



Indigenous Led Environmental Assessments: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

October 2023
OAIA Conference

THE PROJECTS

Marten Falls First Nation (MFFN) and Webequie First Nation (WFN) are leading the environmental assessments (EAs) for 3 road projects within their traditional territories, close to the Ring of Fire area.

Northern Road Link (NRL) (MFFN and WFN as co-proponents):

- Proposed all-season, multi-use, gravel road from 117km to 164 km in length
- Will connect mineral deposits in the Ring of Fire to the highway network via the Marten Falls Community Access Road (MFCAR)
- Creates opportunity for WFN to connect to the highway network

Marten Falls Community Access Road (MFFN as proponent):

- Proposed all-season, multi-use, gravel road from 190km to 230km in length
- Will connect MFFN to the highway network
- Creates opportunity to connect mineral deposits to the highway network

Webequie Supply Road (WSR) (WFN as proponent):

- Proposed all-season, multi-use, gravel road approx. 107km in length.
- Will connect WFN to the mineral deposit area near McFaulds Lake (Ring of Fire)
- Creates opportunity for WFN to connect to the highway network



LOCATION OF THE PROJECTS



WHERE WE STARTED

MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION (MFFN)

- Has long wanted all-season access and completed numerous feasibility studies.
- Volunteered to undertake an EA for the MFCAR at the same time considering future project extending the MFCAR to the mineral deposits in the McFaulds Lake area. MFFN then partnered with WFN to undertake the EA for what is known as the NRL.
- Undertaking these EAs so that the community can look forward to a brighter future because they have access to the highway network.
 - Opportunity for community to grow and be part of the social and economic fabric of the region and country.
 - Ability to forge partnerships with business and government to grow social and economic opportunities (mining, forestry and tourism).
 - Community will still be able to access the land and continue their role as stewards of the land.



WHERE WE STARTED

WEBEQUIE FIRST NATION (WFN)

- Participated in a number of studies with other area First Nations to look at options to connect the communities with each other and the highway network.
- While a preferred route was selected, issues (including no access to the mineral deposits) prevented an all-season road project from advancing.
- WFN interest in continuing to pursue an option which included connection to the mineral deposits in the McFaulds Lake area as it could provide broader economic development opportunities and social benefits.
- The WSR will:
 - facilitate the movement of materials/supplies/people from Webequie airport to the mineral exploration/proposed mine development in the McFaulds Lake area.
 - provide employment and other economic development opportunities to WFN community members and businesses.
- Volunteered to undertake an EA for the WSR and then partnered with MFFN to undertake the EA for what is known as the NRL.



WHY THESE EAs ARE UNIQUE

- Indigenous led EAs
 - MFFN and WFN are the proponents for the purpose of the EA
 - Guided by community principles and knowledge
- WFN and MFFN community members (not just leadership) have a say in how the EAs proceed
- Will use the results of the EAs to make decisions about development that takes place on their respective territories
- Setting the standard for future Indigenous-led EAs which will be the trend in the future



THE GOOD

Good faith practice:

- UNDRIP – economic determination
- Capacity building
- Self-determination
- Reconciliation
- Braiding western science and Indigenous knowledge
- Creative approaches to engagement
- Ability for community members to participate in field work
- Regional assessment – access to regional information



THE BAD

Bad faith practice:

- Crown identified Indigenous Nations, communities and organizations to engage
 - 2 different lists (significantly more communities on provincial list)
- Engagement during COVID pandemic
- Indigenous Knowledge process
- Federal and Ontario EA/IA Coordination in the 2020s



THE UGLY

- Shared territories and engaging neighbours
 - Not sharing information
 - Influence of advisors in limiting participation by communities
- First projects through the Impact Assessment Act – process changed part way through – moving goal posts
- Misinformation
- Cumulative Effects Assessment
 - Scope, uncertainty



THE BEAUTIFUL: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

STATUS OF THE PROJECTS – WE ARE MOVING FORWARD

- Three approved Terms of Reference (provincial EA)
- Three Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines (federal IA)
- Currently working on the EA/IS

AND THERE IS MORE

Committed Indigenous Nations lead to:

- Indigenous-led EAs
- Indigenous-led projects
- Indigenous-led economies





CONTACT US!

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