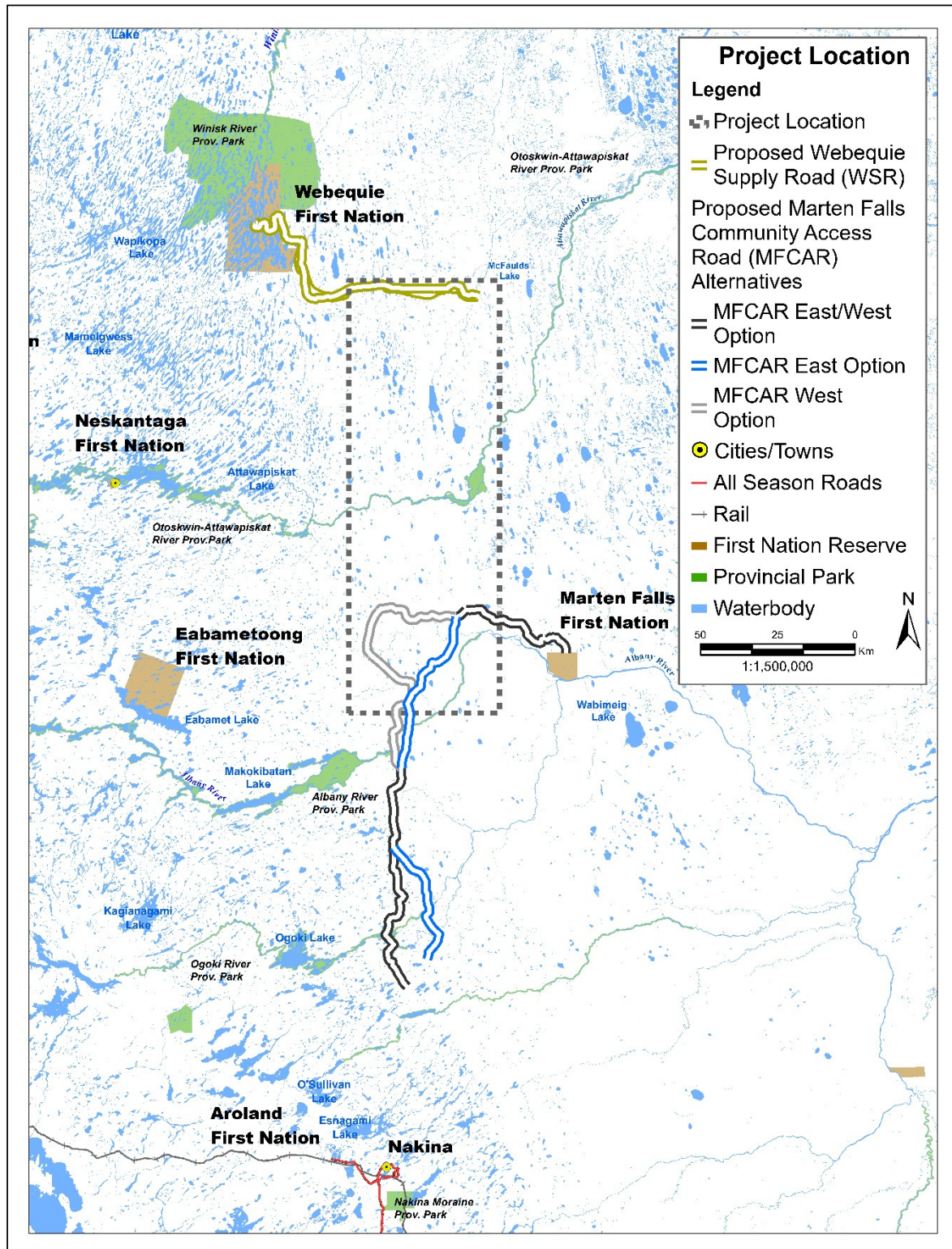
What is the NRL Project?

The NRL Project is a proposed all-season road.

In addition to the NRL Project, MFFN is also the proponent of the Marten Falls Community

Access Road (MFCAR) project, while WFN is also the proponent of the Webequie Supply Road (WSR) project. Similar to the NRL Project, both of these projects are proposed all-season roads. The NRL Project will “link” the proposed WSR to the proposed MFCAR.

Project Location



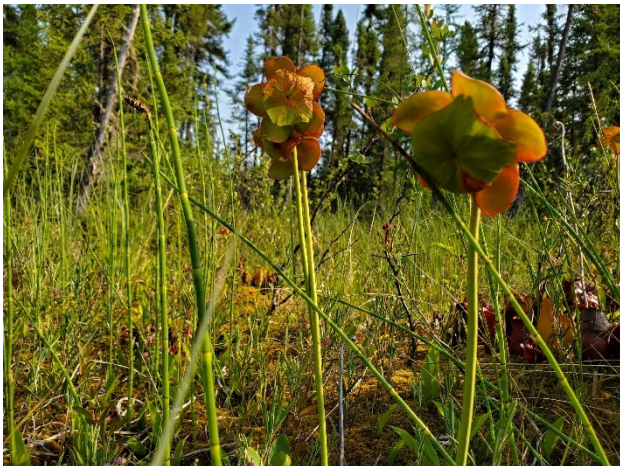
What Are the Purpose and Objectives of the NRL Project?

The **purpose** of the NRL Project is the design, construction, and operation/ maintenance of a proposed all-season road between the proposed MFCAR and WSR to:

- Connect the Ring of Fire (RoF) mineral deposits in the McFaulds Lake area to the all-season highway network via MFCAR.
- Connect WFN to the all-season highway network.
- Enable a broader range of economic activity by facilitating the transport of goods, services and resources.

