

Webequie Supply Road Project

Webequie First Nation

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APPENDIX M: GENDER BASED ANALYSIS PLUS (GBA+)

AtkinsRéalis



WSR
WEBEQUIE
SUPPLY ROAD



GBA+

Webequie Supply Road



InterGroup

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Details
ASSP	Alternative Secondary School Program
GBA+	Gender-based Analysis Plus
IA Act	Impact Assessment Act
IAAC	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
KKETS	Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training
km	Kilometres
LGBTQ2+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirits, non-binary, pansexual, asexual, and intersex (Government of Canada, 2019).
MFCAR	Marten Falls Community Access Road
MFFN	Marten Falls First Nation
NAPS	Nishnawbe Aski Police Service
NRL	Northern Road Link
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
WSR	Webequie Supply Road

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1.0 BACKGROUND

This section introduces the Webequie Supply Road project (“the Project”), purpose of gender-based analysis plus (GBA+), and study area considerations.

1.1.1 WSR Project

The Webequie Supply Road (WSR) is a proposed all-season access road from the Webequie First Nation's main reserve (Webequie 240) to the mineral deposit area near McFaulds Lake (also referred to as the “Ring of Fire”) in northwestern Ontario. Webequie is an Anishinaabemowin Tawin (Oji-Cree community) located approximately 540 km north of the City of Thunder Bay. The proposed new road would be approximately 107 kilometres (km) in length, with the preliminary corridor of the road consisting of a northwest-southeast segment running 51 km from the Webequie First Nation reserve to an east-west segment running 56 km terminating near McFaulds Lake. A total of 17 km of the corridor is within the Webequie First Nation reserve.

The goals and objectives of the Webequie Supply Road Project are as follows:

- To facilitate the movement of materials, supplies and people from the Webequie Airport to the area of existing mineral exploration activities and proposed mine developments in the McFaulds Lake area;
- To provide employment and other economic development opportunities to Webequie First Nation businesses and community members that reside in or around the community’s reserve and traditional territory, while preserving their language and culture; and
- To provide experience/training opportunities for youth related to the Project, which in turn will help encourage attainment of additional skills through post-secondary education, as well as other training and work experience.

Project Phases

The WSR Project will occur in phases that have the potential to interact with various social, health, economic, and environmental conditions in the Project study areas, which can have disproportionate effects on diverse groups who reside there.

The Project will include a Construction Phase and an Operations and Maintenance Phase. It is anticipated that the Construction Phase will begin in 2028 and the Operations and Maintenance Phase will begin in 2033. The Construction Phase and Operations phase are as follows:

- **Construction Phase:** All the activities associated with the initial development of the road and supportive infrastructure from the start of construction to the start of operations and maintenance of the WSR. Decommissioning of temporary supportive infrastructure (e.g., construction camps, aggregate source areas) and reclamation/restoration of disturbed areas are included in the construction phase. The construction phase is anticipated to take approximately 4 to 6 years to complete. To support the initial construction and to minimize the impacts on the community of Webequie, the first construction camp will be established at the

west-end of the Winisk Lake crossing. Once the bridge crossing of Winisk Lake is passable, the other construction camps will be established along the corridor as construction progresses. The direct and indirect workforce requirement for the Project construction phase is anticipated to average 142 workers per year, peaking at approximately 201 workers. The Project will consider a rotational work schedule for the construction workforce, such as fly-in/fly-out labour limited to 14 days in and 7 days out. Direct workforce will account for most of the Project construction workforce requirement and their work will be based at the Project site.

- **Operations and Maintenance Phase:** All activities associated with operations and maintenance of the road and other permanent supportive infrastructure (e.g., maintenance and storage facility, pits/quarries) that will start after construction and will continue for the life of the Project. The operations and maintenance phase of the Project is considered to be 75-years based on the expected timeframe when major refurbishment of the road components (e.g., bridges, culverts) is anticipated. The direct workforce requirement for the Project operation phase is anticipated to be 25 workers.

The Project will require supportive infrastructure throughout the phases, including aggregate/rock source areas (i.e., pit/quarries), temporary construction camps with storage/laydown yards, rest and maintenance areas, access roads, and a permanent maintenance and storage facility. Part of the construction execution strategy of the Project includes accommodation for the construction workforce, which will be provided using a proposed total of four temporary construction camps. The average construction workforce for the Project is 50 to 70 people. The four temporary construction camps are proposed to be established at uniform distances along the preferred route to support construction staging of the road and development of supportive infrastructure (e.g., aggregate source areas). Each temporary camp will be approximately 8 hectares and will provide structures for sleeping, dining, and offices, as well as designated laydown/storage areas for equipment and materials.

The occupational categories anticipated to be required for the Project through direct employment over both phases include trades, health, natural and applied sciences, transport and equipment operators, business, finance, and administration.

1.1.2 WSR Impact Assessment

On May 3, 2018, the Ontario Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (then Minister of the Environment and Climate Change) signed a voluntary agreement with Webequie First Nation to make the WSR subject to an Individual Environmental Assessment under Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act (MECP, 2018). The Project is also subject to meeting the requirements of the federal Impact Assessment Act (IA Act) as determined by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) based on the review of the federal Detailed Project Description for the Project.

This study contributes to the impact assessment for the WSR project by fulfilling the GBA+ component of impact assessment. GBA+ is an analytical process carried out to assess the intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors, as recommended under the federal IA Act in Section 22 (1)(s) (Government of Canada, 2019). GBA+ was conducted for Webequie First

Nation but may act as proxy for other communities in the Local Study Area. **Table 1-1** displays the wider spatial boundaries for the socio-economic environment in the impact assessment.

The Local Study Area for the socio-economic environment consists of eight Indigenous communities identified by the provincial and federal governments for engagement and consultation that have asserted shared traditional territory with Webequie First Nation and/or that may experience potential effects as a result of the Project. All communities in the LSA reside in Treaty No. 9 territory. The Regional Study Area consists of 14 Indigenous communities not included in the Local Study Area located within the regional unorganized districts and census divisions of Kenora, Thunder Bay and Cochrane.

Table 1-1: Socio-Economic Environment Spatial Boundaries

Local Study Area	Webequie First Nation
	Attawapiskat First Nation
	Eabametoong First Nation
	Kasabonika First Nation
	Marten Falls First Nation
	Neskantaga First Nation
	Nibinamik First Nation
	Weenusk First Nation
Regional Study Area	Kashechewan First Nation
	Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig First Nation
	Kingfisher Lake First Nation
	Mishkeegogamang First Nation
	North Caribou Lake First Nation
	Wapekeka First Nation
	Wawakapewin First Nation
	Wunnumin Lake First Nation
	Township of Pickle Lake
	Municipality of Sioux Lookout
	Aroland First Nation
	Ginoogaming First Nation
	Long Lake #58 First Nation
	City of Thunder Bay
	Municipality of Greenstone
	Constance Lake First Nation
	Fort Albany First Nation
	City of Timmins

Gendered impacts are often underrepresented in the IA process (Hoogeveen et al., 2021). GBA+ is used to identify diverse populations that may be impacted by a project and understand how those populations may experience project impacts differently by recognizing the historical and current power imbalances that contribute to inequalities in society (IAAC, 2021). Further, GBA+ helps identify measures that can both mitigate the negative effects of a project and enhance the positive effects of a project on different populations (IAAC, 2022).

