

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2026

NIIWIN WENDAANIMOK NEWSLETTER



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Recap

In October 2018, a Unity agreement was signed between the four Anishinaabe Nations of Wauzhushk Onigum, Washagamis Bay, Shoal Lake 40, and Niisaachewan – collectively the Niiwin Wendaanimok Partnership (NWP) – to discuss shared interests in the twinning of the TransCanada Highway through their territories. This project is proposed to occur over three phases between the Manitoba border and Kenora. In February 2020, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Anishinaabe governments committing to a

respectful, collaborative working relationship and engagement process under Manito Aki Inakonigaawin (MAI). One of the outcomes of Phase 1 was the Partnership developing their own Harmonized Impact Assessment (HIA), which brings together Western science and Anishinaabe knowledge to understand the impacts of the project in a holistic and comprehensive way. Today, the Partnership is embarking on a similar journey concerning Phase 2 of the project. To read the Phase 1 HIA or find more information, please visit: niiwinwendaanimok.com

Niiwin Wendaanimok in Action

Site Reconnaissance: Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin Study – MB Twinning of PTH 1

As part of the Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin Study for the MB Twinning Project, Niiwin Wendaanimok held four community workshops in December 2025, which took place in Washagamis Bay, Shoal Lake 40, Niisaachewan, and Wauzhushk Onigum.

Community members shared stories, experiences, and knowledge about the land, soils, skies, water, and their relationships with these components. Following the group mapping workshops, a site reconnaissance expedition was undertaken in January 2026 by Niiwin Wendaanimok's Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag (Anishinaabe Guardians).

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Niiwin Wendaanimok in Action



During the expedition, the Shkabewisag visited numerous sites of importance identified by the Elders and knowledge keepers in community workshops, including areas of importance on Barren Lake, Edgar Lake, and Falcon Lake. To ensure that site visits were conducted in accordance with Anishinaabe law and protocol, asemaa (tobacco) was offered on site. Wildlife, habitats, plants, medicines, and other important features were carefully recorded through notes, photos, and GPS. This work will be carried forward by Niiwin Wendaanimok in ongoing discussions related to the conceptual design of the project.

Manito Aki Inakonigaawin – Guiding Principles of Compliance

Guiding Principles of Compliance under Manito Aki Inakonigaawin are rooted in the Anishinaabe worldview and guide decision making processes for resource development within Treaty #3 territory. These principles are passed on by Elders and knowledge keepers to younger generations. The guiding principles are:



Nibwaakaawin (Wisdom):
We all have gifts and a purpose in this world. It is through the love of knowledge that we find wisdom.



Zaagi'idiwin (Love): The teaching of love is found in all of the other teachings. Love is strong enough to carry all of the teachings and allows us to see and connect to all of creation. When we live by these teachings, we are able to love who we are. Once we have found that balance within, we can provide love to our family and community.



Minaadendamowin (Respect):
This teaching reminds us to respect all living things, and in doing so we achieve a balance and reciprocity that keeps all things alive.



Aakode'ewin (Bravery): Sometimes we must confront threats we are fearful of, especially to protect our rights and responsibilities. But bravery also means to rest when needed.



Gwayakwaadiziwin (Honesty):
Honesty reminds us we must be truthful to who we are, walk tall, or to have integrity. It is only by being honest that we can have integrity.



Dabaadendiziwin (Humility):
We can be strong and powerful alone, but we find our greatest strength when part of a pack. Humility imparts strength to families and communities.



Debwewin (Truth):
Truth builds and keeps lasting relationships.

Grand Council Treaty #3. (n.d.)
Manito Aki Inakonigewin: Information Package.
www.gct3.ca/MAI-Toolkit.pdf

Traditional Teaching – Ma'iingan (Grey Wolf, Canis lupus)



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. In this issue, we would like to share some teachings on **Ma'iingan** (Grey Wolf).

In Anishinaabe tradition, ma'iinganag (grey wolves) have a special role as they originated when Original Man noticed that all the animals came in pairs, but he was on Aki (Earth) alone. Kizhe Manitou (the Creator) sent a ma'iingan to walk Aki with Original Man, and the two of them realized their comradeship with one another and all other creation.