The **objectives** of the Project include:

- Stimulate sustainable regional economic activity in the region.
- Reduce WFN's reliance on costly air transportation or unreliable short winter road season.
- Provide employment and other economic opportunities to MFFN and WFN community members, while enabling them to live in or near their communities, preserving their language and culture.
- Give experience and training opportunities to youth to encourage them to pursue post-secondary education.



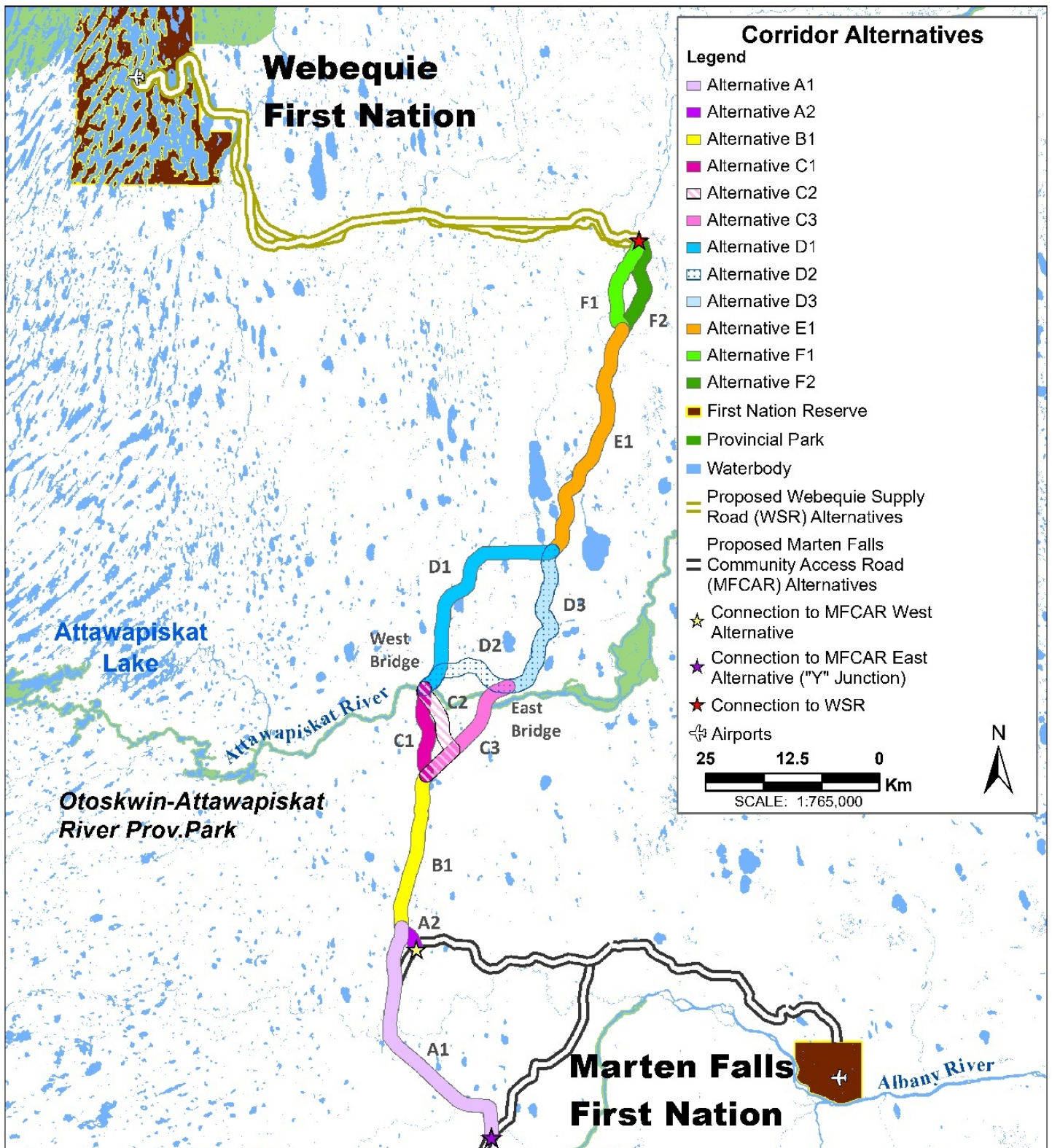
Alternative Methods of Carrying Out the Project - Where and How Will the Proposed NRL Project Be Built?

A key step to project development was identifying corridor alternatives for the NRL Project. These corridor alternatives are each 2 km wide. Based on initial technical review and feedback from Indigenous communities, twelve corridor alternatives segments will be assessed: A1, A2, B1, C1, C2, C3, D1, D2, D3, E1, F1, F2. Many segment combinations are possible to put together a full corridor for the NRL Project from the start point connecting to MFCAR to the end point connecting to WSR. Depending on the chosen corridor, the length of the NRL may range from 117 km and 164 km.

These segment combinations will be assessed to determine the preferred corridor for the NRL project:

- A1/A2 – B1 – C1/C2 – D1 – E1 – F1/F2
- A1/A2 – B1 – C1/C2 – D2 – D3 – E1 – F1/F2, and
- A1/A2 – B1 – C3 – D3 – E1 – F1/F2

Corridor Locations



Alternative supportive infrastructure, such as access roads, quarries, borrow sites, aggregate sites and other infrastructure to support road construction (e.g., camps) may be identified and assessed during the EA/IA. Alternative designs and design elements such as for the bridge crossing of the Attawapiskat River may also be assessed during the EA/IA.