Diverse populations refer to the intersectionality of different identity factors, such as gender, sex, age, ethnicity, race, and disability, that make people who they are. These identity factors can influence the ways in which groups may experience project effects disproportionately. Major projects, such as the WSR, have the potential to impact diverse groups in ways that may reinforce existing inequalities in communities (IAAC, 2022).

While the introduction of all-season access roads to Indigenous communities can have positive results, such as decreased costs of food and other necessities, increased access to services like health care and education, and economic opportunities, greater access to previously remote communities can also produce negative results. Concerns associated with transitions to all-season roads largely centre on the social implications they may bring. Some believe that roads can present threats to community relationships, values, and communication and are associated with changes to traditional roles and practices that promote individualistic behaviours, changes which may be referred to as 'invisible losses' (Adam et al., 2012; Turner et al., 2008). Invisible losses are impacts that may not be widely recognized in planning and development because they may be indirect or cumulative, such as loss of culture, lifestyle, identity, self-determination, as well as emotional and psychological losses (Turner et al., 2008). Other negative results of increased access to remote communities via all-season roads can include increased access to drugs and alcohol and increased access to communities by unwanted visitors who do not have the same appreciation for the land and community as the locals (Mihalus, 2016).

Indigenous communities are placed in challenging positions when it comes to proposed resource development projects in their area. Power imbalances between Indigenous communities and proponents can leave communities vulnerable when they must negotiate benefits for their people and sign agreements. Further, the historical trauma of colonialism carried by Indigenous peoples has caused a lack of trust and feelings of hopelessness in government processes such as IAs, where Indigenous communities fear for violation of their rights and can feel that their needs are left unheard and unaddressed (Myette & Riva, 2021). Thus, GBA+ plays a critical role in amplifying the voices of diverse groups during project processes in order to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable populations not only feel heard, but that their experiences are understood, potential harms are identified, and enhancement measures are tailored to their diverse needs.

GBA+ of the WSR Project focuses on Webequie First Nation due to their proximity to the WSR and availability and nature of data and information sources, however, it is acknowledged that disproportionate affects of the WSR project may be experienced by diverse groups in neighbouring LSA and RSA communities. See **Section 2.0** for more information on the approach

to assessment. For more information on the spatial and temporal boundaries, see **Section 2.0** of the *Socio-Economic Existing Conditions Report* (SNC-Lavalin, 2023).

To be most effective, GBA+ must be applied to all project activities, including the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring phases of a project, in order to ensure activities are informed by input from diverse populations (IAAC, 2022). **Section 2.1.1** describes the primary data sources used to inform the Project and GBA+ assessment. This report provides a GBA+ assessment of the WSR by analyzing the existing conditions (e.g., demographics, housing, employment, etc.) of the study area as presented in the *Socio-Economic Existing Conditions Report* (SNC-Lavalin, 2023) and potential project effects, and proposes mitigation, enhancement, and monitoring measures to aid in equitable project effects for all individuals in the study area.

2.0 METHODS

This section describes the approach to data sources and, the literature review conducted to support qualitative data analysis, and the limitations of the assessment.

2.1 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data is non-numerical and often consists of in-depth information in the form of words that can provide insight on the behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs of people. Examples of qualitative data include interview transcripts, observational notes, and meeting notes. Qualitative data analysis consists of reading information in search of themes to develop categories or codes, which allows for understanding and exploring patterns in perspectives and social structures to extract meaning. Qualitative data analysis can help to uncover unexpected information that cannot be identified through quantitative (numerical) data. Coding is an important process in qualitative data analysis, as it allows for dividing large amounts of information in to categories that make it easier to understand and identify key themes emerging from the data. Codes are labels for topics identified in the review of information (Wong, 2008).

Codes can be created deductively and inductively. Deductive coding is based on previous knowledge and experience of the individual performing the coding, whereby codes are created prior to analyzing information based on anticipated areas of importance. Inductive coding is based on reviewing qualitative data first and creating codes as areas of importance emerge during the review (Daniels, 2018).

Qualitative data analysis was conducted through the use of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. NVivo allows for qualitative data to be coded, sorted, and retrieved more quickly and easily than manual coding (i.e., using colored pens on paper to identify different topics) (Wong, 2008). The primary and secondary data sources analyzed through NVivo included 14 knowledge holder interviews, four focus groups, results from three different community surveys, and four community reports (see **Section 2.1.1** and **Section 2.1.2** for more information on data sources).

The first round of coding both primary and secondary data focused on coding information as it pertained to different identity categories. The objective of coding for identity categories was to identify information and concerns as they pertain to diverse sub-populations who may experience existing disparities and/or who may be at risk of experiencing disproportionate effects of the Project. Identity categories are not exclusive and were subject to change and expand or contract as coding occurred. The identity categories/codes used at the outset of analysis are displayed in **Table 2-1**.

Table 2-1: Identity Categories/Codes

Identity Category	Identity Sub-Categories
Gender	Female, Women, Two Spirit, Transgender, Non-Binary, Transexual, Intersex
Indigenous	Indigenous, First Nation, Aboriginal, Métis, Two Spirit
Disability	Disability, Physical Disability, Mental Disability
Young People	Youth, Adolescent, Child, Teen, Kid
Old People	Elder, Senior

The second round of coding primary and secondary data focused on coding information as it pertained to socio-economic conditions. Codes were identified both deductively, based on previous experience and anticipated areas of importance, and inductively, based on data reviewed to date. The codes identified were structured and defined in a hierarchy, from general topic area to sub-codes of the topic, as shown in **Table 2-2**. Topic sub-codes were further categorized by "current needs and demand" and "potential needs and demand". Information was coded to current needs and demand if describing the existing state of a topic in Webequie First Nation and neighbouring LSA communities, whereas information was coded to potential needs and demand if describing concerns expressed on the topic relative to potential Project impacts on Webequie First Nation and neighbouring LSA communities.

Table 2-2: Socio-Economic Topics and Codes

Socio-Economic Topic	Socio-Economic Sub-Codes
Housing	Availability
	Overcrowding
	In need of repairs
	Homelessness

Cost of Living	Housing
	Food access, availability, stability, and utilization
	Affordability of other necessities
Social Services	Substance Use/Addictions
	Mental Health
	Childcare
	Sexual Health
Community Safety and Well-Being	Community Violence
	Gender-based violence, in-community
	Gender-based violence, workforce interactions
	Sex trafficking
	Community cohesion/social connection
	Traditional culture and activities
	Transportation
Employment	Negative employment experiences
	Barriers to employment
	Employment and education services

2.1.1 Primary Data

The primary data used for GBA+ consisted of 15 knowledge holder interviews, four focus groups, and three different community surveys. Primary data was collected by SNC Lavalin. See **Section 3.5.2** of the *Socio-Economic Existing Conditions Report* for further information on primary data collection (SNC-Lavalin, 2023).

