



MAY - JUNE 2025

NIIWIN WENDAANIMOK NEWSLETTER



In the News

In June of 2025, Niiwin Wendaanimok hosted a week-long introductory training program in Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), through the Manitoba Construction Skills Council (MCSC) Sky Skills initiative. The training focused on practical drone flight skills, safety protocols, mission planning, and regulatory knowledge aligned Federal standards.

This training has equipped the Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag with skills needed to write the exam for Transport Canada's Basic Drone Operators Certification, which the team will be doing in the coming weeks. Drones will be an important tool for the Niiwin Wednaanimok Partnership in the monitoring of construction safety in Phase 2 of the project, and the monitoring of the Lands, Waters, Skies and Soils through the territory.



Next Steps

The Partnership is undertaking high-level strategic planning, visioning and political coordination between governments, industry, and Nations as part of the Process. In Phase 1, the task force had successfully negotiated multiple terms with the Crown Ontario and received National recognition for their work. Discussions with the Crown related to Phase 2 of the project were paused for the election through the winter of 2025, though have since resumed in the spring of 2025. The Task Force has been working to finalize a governance model for Phase 2 construction, with both parties making final revisions in the coming weeks. The path forward through negotiations in Phase 2 has, and will continue to be guided by MAI, guided in ceremony, guided by the Elders, and by the principles of Anishinaabeg Law.

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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") to discuss shared interests on 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 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 on a similar journey for Phase 2 of the project. To read the Phase 1 HIA or find more information, please visit: niiwinwendaanimok.com



Niiwin Wendaanimok in Action

On June 6, 2025 the Leadership of Niiwin Wendaanimok met with Kenora-Rainy River's Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) Greg Rickford, who also serves as Ontario's Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Economic Reconciliation to discuss the continued twinning of the Trans Canada Highway between Kenora and the Manitoba border.

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The purpose of the meeting was to discuss skills training opportunities for community members, in preparation for Phase 2 of the Highway 17 Twinning Project. In a social media post, Rickford wrote about the meeting “Together we are advancing reconciliation and securing safe passage for everyone who travels this route.”

The meeting was highlighted in an article published online and in print in the Kenora Miner & News, on June 18th, 2025.



Niiwin Wendaanimok Construction LP (NWCLP) Project Updates

Niiwin Wendaanimok Construction LP (NWCLP) has been actively engaged in multiple key infrastructure projects, delivering significant contributions across the region.

Completed in February, NWCLP successfully crushed 20,000 cubic meters of materials to support Shoal Lake 40's community Sewer and Water project. NWCLP drilled and blasted 15,000 cubic meters of material to support Niisaachewan community infrastructure and road development in May of 2025. NWCLP also provided vital construction support for safe and efficient operations during the Danger Rock Scaling Project.

NWCLP is excited to be involved in several projects through the summer of 2025, including:

- **MTO Drill, Blast, and Crush:** 5,000 cubic meters of material across three separate locations near Kenora. Blasting has already occurred at all sites, and crushing operations will commence this summer.
- **Lunam Pit:** drill, blast, and crush approximately 80,000 cubic meters of various materials for resale to the public.
- **WON – JP Land-Based Building Project:** 2,500 cubic meters of materials are expected to be blasted.

Stay tuned for more updates on these projects!

Training Program Update

In 2024, a range of valuable training opportunities were offered to community members, including Shoal Lake #40 Carpentry & Plumbing, Niisaachewan Road Building Training, Manitoba Construction Sector Council Training, and Wauzhushk Onigum Nation Carpentry Training.

Looking ahead, the Niiwin Wendaanimok Training Program continues to expand its impact. Over 300 Anishinaabe members from Treaty #3 Territory have already participated, with more than 100 additional members set to begin training in the upcoming year.

Training opportunities through spring and summer 2025 include: Heavy Duty Equipment Technician programs, Rock crushing and drilling training, Workplace Essential Skills, Secondary school-based offerings. In July 2025, a new Training Program Coordinator will be appointed to lead Niiwin Wendaanimok's training initiatives. Stay tuned for an introduction to the new coordinator in the next newsletter.

Manito Aki Inakonigaawin

In this newsletter we would like to discuss the education component of the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin (MAI) and the importance of understanding Anishinaabe laws. Such laws have been the foundation of survival on the land for generations and they continue to provide guidance that is relevant today. It is important for the Anishinaabeg to know their laws, not only because they are foundational to Anishinaabe history and identity, but also because they provide insight for the future and a clear path forward.



Anishinaabemowin is the key to understanding MAI.

The language is deeply interwoven with the law, and it is essential that both be revitalized together in step. Education on the MAI should not be separated from education on Anishinaabemowin.

When learning about MAI, it is important to understand that there is both a customary and contemporary law, and both have been in place since time immemorial. Customary describes the unwritten part of the law – the sacred teachings and ceremonies – and contemporary describes the visual representation of it – the things you can tangibly see, like the sweat lodge, the shaking tent, and the offerings. In recent years, the meaning of contemporary has expanded to include writing laws on paper. However, the written portion of the MAI, the Resource Law, is just one part of this sacred law; it cannot fully be captured by what is written. Just as paper became a new way to validate and express Anishinaabe laws, modern technology also presents a similar opportunity to revitalize our traditional ways.

Traditional Teaching – Cedar (Giizhik)



For this month's newsletter, we would like to highlight teachings from the AAK on the importance of giizhik (cedar). Giizhik has many uses. It is used for purification in ceremony and to provide healing of the body and spirit. When prepared properly, giizhik can be used to treat various ailments like colds and stomach cramps. Giizhik is particularly important in Sweat Lodge Ceremonies. It can be used to make tea or added to the sacred fire, producing a crackling sound that is said to call the attention of the spirits to the ceremony. When someone passes away, giizhik is used during the burial and funeral of the person. Giizhik is one of the four sacred mashkikiwan (medicines) in Anishinaabe tradition. Mashkiki (medicine) means “strength from the earth”, as it is using the plant life that Aki (Earth) has created to build strength in the living beings that consume them. Mashkikiwanlikegiizhik build the foundation of healing for the Anishinaabeg. They are used during ceremonies and in everyday life and are a fundamental component of Anishinaabe wellbeing.

Highlights from Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag

The Anishinaabe Aki Shkabewisag have continued their work monitoring the lands, soils, skies and waters with boots on the ground through the spring of 2025, guided by the Manito Aki Inakonigaawin and informed by the mitigation measures from the Harmonized Impact Assessment in Phase 1.

Their monitoring efforts have focused on sites of significance identified by the Elders & Knowledge Keepers in the Anishinaabe Aki Kakendamowin (AAK). To continue to build capacity of the program, the Shkabewisag have undertaken training in the monitoring of wildlife and the monitoring of plants, berries and medicines. This has included the use of trail cameras, and presence/absence transect surveys to identify plants of importance in the project area. In June of 2025, a new Executive Director was appointed to lead the implementation of the program's strategic plan. Stay tuned for an introduction to the new Executive Director in the next issue of the newsletter!