Criteria will be developed to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives, based on the EA Act requirements, feedback from engagement with Indigenous communities and interested persons, discussion with regulators, available Indigenous Knowledge/Indigenous Land and Resource Use, and information collected during baseline characterization.

During the EA/IA, road alignments will be identified within the 2-km wide corridors. There will be some flexibility to adjust the alignments within the broader corridors to avoid or minimize the impact on areas of sensitivity or concern that may be identified.

The largest watercourse that the NRL Project will cross is the Attawapiskat River. Based on historical information and input from community members that includes community values, two alternative locations are proposed for the Attawapiskat River bridge crossing: The East Bridge and the West Bridge. The **East Bridge** crosses the river along an esker (a ridge of higher ground with sand and gravel), a source of aggregate material for the road. The **West Bridge** crosses the river upstream of some rapids, which may provide habitat less attractive so some wildlife. Moose are less likely to use this habitat as they prefer slower moving water that has abundant aquatic vegetation. Lake Sturgeon are also less likely to be at that location as they prefer to spawn downstream of rapids in fast moving water.

The photos below with the map show the East Bridge and the new West Bridge crossing sites in the context of the river.

Proposed Alternative Crossings of the Attawapiskat River



Project Components

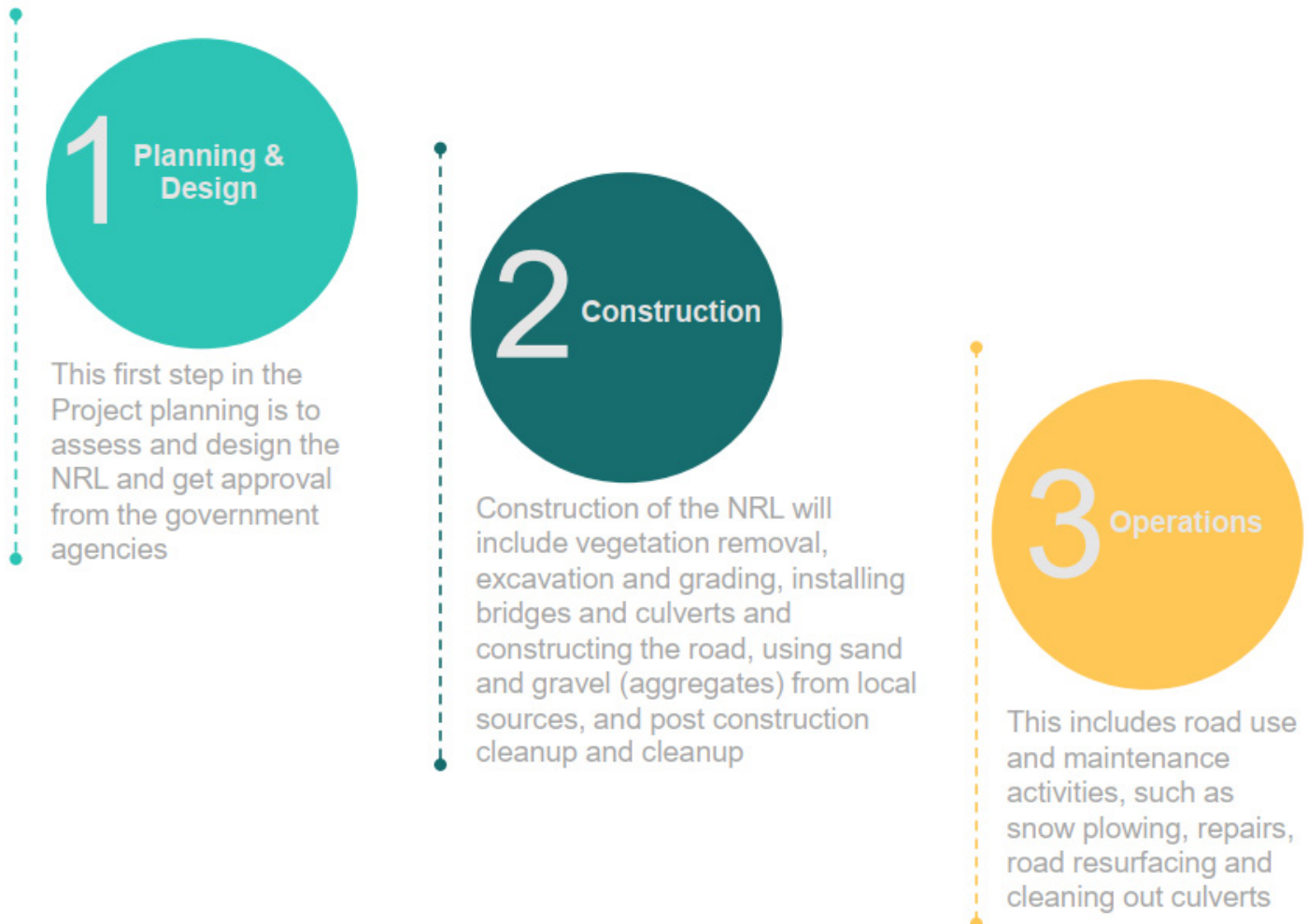
Key components include:

- 20 m-wide road, where the length could range between 117 and 164 km
- Water crossings, including one large bridge crossing at the Attawapiskat River and several smaller bridges and culverts.
- Ancillary structures:
 - Borrow areas, aggregate sources, and quarry sites
 - Temporary access roads and temporary water crossings
 - Work, storage/laydown areas and construction camps

We are currently in the first phase, **planning and design**, which sets the stage for the success of the next phases, including constructing a road which minimizes impacts to all aspects of the environment. That is why your input is so important to the NRL Project.