Knowledge Holder Interviews

Knowledge holder interviews were conducted with knowledge holders, individuals possessing special knowledge or information to contribute to the WSR Socio-Economic Baseline (see **Table 2-3**), from October 2021 to February 2023. Special knowledge includes community infrastructure capacity and service availability/ needs, history with developers, economic development goals and aspirations, Indigenous owned businesses, housing supply and demand, and crime rates. Knowledge holders were asked questions that also speak to the issues and needs of vulnerable sub-groups such as women, youth, and Elders. They were interviewed either by telephone, videoconference, or during in-person engagement and consultation activities.

Interviews were recorded electronically to assist in the preparation of transcripts. Information gathered from the interviews were organized thematically.

Table 2-3: Knowledge Holder Interviews Conducted with Webequie First Nation

Role	Interview Topics
Economic Development Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development • Local businesses • Procurement
Lands and Resources Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land and resources use objectives • Current land and resource-related projects and/or studies
Chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Experiences with other development projects • Major community revenue sources
Community Coordinator/Off-Reserve Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Opportunities and services that may be needed with the WSR – particularly for youth
Esteemed Elder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Opportunities and services that may be needed with the WSR
Health Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Access to services for health, well-being, and safety in the community, as well as barriers • Future plans for service upgrades
Former Health Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Access to services for health, well-being, and safety in the community, as well as barriers • Future plans for service upgrades
Former Counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Experiences with other development projects

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major community revenue sources
Former Counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Experiences with other development projects • Major community revenue sources
School Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • On-reserve and off-reserve school attendance rates • Barriers to achieving higher levels of education • Traditional education offerings
Employment Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • On-reserve employment opportunities, including for youth • Access to training and skills development
Housing Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • On-reserve housing affordability • Housing supply and demand, including overcrowding • Housing quality • Plans for additional housing
Housing Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • On-reserve housing affordability • Housing supply and demand, including overcrowding • Housing quality • Plans for additional housing
Former Chief and Counsellor for Webequie First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social and economic issues and objectives/aspirations • Child and family services • Education and training • Public works and infrastructure • Community well-being, health and safety
Tikinagan Counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and family services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community social issues
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Focus Groups

Four focus groups were held with sub-populations of Webequie, including Elders, youth, women, and land users, in May 2022 and February 2023. Focus groups allow for greater understanding of experiences, challenges, and concerns of these sub-populations. The focus groups were comprised of 3-6 participants each and lasted approximately 2 to 3 hours. Participants were recruited by community coordinators. The sessions were carried out either virtually via teleconference or in-person, depending on provincial and community COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time and participant preferences and comfort levels. They were recorded using audio recording with a notetaker present. The topics explored with these groups included the following:

- Development related experiences, aspirations, and concerns (women, youth, Elders, and land user sub-groups);
- Access, ownership, and control of resources e.g., financial, information (women);
- Education and training needs and interests (women, youth, Elders, and land user sub-groups);
- Employment opportunities and barriers (women and youth);
- Project related and future mining development related safety; experiences of gender-based violence; and concerns about violence (women, female Elders, and female youth);
- Transportation and mobility (women, youth, Elders, and land user sub-groups); and
- Access to emergency and support services and networks (women, youth, Elders, and land user sub-groups).

Community Surveys

The results of three different community surveys were analyzed, including a Socio-Economic Survey, a Community Health Survey (Intrinsik, 2023), and a Country Foods Consumption and Use Survey.

Webequie First Nation completed 238 Socio-Economic Surveys. The Socio-Economic survey was administered from 2021 to 2023 using a combination of in-person and online methods, including at community meetings, frequently visited locations within the community (e.g., at the community store and band office), and/or through Survey Monkey. The Socio-Economic survey was written in plain language and included questions regarding demographics (age, gender, income, education, employment), housing, social services, safety, and community cohesion.

2.1.2 Secondary Data

The secondary sources analyzed through NVivo included four Webequie First Nation reports:

- Webequie First Nation Community Well-Being Baseline Study (Webequie First Nation, 2014);

- Webequie On Reserve Land Use Plan (Webequie First Nation, 2019a);
- Webequie Community Based Land Use Plan (Webequie First Nation, 2019b); and
- Webequie First Nation Comprehensive Community Plan (Webequie First Nation, 2021).

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature search and review was conducted for the GBA+ assessment to better understand the potential effects of the WSR Project on diverse sub-populations and to better propose mitigation and enhancement measures to address potential effects. The literature review focused on project studies and academic sources which described projects with similar characteristics and themes, such as temporary construction camps and all-season access roads, and their subsequent effects on diverse sub-populations, particularly Indigenous women and youth. The review also included other key information sources such as the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a (NIMMIWG 2019) and Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (TRCC 2015).

2.3 LIMITATIONS

Due to the availability of data and their proximity to the Project, the GBA+ assessment primarily focuses on Webequie First Nation. Data related to other communities in the LSA, the RSA, Ontario, and Canada may be included where relevant for comparison. It is acknowledged that effects of the Project may also be experienced by vulnerable groups residing outside of Webequie First Nation and therefore it is recommended that the proposed mitigation, enhancement, and monitoring measures be assessed for broader application to the LSA.

Limitations of primary data collection through knowledge holder interviews, focus groups, and surveys include that the information provided by participants reflects the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants, which may not reflect the perspectives of all residents in the LSA and RSA.

Literature collected through desktop research uses information from publicly available studies and sources to incorporate the best available knowledge at the time of writing. Some studies and secondary sources may be out of date and are subjective to who wrote and published the source.

The GBA+ was completed as a desktop exercise based on primary and secondary sources identified in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. Findings have not been validated with the Webequie First Nation or other communities considered in the assessment. It is recommended that engagement with communities on the outcomes of GBA+ be carried out as best practice to ensure that proposed mitigation and enhancement measures suit community needs, (IAAC 2021).

3.0 GBA+ ASSESSMENT AND RESULTS

This section describes the context of the Project area, the existing conditions of socio-economic indicators relevant to GBA+, and potential project effects, including consideration of cumulative effects with the proposed Northern Road Link (NRL) and Marten Falls Community Access Road

(MFCAR). Potential project effects describe what is known about the impacts of similar projects on Indigenous communities and vulnerable populations (e.g., women, girls, youth, Elders).

The legacy of colonialism and its impacts on Indigenous¹ peoples in Canada is a critical factor with respect to GBA+. Understanding both pre- and post-colonial history and present challenges of colonialism for Indigenous peoples is key to identifying the interrelationships between colonialism, racism, and sexism and the power imbalances which exist for Indigenous peoples (NIMMIWG, 2019a). This information can help understand the power structures at play with projects, such as the WSR, and determine which subgroups in Webequie First Nation may be more vulnerable to changes from the WSR Project and which may be at a disadvantage to benefit from positive effects of the Project.

