

Preliminary Program 2024 Conference

Impact & Environmental Assessment: It's a Lot & We Can Get Great Things Done

A Recipe for Meaningful Assessments in a Time of
Innovation, Modernization, and Uncertainty

October 23rd - 24th, 2024

Old Mill Toronto – 21 Old Mill Road, Toronto

Land Acknowledgement

The OAIA acknowledges that our conference is taking place on Treaty land that is steeped in rich First Nations history. We also acknowledge that this land is the Territory and Treaty Lands of the First Peoples of Turtle Island. It is shared between the Mississaugas of the Credit, as well as the Anishinaabeg of the Williams Treaty First Nations, and the Haudenosaunee, and is now home to many diverse First Nations peoples.

OVERVIEW:



At this year's conference we are exploring the theme of ***“Impact & Environmental Assessment: It’s a Lot and We Can Get Great Things Done. A recipe for meaningful assessments in a time of innovation, modernization and uncertainty.”***

Environmental Assessment (EA) and Impact Assessment (IA) practitioners are pulled in a lot of directions during the course of IA/EAs, with the goal of ensuring the process remains efficient, meaningful, informed, transparent, and inclusive. By prioritizing and focusing, we can strike the correct balance ensuring robust, high-quality, and meaningful IA/EAs. So, while IA/EAs have become a catchall of ideas and aspirations, we can get great things done.

The conference will explore the notion of working in a time of innovation and modernization, ensuring that the vision and principles for assessments are maintained all while not losing focus on the bigger picture questions.

Practitioners need to be well positioned to collect the right information and conduct analysis with a view to maximizing outcomes and minimize impacts on Indigenous culture and traditions, health and socio-economic conditions, as well as archaeology, paleontology and the biophysical environment. With a vision to engage earlier and more effectively to build trusted relationships so that assessments can respond to the pertinent questions from participants at the onset rather than collecting information for information’s sake. Without questioning the bigger picture, we leave ourselves with the unsophisticated notion that IA/EAs are simply too resource intensive.

Practitioners must also learn from Indigenous communities, respecting Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing as it should be and harmonizing this knowledge with western scientific methods in the assessment processes.

The complexity of information available to practitioners can seem daunting, and this conference is intended to aid practitioners to stay focused on the vision and not feel swung in different directions between streamlined processes, prioritizing information, and new technologies. The vision is for practitioners to learn to balance this wealth of information along with the emergence of new technology tools, mapping and database tools, and artificial intelligence. Are some practices more useful in certain circumstances? What does meaningful engagement look like on your project? Where is the sweet spot and how does the practitioner decide on it for different projects in different contexts?

The 2024 Conference Explores Three Program Areas:

Program Area 1 – Indigenous-led EA/IA Processes:

Exploring Indigenous and community-led assessments processes, what does the process look like and how does it differ from Federal, Provincial and Municipal processes.

Program Area 2 – Streamlining Processes, Prioritizing Information, and Asking the Right Questions:

If the process is too cumbersome and when we don't collect the right information we slow down. Continued streamlining efforts are imperative, however we need to ensure this is done while adhering to the core principles (transparent, inclusive, informed and meaningful). An important and often overlooked component of improving efficiency is ensuring we get the right information at the pre-planning stage and pre-permit stages, not later during the decision-making stages. We need to look at the big picture at the onset of assessments and ask the correct questions early-on to help focus our efforts. We also need to ensure these questions are in fact answered through the assessments and projects we deliver.

Program Area 3 – Value Relationships:

If we don't engage the right regulators, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities, at the outset of the project, we slow down. If we want to improve IA/EAs, we need to initiate, develop, and foster relationships for the long term. When we don't take the time to develop relationships, we lose the chance to develop trust. Without trust it is hard to effectively move forward.

The 2024 Conference Planning Committee:

Violetta Savage ⊖ 2024 Conference Chair ⊖ City of Toronto

Mark MacDougall ⊖ Shared Value Solutions

Hayley Austin ⊖ Stantec

Rebecca D'Onofrio ⊖ Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Catherine Gentile ⊖ WSP

Catherine Macdonell ⊖ Toronto Metropolitan University

Greg McKenzie ⊖ Blue Moth Creative

Anjala Puvananathan ⊖ Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

Sabrina Wong ⊖ Dillon

The Ontario Association for Impact Assessment (OAIA) was founded in 1994. This year is OAIA's 30th Anniversary.