The NRL Project is planned to operate indefinitely, and decommissioning is not anticipated.

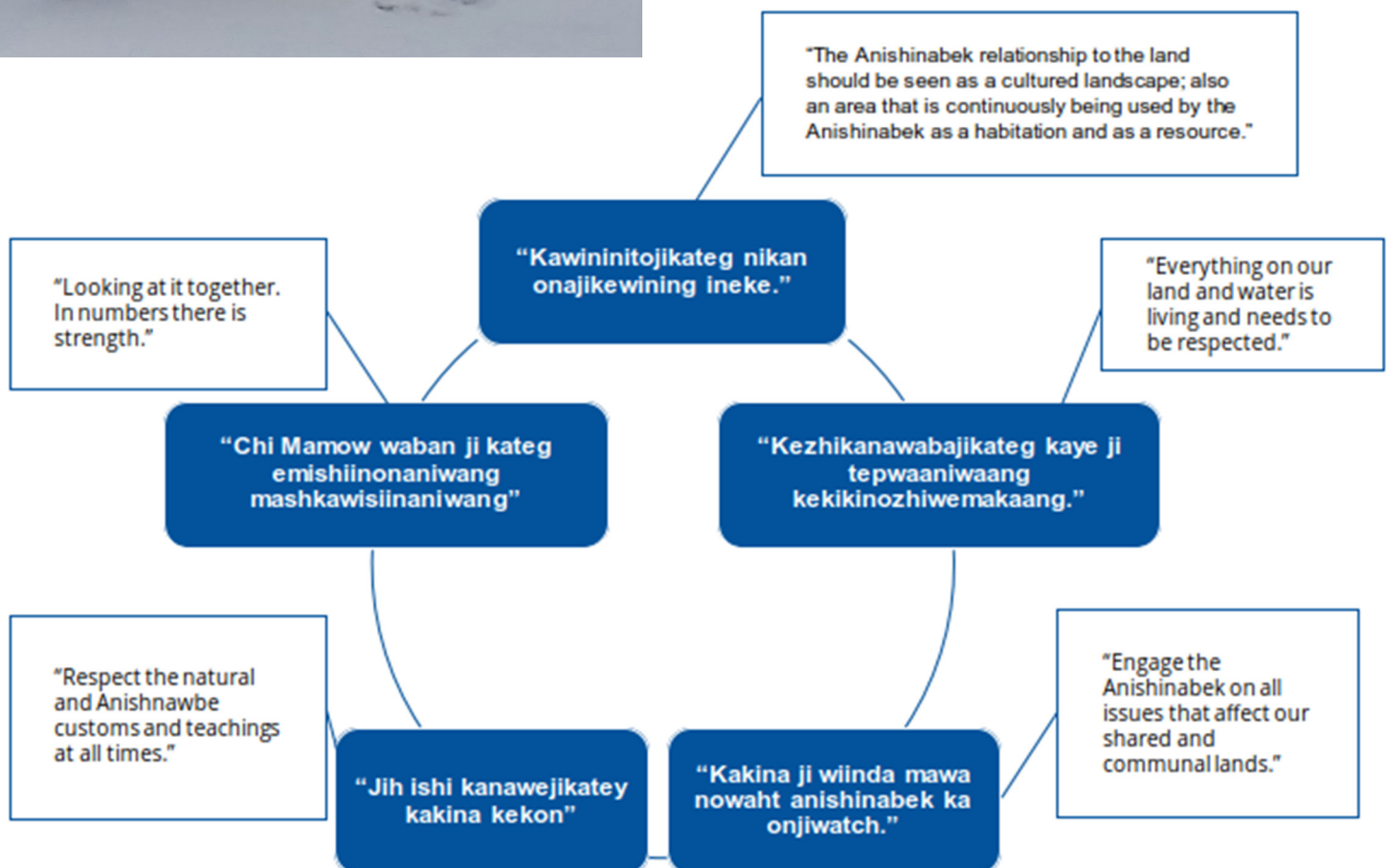
Project Phases





Consultation and Engagement

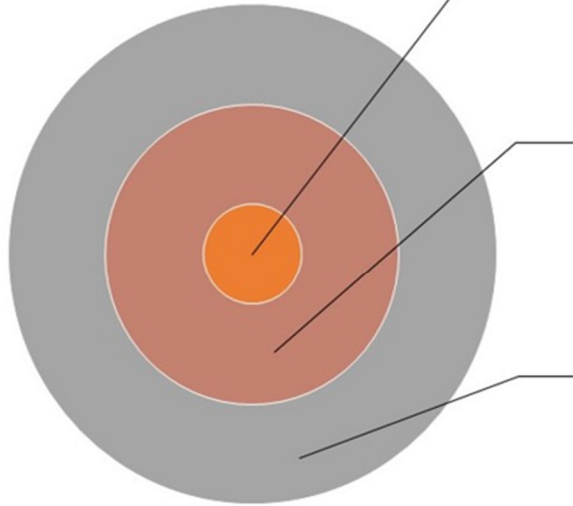
MFFN and WFN are committed to carrying out a thorough and meaningful consultation and engagement process for the NRL Project, in a respectful manner that reflects Indigenous culture and traditions. Consultation and engagement activities will follow MFFN's **Guiding Principles** and the WFN's **Three Tier Approach**. This guidance has been developed by MFFN and WFN over time to embody and pass on their traditional cultural values, customs and beliefs.