In particular, Indigenous women and children have been subject to many historical and socio-economic factors which have contributed to different types of traumas. This can include having witnessed or experienced sexual assault, the relocation of Indigenous communities and being forced into new settlements, and suffering associated with residential schools. The collective trauma held by Indigenous peoples in Canada has led to residual historical violence being passed on to new generations. Indigenous women and youth are at a higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence given the existing systemic challenges on reserves, where there are often few services, programs, and opportunities to support them (Gibson et al., 2017).

Colonialist ideologies and the influence of the patriarchy on Indigenous societies has had long-lasting impacts on the position of Indigenous women in society. The purposeful exclusion of Indigenous women in community decision-making, consultations, and negotiations, particularly with respect to resource projects, highlights gender inequities that are further perpetuated when industry and government fail to adequately engage Indigenous women on matters concerning themselves, their families, and their communities (Bond & Quinlan, 2018).

The intersectionality of other socio-economic factors can cause increased vulnerability of Indigenous women. These can include being low-income, being a single parent, experiencing addictions and mental health challenges, living in unsuitable housing, and lack of education. For example, Indigenous women are more likely to live in poverty and are often living in unsuitable housing on reserve, while low-income mothers and mothers with less education are more likely to experience abuse, often perpetuated by their intimate partners (Gibson et al., 2017; Daoud et al., 2012). The intersectionality of these factors illustrates the inequalities Indigenous women often face, particularly those living on reserve.

Today, inequities faced by Indigenous communities, such as in education, health care, and housing, are all a result of settler colonial oppression (Irving, 2021). The geographic isolation and lack of infrastructure for many Indigenous communities makes government assistance challenging due to the high costs associated with providing resources to remote and northern locations. Further, the social and economic isolation faced by Indigenous communities coupled with factors such as the long history of oppression, intergenerational trauma, discrimination, and

¹ "Indigenous peoples" is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. Often, "Aboriginal peoples" is also used (Government of Canada, 2023a).

loss of culture and language plays a large role in the well-being of community members, leading to higher rates of addictions and mental health challenges (Irving, 2021; Government of Canada, 2023c; Finlay, Nagy, & Gray-McKay, 2010). Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous youth, in Canada face significantly higher rates of suicide than non-Indigenous people (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019).

The legacy of colonialism and the intergenerational trauma which exists for Indigenous peoples in Canada today must be recognized and acknowledged when carrying out project processes. These historical factors have led to particular vulnerabilities for different groups of Indigenous communities, such as women and girls, youth, Elders, and gender-diverse people, which must be taken into account when assessing potential project effects. These vulnerable groups face higher risks of disproportionately experiencing potential negative effects of major projects and are less likely to benefit from the potential positive effects of major projects.

Temporary industrial camps, as are required for the proposed WSR Project, are known to be associated with particular issues that hold severe implications for host communities, notably their disproportionate affects on Indigenous women and girls due to gender-based violence (Bond & Quinlan, 2018; Gibson et al., 2017). The transient nature of the workforce coupled with high disposable income, and a lack of connection to the hosting region can lead to employees conducting themselves in ways they would not if they were in their home community. This may include behaviours such as increased drug and alcohol use as a way to “blow off steam” from long shifts and isolation, racism, and gender-based violence (Gibson et al., 2017; Eckford & Wagg, 2014). These factors can increase risks for existing vulnerable groups in Indigenous communities, including Indigenous women and girls, youth, and individuals living with addictions challenges, where social supports and services are often lacking.

The GBA+ assessment is based on components of social and economic importance to Indigenous communities, Indigenous organizations/groups, the public, federal and provincial authorities, and stakeholders, which have the potential to be changed as a result of the WSR Project, as described in Section 3.4 of the *Socio-Economic Existing Conditions Report* (SNC-Lavalin, 2023). Components relevant to GBA+ that may change as a result of the Project and cause disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations in Webequie First Nation and neighbouring LSA communities include population, housing, cost of living, social services, safety, and employment and economic opportunities. GBA+ of the WSR Project assesses the following socio-economic indicators:

- Changes to population;
- Changes to housing costs and affordability;
- Changes to demand for social services;
- Changes to perceptions of safety;
- Changes to crime rates, rates of domestic violence, and rates of sexual and physical assault;
- Changes to supply and demand of emergency services;

- Change to economic opportunities; and
- Changes to employment (status, type), employment opportunities, and barriers to employment.

3.1 PROJECT CONTEXT

Many factors make living in northern Ontario challenging, including the high unemployment rates, high cost of groceries, limited access to services, improper clothing, severe housing shortages, limited education, and long history of oppression and reliance on government (Finlay, Nagy, & Gray-McKay, 2010). The historical context of Indigenous peoples in Canada is critical to understanding the current socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by Indigenous peoples today, in particular, the challenges faced by Indigenous women and girls, and how major environmental changes may impact them differently (NIMMIWG, 2019). To conduct GBA+ and understand the potential impacts of the WSR Project on diverse populations it is important to recognize the historical disempowerment of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the power structures that remain in place. This section provides the historical context of Webequie First Nation, the outcomes of colonization in Canada, and how this history plays a role in the vulnerabilities of diverse groups of people and potential Project effects.

Webequie Innniwuk (Webequie People) are the original Indigenous inhabitants of what is now northern Ontario (Webequie First Nation 2019a). Webequie is an Anishinaabemowin community; a blend of Anishinaabe (Ojibway) and Mushkegowuk (James Bay Cree). The fly-in community of Webequie is located on the northern peninsula of Eastwood Island on Winisk Lake (Webequie First Nation 2019b). Prior to the arrival of settlers, the Anishinaabe and Mushkegowuk shared the territory sustainably based on a great respect for Mother Earth and their reciprocal relationship with the land (Webequie First Nation, 2021; Thomas, 2020; Helin, 2020). The Webequie Innniwuk and their neighbours are traditionally mobile peoples, using the Hudson Plains and Boreal Shield regions according to the season for hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and other cultural customs (AAFC, 2023; Archaeological Services Inc., 2021).

Webequie and their neighbouring communities existed long before European arrival in Canada and their way of life is deeply rooted in their relationship with the land (Government of Canada, 2017). The arrival of European settlers in Canada in the 17th century was the onset of severe changes to the way of life of Indigenous peoples (Government of Canada, 2017). Colonizers not only brought on the purposeful exposure of disease and alcohol to Indigenous peoples in Canada, but increasingly sought to control their lands and eliminate their culture (Irving, 2021).

Settler colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada was a structure to eliminate Indigenous societies premised on the control of Indigenous identity and displacement of Indigenous peoples from their land. The establishment of reserves restricted First Nations peoples to specific parcels of land, becoming dispossessed peoples on their former lands (Government of Canada 2017). Land surrender treaties often did not provide sizeable reserves, thus First Nations signatories increasingly lost access to their traditional grounds for hunting and other land and resource uses (Government of Canada, 2017).

Settlers saw British society and culture as superior and sought control over Indigenous economies and denied their right to self-identification and self-governance by ambiguously deciding who was “Indian”, replacing traditional identification processes for land and community (Government of Canada, 2017; Irving, 2021; Lawrence, 2003). The Indian Act of 1876 is one of the most notable ways that Indigenous identity, land, and socio-economic structures have been regulated and shaped by colonial legislations and attitudes (Irving, 2021).