To celebrate the history of both OAIA and the evolution of environmental and impact assessment in Canada and, in particular in Ontario, we are asking that you upload your stories and photos, videos and documents at this portal:

<https://oaia.on.ca/30th-anniversary-submissions/>

The deadline to do so is August 30, 2024.

We can't wait to go through your submissions!

Day 1: Session Details

SESSION

TOPIC(S), ABSTRACT(S), PRESENTER(S)

Session 1: Facilitator information, times and logistics to be inserted in the final program

Innovations In Field Studies for EAs / IA – With Advancing Technology Are We Up to The Challenge?

Kimberly Laframboise, HDR

As legislative amendments continue, including the *Fisheries Act*, the *Conservation Authorities Act*, and *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, practitioners modernize to meet new requirements. This presentation will explore new innovations in field studies (such as Environmental DNA (eDNA)), and how these can benefit the EA/IA process, and discuss how to strike the correct balance of ensuring robust, high-quality, and meaningful IA/EAs.

Session 1: Managing Uncertainty

How do we increase the confidence in projects/study results/processes in the face of unknowns. When we predict the environment will behave in a certain way how do we monitor for success or what occurs if the predictions do not come to fruition? What is the role of follow-up programs in building confidence?

New Nuclear Project Impact Assessment in Canada: Navigating First-of-a-Kind Projects in an Uncertain Regulatory Landscape

Cole Atlin and Kieran Potter, Calian Nuclear

As new nuclear development proposals emerge, impact assessment for nuclear projects have both opportunities and challenges in order to integrate the requirements, where applicable, of the *Impact Assessment Act*, and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission licensing requirements. Case studies from across Canada will focus on technical challenges related to greenfield nuclear development.

Impacts of Today’s Decisions in an Uncertain Tomorrow: A Review of Adaptation in the Mining Sector

*Trennon Wint, Master of Science Student, University of Guelph
 2024 Ontario Impact Assessment Award and Student Bursary Recipient*

Few studies have assessed efficacy of climate adaptation in mine closure plans. This presentation would highlight best practices in the Canadian context on the adaptive response to climate change during closure and elucidate climate risks associated with post-closure mine sites.

Exploring the Landscape of Post-Environmental Assessment Support

David Kielstra, Stantec

Following the environmental assessment (EA), EA commitments are transferred to designers, permitting conditions, and then subsequently to a contractor; and there is a time lag that creates uncertainties. Using case studies, this presentation will emphasize the vital role of adaptive management and continuous improvement to manage uncertainties in the long-term effectiveness of EAs.

SESSION

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Session 2: Facilitator information, times and logistics to be inserted in the final program

**Session 2:
Bringing it All
Together**

Streamlining processes, managing and prioritizing information and asking/answering the right questions.

Modernizing Process and Maintaining Environmental Accountability

Jeffrey Reid, City of Mississauga

The Province of Ontario is proposing to replace the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) with a streamlined Municipal Project Assessment Process (MPAP) regulation under the provincial *Environmental Assessment Act* (EA Act), which would not apply to roads. While creating flexibilities for municipalities, the proposed regulation would not hold municipalities accountable for environmental planning principles in transportation design. To compensate and maintain environmental accountability, Peel Region and the City of Mississauga have adopted a multi-modal integrated approach to transportation planning. Having an integrated plan reduces cost and minimizes disruption to the community.

York Region Sewage Works Project Report: A Case Study for Streamlined Impact Assessment

Katrina McCullough, GHD

The York Region Sewage Works Project Report is a case study for what Environmental Assessments for municipal infrastructure in Ontario could look like in the future. This streamlined program-level impact assessment process was driven by the provinces' aggressive housing targets and the *Supporting Growth in York and Durham Region Act*, which directed York and Durham Regions to undertake a program-level impact assessment for over 20 individual projects.

Session 3: Facilitator information, times and logistics to be inserted in the final program

**Session 3:
Consultation and
Engagement**

How has this changed in process and/vs in practice. How is technology being used? How should technology be used to enhance consultation and engagement? How can Indigenous or community-led

Understanding Relationships as Critical Path for Project Delivery

Jeremiah Pariag, HDR

Engagement with regulators, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities is essential for the critical path of project delivery, as well as the overall viability of projects. Projects have always been politicized; however, due to the rise of social media, changes in media consumption patterns, and the general availability of information, the perception of projects matters more than ever before. This presentation will examine some of the trends that are taking place in consultation, engagement, and long-term relationship development, and how the EA and IA industry needs to adapt in order to meet the expectations of the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities.