MFFN's Guiding Principles

WFN's Three Tier Approach

The three tiers are closely connected and depend on each other.



CORE TIER: The Community of Webequie and their Overall Well-Being

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Social health
- Education
- Employment opportunities
- Income

RELATIONAL TIER: Preserving the Indigenous Culture of Webequie

- Increasing understanding of the culture by others
- Language
- Traditional cultural activities
- Ancestral knowledge inheritance- recording and passing down knowledge down from the elders

FOUNDATIONAL TIER: *Treaty and Partnerships*

- Fair sharing of benefits from the land with government and industry



Jon Pleizier



Indigenous-Led Community Consultation & Engagement

Messages from the Chiefs about the importance of the NRL Project to their communities:

“Marten Falls First nation and Webequi First Nation are working on providing prosperity for our respective communities. As co-proponents, the NRL Project allows us to exercise our inherent right of self-determination and create business opportunities for our youth. Marten Falls First Nation will ensure the protection of the lands by having our first Nations lead the EA studies. We look forward to the partnership and the opportunities that will follow with economic development.”

Chief Bruce

“Webequie First Nation is excited to partner on an Indigenous-led environmental assessment (EA) for the Northern Road Link Project. The reason why the two communities are co-leading the EA is to generate information which will allow for us to make an informed decision. As co-proponents, Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation will ensure environmental stewardship for our traditional territories. We are seeking to enhance the quality of life of our community members and looking forward to working towards our mutual aspirations.”

Chief Cornelius

Indigenous Communities, Groups, and Tribal Councils

The purpose of consultation and engagement is to:

- Promote effective two-way communication between the proponent and members of potentially affected Indigenous communities and organizations, regulators, the public and others
- Present and receive information
- Identify and address issues and concerns related to the Project through mitigation and/or accommodation

As the proponent of the NRL Project, MFFN and WFN will ensure that the environmental planning is accessible and inclusive.

The MECP identified the following Indigenous Communities and groups that may be interested or affected by the Project and which are being consulted:

Indigenous Communities and Indigenous Groups

- Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek
- Long Lake #58 First Nation
- Aroland First Nation
- Marten Falls First Nation
- Attawapiskat First Nation
- Métis Nation of Ontario – Region 2
- Constance Lake First Nation
- Neskantaga First Nation

- Eabametoong First Nation
- Nibinamik First Nation
- Fort Albany First Nation
- Red Sky Independent Métis Nation
- Ginoogaming First Nation
- Wapekeka First Nation
- Kasabonika Lake First Nation
- Wawakapewin First Nation
- Kashechewan First Nation
- Weenusk (Peawanuck) First Nation
- Kingfisher Lake First Nation
- Webequie First Nation
- Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug
- Wunnumin Lake First Nation

Tribal Councils and Provincial Territorial Organizations will be also notified to determine their interest in participating in the process, as follows:

Tribal Council

- Matawa Tribal Council / Matawa First Nations Management
- Mushkegowuk Council
- Shibogama First Nations Council
- Nokiwin Tribal Council

Tribal Council

- Nishnawbe Aski Nation (also known as Grand Council Treaty 9)
- Anishinabek Nation (also known as the Union of Ontario Indians)
- Métis Nation of Ontario
- Chiefs of Ontario

Public and Stakeholders

General public, stakeholders (people or groups that are interested in the Project), as well as government ministries and agencies will be notified and consulted at ToR and EA milestones. The cities of Thunder Bay and Timmins, the municipalities of Greenstone and Sioux Lookout and the Township of Pickle Lake will be consulted given their proximity to the Project.

Outreach Activities

A variety of materials and activities have been used to engage with Indigenous communities