Webequie First Nation is part of Treaty No. 9 territory. During the creation of Treaty 9, the Treaty Commissioner wrongfully designated the Webequie peoples as Band members of Eabametoong (Fort Hope Band), a community located approximately 80 km southeast of Webequie homeland. This incorrect designation remained until the federal government recognized Webequie as a distinctive Band in 1985, giving Webequie Band Registration No. 240. A Band Registration number, however, did not provide Webequie with reserve status nor its subsequent benefits. Throughout the late 1980’s, Webequie continued to seek their full rights as a First Nation and negotiated for almost two decades until 2001 when they received official reserve status (Webequie First Nation 2019a).

The passing of the Indian Act gave authority to the Department of Indian Affairs, allowing the department to make policy decisions, including defining who was considered “Indian”, manage lands and resources, and more (Government of Canada 2017). Policies on Indigenous identity went against traditional ways of identification, with the binds and limitations of race not only being foreign to First Nations peoples, but dividing their nations (Irving, 2021). In 1883, an official policy on First Nations education focused on residential schools and the forced assimilation of Indigenous children (Government of Canada 2017).

The residential school system was set up by the Government of Canada and the church to “civilize” and assimilate Indigenous children by forcibly taking them from their families and communities to attend schools often located far from their homes (Government of Canada, 2017; NCTR, n.d.a). The first church-run residential school opened in 1831. The explicit intent of residential schools was to rid Indigenous children of their language and culture, with children being harshly punished for speaking their own languages. Not only did children face loneliness and the loss of their families and culture, but thousands of children endured physical and sexual abuse from residential school staff. Residential schools have had long-lasting impacts on its survivors, who were not shown healthy examples of love and respect. The residential school system in Canada sustained cultural genocide for over 150 years, with more than 150,000 children attending residential schools over this period, many of whom did not return (NCTR, n.d.a).

Children removed from the Webequie community were taken to St. Anne’s Residential School in Fort Albany, approximately 400 km away. St. Anne’s was open from 1906 until 1976. While at St. Anne’s, 24 children died while the school was government-run (NCTR n.d.b). The traumas brought on by residential school remain within the community and continue to negatively impact the mental health and addictions challenges of Webequie members (Webequie First Nation, 2021; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Colonization further had severe, long-lasting effects on Indigenous women and their position and relative power in society. Before settlers arrived, Indigenous communities governed themselves through their own structures and natural laws. Indigenous societies recognized women's participation and contributions in governance and stewardship, with many First Nations historically being matrilineal, meaning inheritance was passed down through the mother and children would be known by their mother's clan and lineage (Hanson, n.d.; ACWS 2022). Indigenous women sustained societies, relying on their close relationship with the land and a deep understanding that nurturing and caring for the land is key to life and livelihood (Bond & Quinlan 2018). Colonization changed the position of Indigenous women in society, oppressing them through patriarchal governance and attitudes (Baruah & Biskupski-Mujanovic, 2023; Reed, 2008). Today, Indigenous women and girls continue to face marginalization and underrepresentation, often excluded from decision-making on matters related to themselves and their families (Bond & Quinlan 2018; Dalseg et al., 2018).

Today, Indigenous women and girls face numerous threats to their safety. Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be missing or murdered than any other women in Canada. They also face extremely high rates of domestic and family violence, are sexually assaulted three times more often than non-Indigenous women, are more likely to be killed by acquaintances than non-Indigenous women, and are seven times as likely to be the target of serial killers than non-Indigenous women (NIMMIWG, 2019a). Most of the women and children being trafficked in Canada are Indigenous, with some communities seeing 90% of those trafficked being Indigenous children and youth, even in communities where less than 10% of the community is Indigenous (NIMMIWG, 2019a). Understanding the history and experiences of Indigenous women and girls in society today helps to address the injustices they face while promoting their equity, rights, and opportunities and answering the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice (Bond & Quinlan 2018; NIMMIWG 2019b).

3.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

This section describes the existing population and demographics of Webequie First Nation while highlighting other demographics of the people who live there. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding current and potential future population changes as related to the WSR Project. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on population and demographics and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.2.1 Existing Conditions

Population and demographic information on Webequie First Nation help to understand what sub-populations reside in the community and the general stability of the population. Recognizing the presence of different groups and how frequently or infrequently residents move allows for better understanding of how these groups may experience potential social, economic, and cultural impacts of the WSR Project and develop more appropriate measures to protect sub-populations against potential negative effects.

Webequie First Nation's total registered member population is 987 people as of December 2023, with 145 registered members living off-reserve (CIRNAC, 2023). It is noted that the registered population varies from the values presented in the Census of Population, which is recorded to be 723 people for the Webequie census subdivision² (Statistics Canada, 2022). In 2021, 100% of the Webequie census subdivision identified as First Nations³ (Statistics Canada, 2022). Approximately 60% of households speak English while at home, while 28% speak Oji-Cree within their home, and 12% speak Ojibway within their home (Statistics Canada, 2022).

The population of Webequie First Nation is declining and has limited in-migration, with 95.8% of residents being "non-movers"⁴ (Statistics Canada, 2022). Based on current growth trends, Webequie First Nation is forecasted to decline by approximately 32.6%, 254 people, between 2016 and 2043 (SNC-Lavalin, 2023). This forecast is consistent with population forecasts for the Kenora Census Division. Further analysis and data verification is needed to confirm existing population dynamics.

For the first time, the 2021 Census presented a question on self-identified gender, adding "at birth" when asking about one's sex, enabling individuals to report their gender, including cisgender⁵, transgender⁶, and non-binary⁷ individuals (Statistics Canada, 2023). These changes to the Census reflect increasing recognition of gender and sexual diversity of LGBTQ2+ individuals (Statistics Canada, 2023). This data aids in the ability to perform GBA+ and to better recognize and address the needs of LGBTQ2+ individuals. Due to its small population, however, data on LGBTQ2+ members of Webequie First Nation are limited.

² Censuses are snapshots of a population that self-identifies as Registered or Treaty Indians at a particular time, while the Indian Register is a continuous statutory administrative file based on the registration of individuals who meet specific criteria, as defined by the Indian Act. The census estimate is affected by the undercounting of Registered Indians living on incompletely enumerated reserves where enumeration was not permitted or was interrupted before completion, by the undercoverage of Registered Indians living on participating reserves and settlements, and by the undercoverage of Registered Indians living off reserve. Furthermore, because the short-form questionnaires were used, the census did not collect data that identified Registered Indians living in institutions (hospitals, senior citizen homes, jails, shelters, etc.), or living outside the country (Statistics Canada, 2019a).

³ 'First Nations' refers to both Status and non-Status Indians (Government of Canada, 2021). Indian status is the legal standing of a person who is registered under the Indian Act (Government of Canada, 2023b).

⁴ Non-mover refers to persons who, on Census Day, lived in the same residence as they did on the same date 1 year or 5 years earlier (Statistics Canada, 2022).