Historically, ma'iingan roamed across nearly all of Mikinaak Minis (Turtle Island), but today they are mostly found in certain regions of Canada and Alaska as a result of extirpation. Ma'iinganag are family-oriented, and they live in packs. They mate from January to April, and pups are born between April and June. The pups are raised as a community, and pups learn hunting techniques from adult pack members and learn social interaction through play with other pups.

Ma'iinganag are carnivores and skilled hunters and prey on animals such as waawaashkeshiwag (deer), omashkooz (American elk), adik (woodland caribou), and moozoog (moose). However, ma'iinganag (grey wolves) are also predators of amik (beaver), akakojiishag (groundhog) and waaboozoog (snowshoe hare). In the wild, the strongest ma'iinganag (grey wolves) will defend their pack during times of danger. Male ma'iinganag (grey wolves) will demonstrate aggression towards intruders to protect their offspring.

In Anishinaabe culture, ma'iinganag represent perseverance, guardianship, and humility. During the Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin interviews in August 2019, community members highlighted the ma'iinganag's example of humility, reminding us that Kizhe Manitou (the Creator) placed humans on Aki (Earth) and that we should remain humble throughout our lives. Wolves are also culturally important because they play a role in traditional practices like trapping and hunting, which was also noted during the interviews.

Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag – Program Update

Through January and February, the Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag continued land-based monitoring activities within the Highway 17 Twinning Project area, guided by the principles of Manito Aki Inakonigaawin. Monitoring efforts focused on maintaining and relocating trail cameras to support ongoing site observation, with plans to expand monitoring capacity through additional cameras in 2026.

As per the governance protocols of the program, the Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag continue to provide regular updates and seek guidance from the Knowledge Keepers Council through monthly meetings, which inform next steps in the program. A Knowledge Keepers Council meeting was held on January 23, 2026, during which year-end updates were shared on progress made toward the Year 1 priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan. These updates included program governance, financial priorities, training and skills development, and the evolving role of the Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss and confirm priorities for Year 2 of the Strategic Plan.

Skill development and training remains a top priority for the program in the year ahead. With this in mind, in the coming weeks the Shkabewisag will undertake training in the monitoring of the waters, and wilderness first aid. This training will prepare the Shkabewisag for another great season in the field, monitoring the lands, soils, skies and waters with boots on the ground.

In The News: Niiwin Wendaanimok Training Updates

Niiwin Wendaanimok Training Program has had a very busy start to the year in 2026, with record numbers of participants enrolled in the training programs, and even more training opportunities upcoming through 2026.

Current Program Highlights:

On January 6th, 2026, Niiwin launched **Round 1 of the Turtle Shell: Modular Construction Training Program**, where a full cohort of trainees were on-site building a single-story modular home using polyurethane Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs). Participants are gaining hands-on experience in the full assembly process of a modular home, from structural floor systems and wall installation, to integrating mechanical systems and weatherproofing the building envelope. By the end of week 8, trainees completed the core interior finishes, a significant milestone in the home building process.

On February 4, 2026, Niiwin held a free virtual training in **HR Management Essentials Strategy and Leadership**, where participants explored how to lead ethical workplace cultures and align HR needs with organizational goals.

A Pre-Apprenticeship Heavy Duty Equipment Technician (HDET) Training also began on February 23 and will run until May 22, offered in partnership with Confederation College and Neniska Repair. In this training, a full cohort of participants will learn the skills necessary to inspect, diagnose, troubleshoot, and repair heavy duty equipment, drive axle assemblies, undercarriages, and ground-engaging attachments.

Upcoming Training Opportunities:

In March, Niiwin Wendaanimok Training, in partnership with Confederation College, will be offering a **Pre-Apprenticeship Roofer Course** from March 16, 2026 – June 12, 2026 in Kenora. In this course, participants will learn to install, repair and replace roofs using a variety of materials with different application methods, including shingles, shakes, and roofing tiles on sloped roofs. This is a paid opportunity where participants will earn an income while building skills (\$18/hr for eligible participants).

Round 2 of the Turtle Shell: Modular Construction Training Program will be a 10-week program beginning in May 2026, with applications opening in March. There are also Heavy Duty Equipment Operators (Surface Miner), and Construction Craft Training upcoming in 2026 with dates to be announced. See the next issue of the newsletter for more details!

Applications for all programs are posted on the website, Facebook page, and displayed via posters in the communities – sign up today!

If you have any training-related questions, please reach out at training@niiwinwendaanimok.com



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