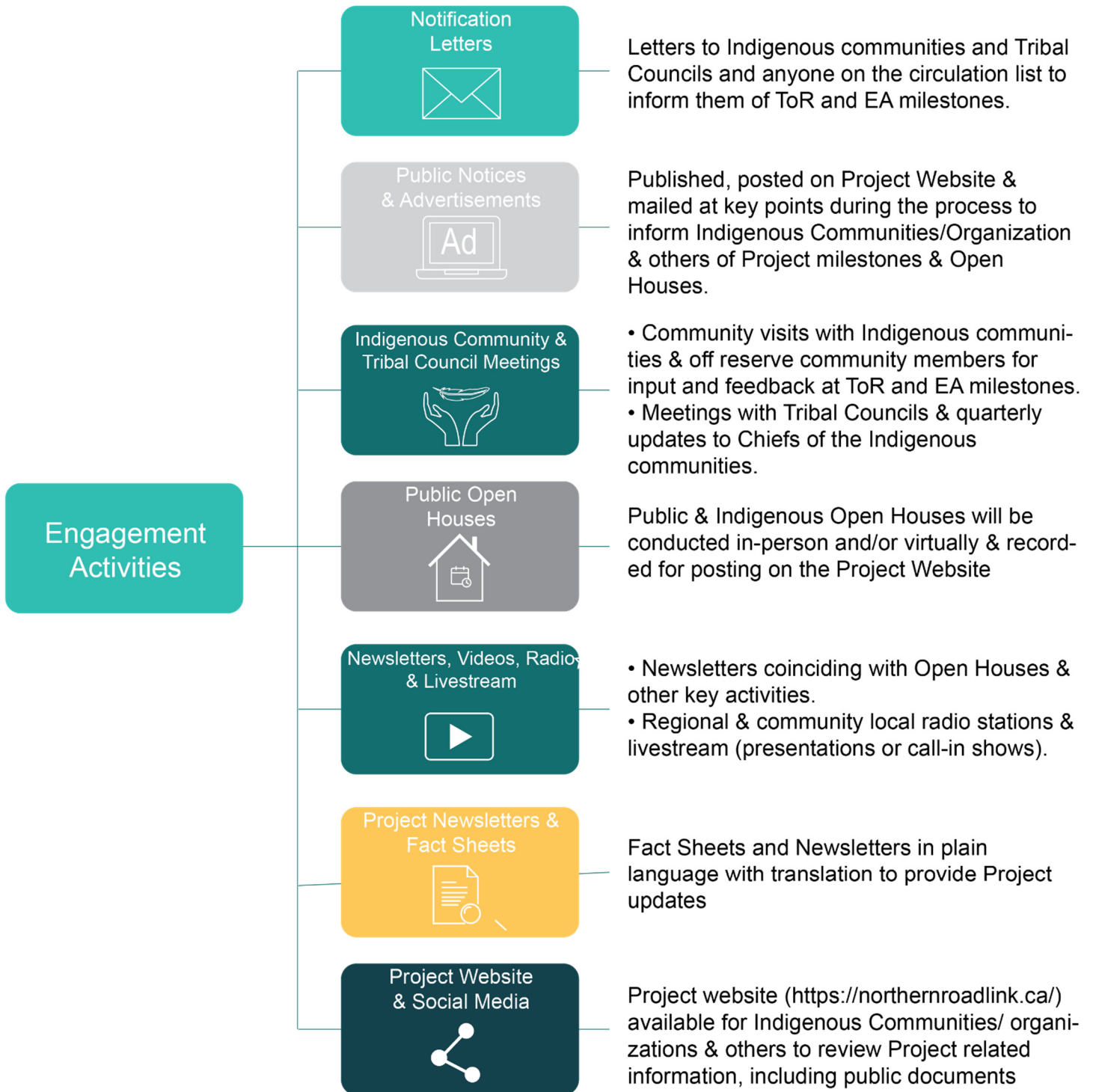
to date and will continue to be used as the Project progresses.

When visiting and engaging with Indigenous communities, the NRL Project Team will respect the protocols of those communities. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the Project will use responsibly innovative and adaptive ways to allow for meaningful consultation in a form that respects both the values and safety of Indigenous communities, other Indigenous organizations, and others.

The figure below highlights the types of engagement activities to be used.