⁵ Cisgender refers to persons whose reported gender corresponds to their reported sex at birth. It includes cisgender (cis) men and women (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

⁶ Transgender refers to persons whose reported gender does not correspond to their reported sex at birth. It includes transgender (trans) men and women. Non-binary persons are excluded (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

⁷ Non-binary refers to persons whose reported gender is not exclusively male or female. It includes persons whose reported gender is, for example, agender, pangender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or gender nonconforming. It also includes persons whose reported gender is Two-Spirit, a term specific to some Indigenous peoples of North America. It includes persons whose reported gender is both male and female, neither male nor female, or either male or female in addition to another gender. It may also include those who reported or were reported by proxy as questioning or in the process of deciding (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

As of 2021, the population distribution by self-identified gender⁸ shows that Webequie First Nation has a larger population of women⁹ (52.6% or 380) than men¹⁰ (47% or 340), however, this difference appears to be decreasing based on population forecasts from 2016 to 2043 (Statistics Canada, 2022; SNC-Lavalin, 2023).

The population distribution of Webequie First Nation by age can be broadly categorized by 0-14, 15-64, and 65 years and over, where those aged 15-64 are considered the potential labour force. Further age group breakdowns by gender are displayed in **Figure 3-1**. Webequie First Nation has a young population, with approximately 35% being aged 0-14. Youth (those aged 15 to 24) (Statistics Canada 2020a) account for nearly 16% of the population. Based on population forecasts, both the 0-14 and 15-64 age groups are declining from 2016 to 2043 by 40.4% and 31.1%, respectively (SNC-Lavalin, 2023). This may be due to out-migration of Webequie members needing to leave the community to pursue education, training, and employment opportunities that are not readily available in Webequie.

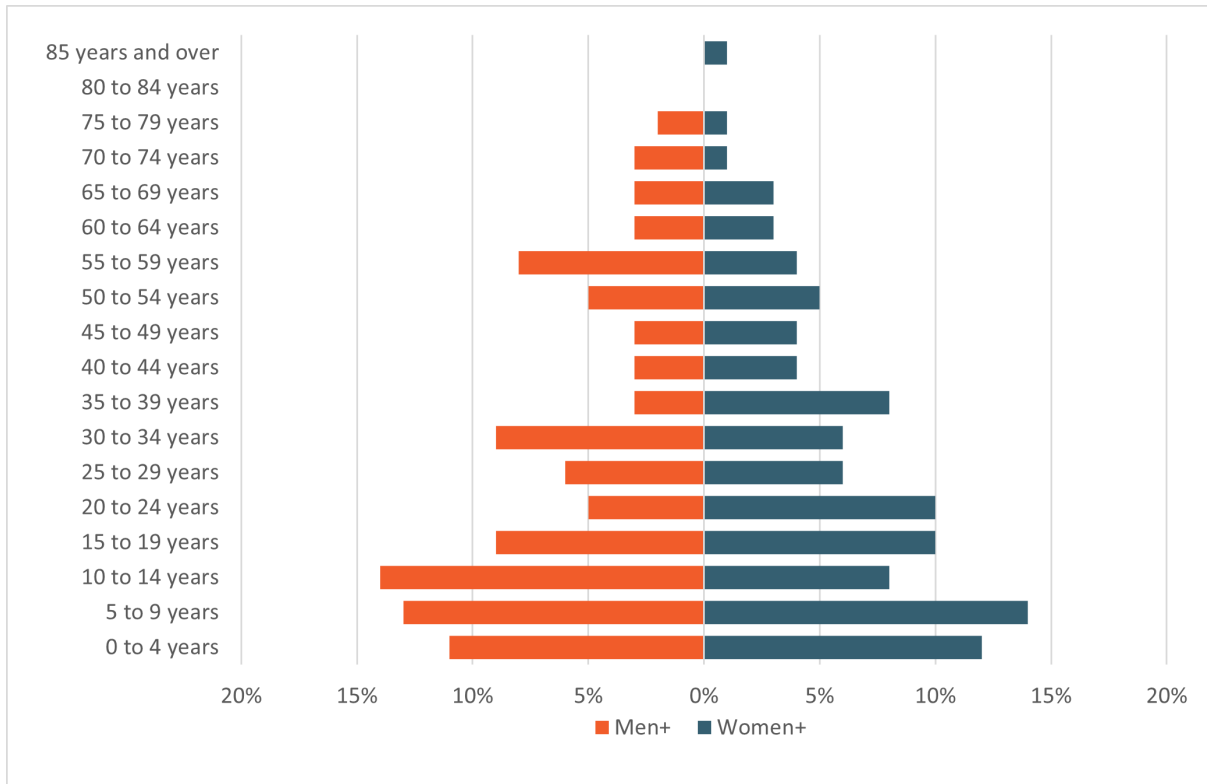
Of Webequie First Nation youth, 66.7% (80) are women and 37.5% (45) are men (Statistics Canada, 2022). Seniors (aged 65 and over) make up a small proportion (6.9%) of Webequie First Nation (Statistics Canada, 2022), however this may be due to the fact that elderly residents must move south to larger municipalities, such as Thunder Bay, as they age in order to access more intensive health services that are not available in their home community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

⁸ Given that the non-binary population is small, data aggregation to a two-category gender variable is sometimes necessary to protect the confidentiality of responses provided. In these cases, individuals in the category "non-binary persons" are distributed into the other two gender categories and are denoted by the "+" symbol (Statistics Canada, 2022).

⁹ "Women+" includes women (and/or girls), as well as some non-binary persons (Statistics Canada, 2022).

¹⁰ "Men+" includes men (and/or boys), as well as some non-binary persons (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Figure 3-1: Population Age and Gender for Webequie First Nation, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada 2022a.

3.2.2 Potential Project Effects

The WSR Project has the potential to increase the population of Webequie First Nation through both increased in-migration of off-reserve Webequie First Nation members and decreased out-migration of on-reserve community members associated with direct and indirect¹¹ employment opportunities of the Project. Employment opportunities with the Project may also temporarily shift the local demographics, as these are likely to attract certain sub-groups.

As described in **Section 1.1.1**, the Project will require direct and indirect workforces during the construction phase. Hiring strategies will be in place to prioritize the hiring of local residents and First Nation members for the construction and operation phases. This has the potential to bring a small influx of Webequie First Nation members currently living off-reserve back to the community in order to seek employment with the Project. Of Webequie survey respondents living off-reserve

¹¹ Indirect employment related to the WSR Project could include various activities spurred by the presence of the Project such as positions in supporting information technology, health and safety, manufacturing, etc.

at the time of the survey, 80% indicated they would want to live in Webequie year-round because of either the WSR and/or future mining development in the area (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). Decreased out-migration may also occur as a result of an increase in local employment opportunities.