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assessment bridge gaps in understanding and expectations.

From the Ground Up: Webequie's Recipe for Successful Indigenous-Led Projects

Marian Tibor-McMahon and Michael Fox, Indigenous & Community Engagement (ICE) Inc.

Webequie First Nation is a remote community located in the Ring of Fire area of Ontario's Far North. The Community has been undertaking an Indigenous-led assessment for the Webequie Supply Road (WSR) Project, a proposed all-season road connecting Webequie First Nation to the Ring of Fire area. This supply road will enable Webequie to improve its community well-being and socio-economic opportunities. The presentation will highlight community-based and innovative methods of engagement with its community members and neighbouring communities. Overall, this presentation will showcase how Indigenous-led principles have been implemented in the Indigenous and public review process.

Innovative approaches to building Impact Assessment Capacity in Omushkego Communities *Caroline Coburn, Odonaterra Inc and Alana Graham, Mushkegowuk Council*

Mushkegowuk Council responds to the collective will of the Omushkego Nation. Omushkego communities are experiencing development pressures and are involved in impact assessments for the Webequie Supply Road, Marten Falls Community Access Road, and the Northern Road Link, as well as the Regional Assessment for the Ring of Fire. These assessments involve an immense amount of western scientific data and Indigenous knowledge. These assessments are complex and challenging because they are occurring concurrently and within the context of sustained socio-economic inequality, and climate change impacts on community life. To build confidence and capacity in IA, Omushkego communities propose to establish community and external IA expert advisory groups, draft an Impact Assessment Toolkit and Certification Program, and deliver information and training through art and a GeoHUB.

Session 4: Facilitator information, times and logistics to be inserted in the final program

**Session 4:
The Crystal Ball**

What should EA/IA processes focus on? Should there be one size fits all or flexibility to focus and scope based on environmental, social, technical contexts?

Waasigan Transmission Line Comprehensive Environmental Assessment and Indigenous Engagement and Partnerships

John Chadwick, Hydro One and Callum Squires, WSP Canada Inc.

The Waasigan Transmission Line, a proposed 360 km line connecting Lakehead Transformer Station (TS) in the Municipality of Shuniah to Mackenzie TS in the Town of Atikokan, and on to Dryden TS in the City of Dryden, is Hydro One's first comprehensive EA in over 15 years. This presentation will highlight participation opportunities for Indigenous communities, as well as the natural environment field program.

Engagement with Indigenous communities was key and there were many

SESSION

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If there is flexibility, how would practitioners build buy-in and trust with Indigenous communities and public participants

lessons learned related to incorporating Indigenous perspectives and how to remove barriers to participation.

The Human Environment in EAs/IAs: Areas Building and Valuing Relationships

Faiza Waheed, Intrinsik

This presentation will shed light on identifying what needs to be assessed (i.e., scoping). This presentation will highlight opportunities and challenges with survey tools and shed thoughts on 1) the questions that should be asked; 2) how we should ask these questions and of whom; 3) when we need to start asking questions; 4) the information we should be prepared to share with communities; and 5) the mindset we should bring to the table.

Networking and Socializing: Evening Reception with Complimentary Appetizers and Cash Bar

Day 2: Sessions

Morning First Nations Knowledge Walk with Gary Pritchard adjacent the Humber River.
 Space is limited, registration will be required

SESSION	TOPIC(S), ABSTRACT(S), PRESENTER(S)
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Session 5: Facilitator information, times and logistics to be inserted in the final program

**Session 5:
 Jurisdictional Roles
 and Responsibilities**
*Where applicable,
 both the federal and
 provincial IA/EA
 processes are
 meaningful and assess
 effects as defined in
 the respective
 legislative
 frameworks.*

Overview of the *Impact Assessment Act*
Terence (Terry) Hubbard, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
 Immediately following the Supreme Court of Canada’s issuance of its decision on the constitutionality of the *Impact Assessment Act*, in a joint statement by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Justice, the Government of Canada committed to make the legislative changes required to respect the Court’s decision. The presentation would provide an overview of the amendments made to the *Impact Assessment Act* in 2024.