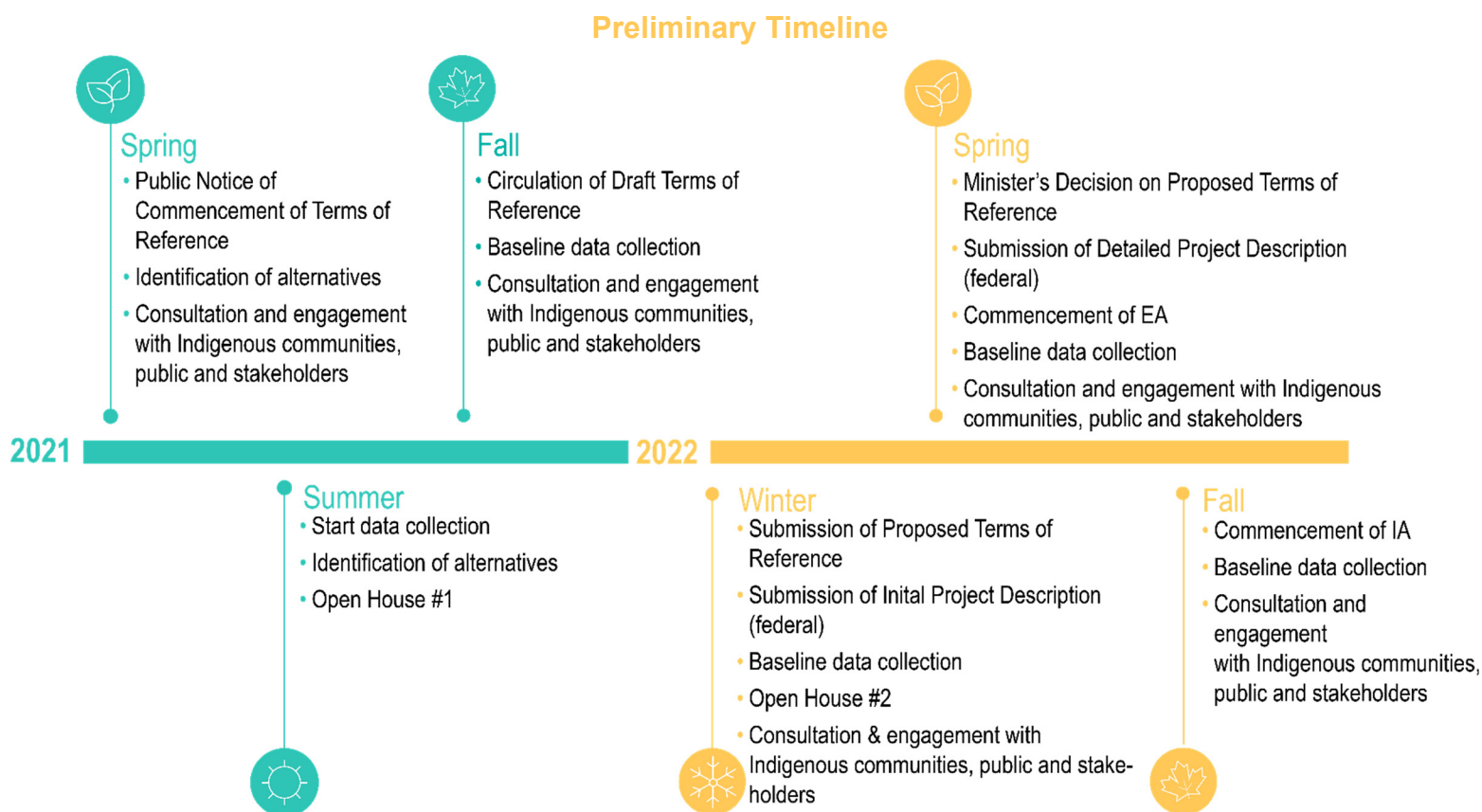


Types of Engagement Activities to be Used



Northern Road Link – Preliminary Timeline

The timeline for the EA/IA will be developed as the project progresses. The EA/IA will commence at the end of the planning phase, tentatively in spring 2022.



Indigenous Knowledge

An Indigenous Knowledge Program will be carried out to collect Indigenous Knowledge/Indigenous Land and Resource Use (IK/ILRU) information for consideration and incorporation into the EA/IA. The program will include both collection of existing IK/ILRU information and completion of Project-specific studies.

Assessment Methods

An assessment of Project-related effects on the environment will be carried out by selecting Valued Components (VCs) for Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests, physical, biological

and socio-economic environment, cultural heritage resources, and human health.

The EA/IA will describe assessment methods for:

- Selection and scoping of VCs
- Characterization of existing (baseline) conditions
- Identification of project interactions and potential effects
- Mitigation measures
- Residual effects (effects remaining after mitigation)
- Cumulative effects (effects of the project combined with other projects)
- Commitments and monitoring

Components of an Environmental Assessment



Current Environmental Conditions



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The Project is located on provincial Crown land. As typical for the Hudson Bay lowlands, the region is dominated by treed and open wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams within the watersheds of the Attawapiskat and Albany Rivers. Two broad bands of permafrost (sporadic and isolated patches) cross the region.



The wetlands, particularly the peatlands, are carbon sinks, providing protection against climate change. Wetlands also act as a natural filter, improving water quality. Waterfowl use

the waterbodies for stopping and staging (gathering together to prepare for migration). These areas have poorly drained organic soils. Black Spruce trees dominate both upland and lowland areas.



A wide variety of fish, birds and animals are found in the area, including species at risk protected by federal/provincial laws (Wolverine, Caribou, bats, Lake Sturgeon). Caribou and

other species (Moose) are important to Indigenous people. These, along with plants, such as berries, nuts, leaves (Labrador Tea), roots and tree foods (maple syrup, bark), are used as food and medicine. Other traditional Indigenous activities on the land include hunting and fishing, as well as cultural and spiritual activities. In addition, there are mining claims and trap lines.

Potential Environmental Effects

Like any project, the Northern Road Link will have some effects on the environment. The effects assessment will be completed for the preferred corridor / route alignment and supporting works and activities. Below is the list of 19 [preliminary valued components \(VC\)](#) and [indicators](#) identified in the draft ToR for the Project's environmental effects assessment. These VCs and indicators will be studied during the environmental assessment.



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Aboriginal & Treaty Rights & Interests

VC: Indigenous Use of Land and Resources

- Sites/areas used for rights-based activities and other interests (e.g., hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering)
- Availability or quantity of resources (e.g., wildlife, fish, vegetation) for rights-based activities and other interests (e.g., harvesting and gathering)
- Quality or perceived quality of resources for rights-based activities and other interests
- Access to sites and areas used for rights-based activities and other interests

VC: Cultural Continuity and Well-being

- Culturally important sites and areas (e.g., ceremonial sites, place names, teaching sites, archaeological sites)
- Sufficiency or perceived sufficiency of culturally significant sites, areas and/or resources
- Experience of being on the land
- Cultural traditions and way of life
- Mental well-being and future outlook of community members
- Social and family interactions and community cohesion
- Diet and food security
- Cultural knowledge transfer and language protection



Physical Environment

VC: Air Quality

- Concentrations of air contaminants
- Selected volatile organic compound (VOCs)
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon PAHs (benzo(a)pyrene)

VC: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)

- Quantification of GHG emissions

VC: Noise

- Continuous one-hour equivalent sound and vibration level (Leq, 1hr)
- Day-night sound and vibration level (Ldn)

- Day-time sound and vibration level (Ld)
- Night-time sound and vibration level (Ln)
- Percent highly annoyed (%HA)

VC: Groundwater

- Groundwater Quantity
- Groundwater Quality

VC: Surface Water

- Surface Water Quantity
- Surface Water Quality

VC: Geology, Terrain and Soils

- Terrain type and distribution
- Soil quality and distribution
- Geochemical hazards
- Geohazards
- Permafrost

VC: Visual Environment

- Visual contrast/character
- Visibility
- Visual sensitivity



Biological Environment

VC: Fish and Fish Habitat

- Fish and aquatic species, including fish species at risk
- Fish habitat

VC: Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

- Abundance and distribution
- Habitat availability
- Species richness
- Species habitat specificity
- Predation/habitat usage (other wildlife) and human access