The construction phase has the potential to attract particular sub-populations for employment with the Project, such as those more typically engaged in construction work (i.e., young adults, males, and abled persons). The direct jobs anticipated for the Project include trades, health, natural and applied sciences, transport and equipment operators, business, finance, and administration. This is a barrier for existing Webequie members, as the local skillset does not readily match these requirements due to lack of education, training, and similar employment opportunities in the community (see **Section 3.4** and **Section 3.5**). The in-migration of certain sub-populations to Webequie First Nation for these employment opportunities has the potential to shift the demographics and service needs in the community (see **Section 3.3.2** for potential changes to community services).

The non-local construction workforce will work on a fly-in/fly-out rotational shift basis and the first camp will be located nearby the community (see **Section 1.1.1**). The first camp's proximity to the community and the transportation of non-locals through the community airport could result in workforce interactions with Webequie residents should employees wish to enter the community for any reason (e.g., to visit a store or service). Community interactions could be both positive (e.g., increased business for the store) and negative (e.g., interactions with vulnerable community members such as women and girls). The potential for these interactions requires strategies to ensure interactions between the non-local workforce and Webequie community members are limited.

3.3 COMMUNITY SERVICES

This section describes community services, including health care and childcare, in Webequie First Nation, while highlighting diverse groups who may be facing barriers to receiving the services they need. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding current and future community services. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on community for Webequie members and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.3.1 Existing Conditions

Understanding community services available to Webequie First Nation members on-reserve helps to identify services that may be stressed and/or unable to accommodate potential changes in community needs related to the WSR Project, particularly services which serve vulnerable sub-populations, such as Elders and women.

Health Services are provided in Webequie First Nation by a rotational team of three community health nurses/nurse practitioners and a community health representative. Physician consultations are offered twice a month with a visiting physician from Sioux Lookout. Health Services conducts health awareness and counseling sessions, educational workshops, and preventive programs on various topics such as diabetes, alcohol/drug abuse, sexual health, and communicable diseases.

They also coordinate clinics and workshops related to diabetes management, immunization, sexual health, and communicable diseases (211 Ontario North, Webequie First Nation, 2023c). The community does not currently have emergency medical services (e.g., ambulance).

Health Services in Webequie First Nation is an already stressed system, where members do not have access to a regular, full-time physician and instead rely on a rotation of nurses to address their health care needs. The remoteness of the community makes it challenging to deliver healthcare, where transportation delays can not only result in delayed service, but loss of life. The community is in need of adequate healthcare and overnight health care accommodation. Lack of appropriate healthcare in the community has caused a loss of trust in the system amongst Webequie residents (SNC-Lavalin 2022a).

There is currently no long-term Elder care facility in the community. Instead, community staff conduct home visits to assist Elders with household tasks, personal care, and transportation (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Lack of a local long-term care facility for Elder's is a primary concern for Webequie First Nation members (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b). In the Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey, 66.7% of Webequie member respondents reported a lack of access to Elder care, and Elder care ranked as the second most requested service in the community after childcare (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b).

Lack of health care services for Elders inhibits Webequie First Nation members from aging in place (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Families often have no choice but to send their parents to long-term care facilities in larger urban centres like Thunder Bay, where costs may outweigh their financial means (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). It further makes the senior population of Webequie more vulnerable to changes in population, as increases in the population can place greater stress on the existing health care system (CRIA, 2014).

Childcare is a challenge in Webequie. The community has a preschool, the Aboriginal Head Start Program, which is geared toward children aged 4 and younger. There is no childcare (daycare) program available (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Lack of childcare options particularly impacts women and girls, who are often responsible for caring for children in the home.

3.3.2 Potential Project Effects

A potential increase in the population of Webequie First Nation and presence of a temporary population nearby the community could affect community service needs, such as healthcare, which may be experienced differently by vulnerable populations in the community. Changes in the demand for community services is primarily associated with the construction phase (approximately 4 to 6 years) where the presence of a non-local workforce may place additional demand on local services.

Changes to the demand for healthcare could be attributed to an increase in the number of people accessing health care locally. Temporary construction camps have known impacts on their host communities which can be the result of isolation from friends and family, stressful work environments, and lack of connection to the host community, including increased sexual violence, substance use, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Aalhus, Oke, & Fumerton, 2018; Bond & Quinlan, 2018). Further, employees of industrial camps can carry other health

care concerns that are non-work related or non-urgent, such as chronic conditions, injuries, and illnesses (Northern Health 2015).

Competition for healthcare services in the community may create a barrier for timely healthcare and cause individuals to refrain from seeking care for what they may consider to be minor health needs. The lack of dedicated services and care for Webequie Elders make them a particularly vulnerable population relative to service demand (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b) as they already face challenges in meeting their overall healthcare needs. Greater competition for health care services may also place more financial, emotional, and other burdens on younger families, primarily women and girls, who care for their elderly parents.

Employees of temporary construction camps are often transient, young males. In-migration of young males employed by the WSR Project can lead to regular interactions between the non-local workforce and local population, which can have major effects on sexual health in the community and may subsequently increase the demand on health care services in Webequie First Nation (Goldenberg, 2008; Shandro et al., 2011). Women and girls between the ages of 15 to 44 residing in Webequie First Nation make up approximately 25% of the local population and are vulnerable to this change in demographics (Statistics Canada, 2022; Gibson et al., 2017). Women and girls in the community with low income (see **Section 3.5.1**), low education (see **Section 3.4.1**), and those living with addictions (see **Section 3.10.1**) are particularly at risk and can cause an increased demand for services including police, sexual health, and gender-based violence services (e.g., shelters).

Non-local women employed by the Project during the construction phase are also vulnerable to the high population of young males associated with the WSR Project construction workforce and can further increase the demand on health services. Health care services which may see increased demand as a result of this shift in demographics and subsequent increase in male-female interactions include sexual health services (i.e., increased rates of STIs) and maternal health services (i.e., increased rates of pregnancies) (Goldenberg, 2008; Shandro et al., 2011).

Knowledge holders further expressed concern for women's ability and willingness to seek services in the community due to social stigmas and feeling judged. The participant shared that this mindset is a result of intergenerational trauma from residential schools, as these institutions taught children to feel ashamed, and further stressed the importance of educating the community and spreading awareness that it is healthy and acceptable to ask for help and seek out services (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

3.4 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This section describes the existing levels of education attainment of Webequie First Nation members and education and training options, while highlighting diverse groups who experience inequalities in accessing education and training. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding current and potential education and training opportunities as related to the WSR Project. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on education and training for Webequie members and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.4.1 Existing Conditions

Understanding the education and training options available to Webequie First Nation members on-reserve and their level of educational attainment helps to identify sub-populations, such as women, youth, and individuals living with disabilities, who might experience disproportionate barriers to education and training, and further, who may be at a disadvantage to benefit from a potential increase in employment opportunities associated with the WSR Project due to such barriers.

Education and training opportunities are limited in fly-in First Nations communities across Northern Ontario and Canada. Educational services and facilities are often inadequate, face high teacher turnover rates, and lack special education services (Finlay, Nagy, & Gray-McKay, 2010; CRIAW, 2014). Inequities in education for First Nations peoples are a result of the colonial oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Irving, 2021). Webequie First Nation is not exempt from these challenges.