Update on Ontario’s *Environmental Assessment Act*
Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)
[presenter names TBC]
 This presentation will provide an update on the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks’ ongoing initiatives to modernize the environmental assessment program in Ontario.

SESSION TOPIC(S), ABSTRACT(S), PRESENTER(S)

Session 6: Facilitator information, times and logistics to be inserted in the final program

A Space for Indigenous Led Impact Assessments

Mina Patel, and Maya Watson, WSP Canada

Promoting reconciliation is at the core of federal assessments and is demonstrated by the early identification of potential impacts of projects on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That said, it is preferable for Indigenous Peoples to lead their own studies. However, respectful and meaningful integration of Indigenous-led impact assessments (ILIA) into proponent-led and government-mandated Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) remains a challenge. Is there a way of developing a space for ILIAs in the EIA process that does not compromise or water down Indigenous Knowledge (IK)?

Lithium Hydroxide Conversion Plant in Quebec: Lessons learned from a voluntary EIA using the Issue-Based Approach

Robert Young, Hatch

Nemaska Lithium Inc. (NLI) is a company in the new transition renewables economy and is building a plant in Bécancour, Quebec to convert spodumene into monohydroxide lithium. To obtain all permits and streamline dialogue with stakeholders and Indigenous communities, NIL create a streamlined voluntary environmental and social assessment process that prioritized environmental data and assessed potential impacts by addressing key considerations through a new “issues-based” provincial EIA process. This presentation will outline how the EIA process in Quebec was modernized.

**Session 6:
Process
Modernization**

Lessons learned from process modernization effects on different valued components, in different sectors or in different jurisdictions

Modernizing While Maintaining Safety: Integrated assessments for designated nuclear projects

Claire O'Neill Sanger, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, Kendra Warnock-Juteau, Canadian Nuclear Safety commission

As new nuclear development proposals emerge to meet electricity demands, requirements of the *Impact Assessment Act* and the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act* (NSCA) must be integrated to meet the goal of “one project, one assessment”. The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) and Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) established a Memorandum of Understanding, which outlines roles and responsibilities for the review process. IAAC and the CNSC have been actively working to implement a modernized process that reduces duplication and improves efficiency, while ensuring Indigenous Rights and nuclear safety remain top priorities.

SESSION TOPIC(S), ABSTRACT(S), PRESENTER(S)

Session 7: Facilitator information, times and logistics to be inserted in the final program

Technology and the EA Process - Where to Focus?

Sabrina Wong, Dillion

The world of technology and AI is evolving at a faster pace than ever before. As an EA Practitioner, it can be challenging to know where to start applying new technologies and what risks to be aware of. This presentation is intended to generate discussion on the use of technology by EA Practitioners and learn from others' experiences - both the good and the bad.

Open Science and Data Platform: Empowering Canada's Environmental and Impact Assessment Processes

Sonja Kosuta, Natural Resources Canada

The Open Science and Data Platform's records and functionalities help users utilize information to improve environmental and impact assessment processes, including geospatial data, science, and regulatory information, multi-dimensional baseline and timeseries data, and the ability to layer data in an interactive map viewer to inform cumulative effects at multiple scales. The presentation will highlight how diverse users leverage the Platform to support an efficient and enhanced IA process.

**Session 7:
Data and Technology**

What are the modern tools currently available and innovations that might help IA/EA? How is technology changing and how are we using it? How has technology created process efficiencies?

CNSC Engagement Through Environmental Protection Reviews

Kendra Warnock-Juteau and Rebecca D'Onofrio, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's (CNSC) staff publish environmental protection review (EPR) reports to provide transparency on staff's evaluation of how effectively nuclear facilities are protecting human health and the environment. CNSC also maintains an Independent Environmental Monitoring Program, regional health studies, monitoring programs, and Indigenous knowledge studies.

Enhancing Planning Operations and Decision-making through Automation and Data Insights at the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Mark McKnight, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)

TRCA has launched its new PARES platform as it continues to make significant investments in modernizing its planning and permitting services. TRCA's new tools are providing better collaboration on files, improved efficiency and more visibility to team activities. This presentation will provide an update on the PARES project and highlight new ways TRCA is continuing to advance its services, including an upcoming public portal for permit applications, enhancements of GIS services for infrastructure reviews, map production automation, and new data analytics services for decision-making.

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