VC: Birds and Bird Habitat

- Abundance and distribution
- Habitat availability
- Species richness
- Species habitat specificity
- Predation/habitat usage (other wildlife) and human access

VC: Plants and Vegetation Communities

- Vegetation type abundance (quantity and quality)
- Vegetation biodiversity



Socio-Economic Environment

VC: Regional and Local Economy

- Employment
- Income
- Cost of living
- Government financing
- Mining and forestry activity

VC: Community Services and Infrastructure

- Housing and accommodation
- Health care services
- Air transportation

VC: Land Use and Recreation

- Outdoor recreation
- Parks and protected areas

VC: Community Safety

- Crime rate
- Substance abuse



Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Resources

VC: Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Resources

- Archaeological resources
- Built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes



Human Health

VC: Human Health

- Air quality
- Noise
- Country foods
- Surface water and groundwater quality



Are there any other valued components (VCs) or indicators that you think we should consider in evaluating the NRL Project?

Climate Change Assessment

The EA/IA will include an assessment of climate change looking from both perspectives:

- How could the Project impact climate change, for example, from potential loss of peatlands and emissions from heavy equipment during construction?
- How could climate change impact the operation and maintenance of the road, such as more frequent flooding or repairs?

The EA/IA will look at ways of minimizing negative climate change impacts during construction and operation of the road.

Commitments and Monitoring

The EAR/IS will include a list of commitments made by the proponent during the EA/IA process and how they will be met. The commitments may relate to Project construction, operation/maintenance, mitigation measures, consultation/engagement and compliance monitoring.

Monitoring is meant to verify the effectiveness of mitigation measures and to help determine if additional action is needed to meet the Project's commitments.

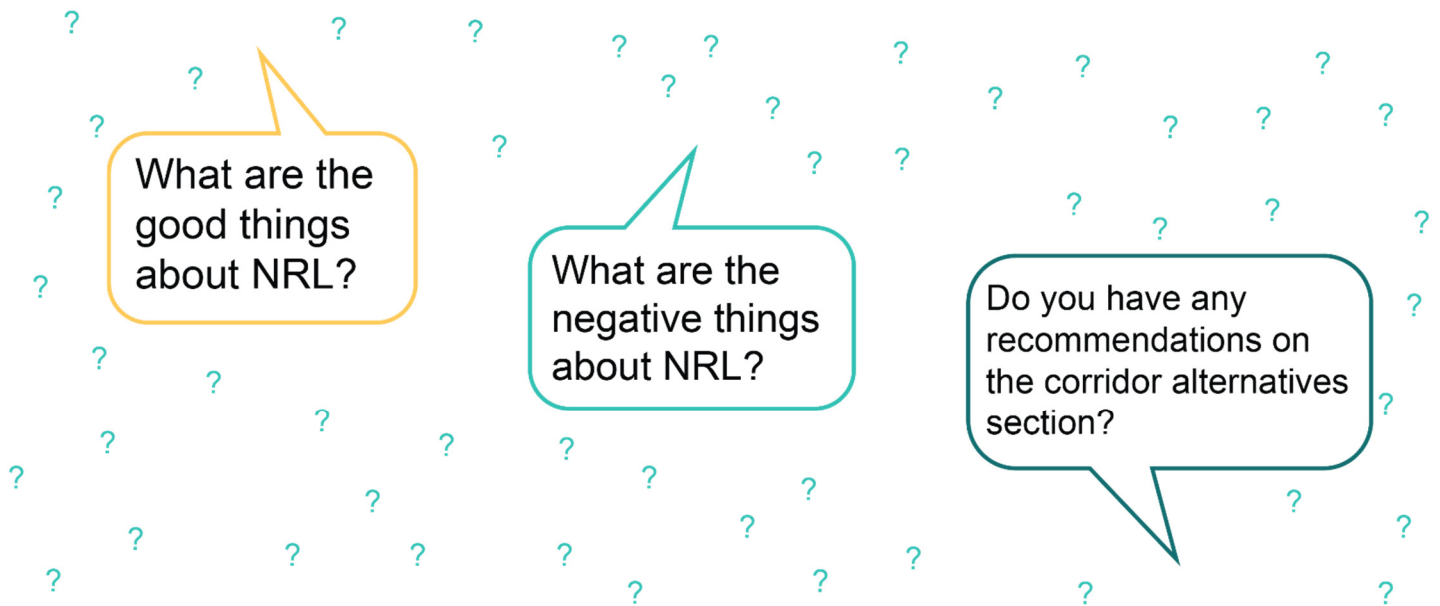
Flexibility to Accommodate New Circumstances

The ToR presents a preliminary description of the proposed NRL Project. The NRL Project is expected to evolve during the EA/IA process. Changes to the project design may be made to accommodate concerns from Indigenous

community, federal and provincial regulators, the public or stakeholder concerns, or based on ongoing engineering design, baseline characterization, and the effects assessment.

We Want to Hear from You!

Connect with the NRL Project Team. Please let us know, from your perspective, the following:



We encourage you to get in touch with our main contacts listed below and provide them with comments or ask them questions about the NRL Project.

Michael Fox & Qasim Saddique

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Please visit our Project Website: www.northernroadlink.ca for more information on the Project and check regularly for updates. There is a lot more information on the website, including videos. We welcome any suggestions you may have for future videos / fact sheets to best communicate information about our Project.

THANK YOU!