Webequie First Nation has the Simon Jacob Memorial Education Centre, a Kindergarten to Grade 10 band-operated school. Simon Jacob is run by Webequie First Nation Education Authority under the direction of the Chief and Council (SJMEC, 2023). The school offers culturally relevant content that features the traditions, language, and way of life of Webequie First Nation and Anishinaabe people and allows students to participate in spring and fall hunts. To receive their high school diploma, youth work with teachers at the school who support their online education in partnership with Keewaytinnook Internet High School. The school experiences a high teacher turnover rate in staff. The physical size of the school is also a challenge; the lack of classroom space available has caused the school to lose space for a library, computer room, staff room, and usable kitchen in order to expand classrooms (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). The Alternative Secondary School Program (ASSP) helps those who did not complete high school get their high school equivalent (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Special education in the community is a challenge, causing inequities in education for individuals who may face intellectual disabilities¹². Services, such as counselling and those through Jordan's Principle can be difficult to access and expensive as they can require flying out of the community. The school must bear the expensive costs of bringing counsellors up to the community, and the additional lack of housing issue in Webequie (see **Section 3.6**) creates further barriers to providing in-community counselling. Although counselling may be done virtually, not all Webequie residents have access to internet. It is noted that speech language therapy is a vital service for the community and has been available virtually since the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowledge holders noted the difficulties in providing in-community services to children with disabilities and how lack of access to these services affects their caregivers, who suffer from burn-out (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

¹² Intellectual disability refers to a person's ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life. Levels of intellectual disability vary greatly (CDC, 2022).

As Webequie is a remote community, it lacks the ability to provide training locally (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Thus, at present, any Webequie member who wishes to pursue education and training beyond high school must leave the reserve and often head much further south in order to do so.

Timmins and Thunder Bay are post secondary hubs with several colleges and universities which offer both in-person and virtual training. Further, Pickle Lake, Sioux Lookout, and Greenstone have other post-secondary options, including Confederation College's regional campuses.

Training options for Webequie First Nation include an employment training program available through Matawa First Nations as well as training and certification courses through Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (KKETS). A recent focus of KKETS is the ASSP in order to help those who gain their high school equivalent enter into a skilled trade (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

The employment training program available through Matawa First Nations is not currently utilized due to the lack of available jobs in Webequie. Not only are the skills of those community members who have been certified through the program in the past, including millwrights, heavy equipment operators, and remote camp cooks, currently being underutilized, but there are concerns that they are aging out of the workforce (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Courses offered at KKETS in the past include drilling, line cutting, and heavy equipment mechanic, however more recent focus at KKETS is on the Aboriginal Skills and Training program which helps members to complete their high school education before being trained in a skilled trade. Training and certification offered through KKETS often takes place outside of Webequie, in locations like Thunder Bay and Ottawa.

Webequie is hoping to train more members under the age of 35, and specifically target youth aged 18 to 20, as heavy equipment operators and mechanics in order to allow more members to take advantage of future industrial opportunities in the area (SNC-Lavalin, 2021).

In general, Webequie youth suffer from a lack of in-community opportunities and partnerships. Youth must rely on virtual opportunities if they are unable or unwilling to travel away from home to pursue further education and training after high school. Community members have expressed how difficult it can be for youth who must leave their home to access these training options due to the culture shock and financial challenges they face down south (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Further, community members shared concerns that youth do not feel motivated to pursue education and training opportunities (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

Members pointed to family violence and addictions as some reasons for this lack of motivation amongst youth. One knowledge holder pointed to the intergenerational trauma of residential schools as a reason for members' poor relationship with school and education. Lack of motivation may also be attributed, in part, to the fact that many positions in the community do not require post-secondary education (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

As of 2021, 61.7% of people in Webequie First Nation had no certificate, diploma, or degree, 25.5% had their high school diploma or equivalent, and 12.8% had a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree (Statistics Canada 2022a). The rate of individuals with no certificate,

diploma, or degree in Webequie First Nation is higher than the provincial rate (15.3%), while the rates of individuals who have their high school diploma (or equivalent) and those who have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree are lower than the provincial rates (27.2% and 57.5%, respectively). Females in Webequie First Nation were more likely to not have a degree (62.7%) than males (59.1%). Females were also less likely to have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree (7.8%) than males (20.5%).

The Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) results show 35.8% of on-reserve respondents indicated that some high school, meaning they had attended but not completed high school, was their highest level of education. For off-reserve members, 25% of respondents said their highest level of education was a high school diploma, and 25% said their highest level of education was graduating from college or similar courses, indicating that the educational outcomes of Webequie members living off-reserve are higher than those living on-reserve. Few respondents indicated that they had completed post-secondary education (i.e., university or college), apprenticeships, or trade certifications. Of those living on-reserve who pursued post-secondary education and training, 40% studied education, while 38.5% of those living off-reserve who pursued post-secondary had studied business administration.

Of those Webequie member respondents between the ages of 19 and 30, almost 7% said elementary school was their highest level of education, 23.2% said they'd completed some high school, and 44.2% said they'd graduated high school. No Webequie respondents in this age range had graduated from university, while 18.6% said they'd completed some college or similar courses and 4.7% said they'd graduated from college or similar courses. Of those who had completed post-secondary education, many studied the arts, including education, business administration, and social services. The moderate proportion of individuals between the ages of 19 to 30 who had completed some college or similar courses suggests that community concerns regarding the youth culture shock and financial challenges associated with the need to leave home to pursue post-secondary education could be impacting youth's ability to complete their studies.

Indigenous women face additional barriers to education and training, including pressures to fulfill the role of caregiver in their homes, that can be linked back to the impact of colonization and introduction of patriarchal attitudes on Indigenous women in society (CRIA, 2014; Bond & Quinlan, 2018). Female members of Webequie First Nation face inequalities in accessing education due to familial responsibilities and the lack of childcare in the community. During the Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b), when asked if the primary caregiver (i.e., childcare, eldercare) at home, the majority (80.5%) of Webequie female respondents said yes. A knowledge holder shared that if childcare could be dealt with in the community, more women would seek education and training (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). There is currently no childcare program available in Webequie.

It is important to note that members of Webequie First Nation possess skills and knowledge not reflected in education and training statistics.

3.4.2 Potential Project Effects

The WSR Project has the potential to improve education and training attainment opportunities for Webequie First Nation members. Many direct and indirect employment opportunities related to the Project will require education, training, and/or experience, and the Project has the potential to be a source of employment growth. However, if the community's available skills do not match the Project's direct and indirect employment requirements (Martel & Noiseux, 2017). Certain subpopulations of Webequie face additional barriers to taking advantage of such opportunities, including women and youth.

The lack of education and training opportunities available to Webequie members living on-reserve as well as the low number of Webequie members between the ages of 19 and 30 who have completed post-secondary education suggests that Webequie youth may be at a disadvantage to benefit from the presence of the WSR Project and subsequent increase in employment opportunities both directly and indirectly related to the Project. Community members expressed concerns that Webequie youth will not be in a position to benefit from the Project's employment opportunities due to low educational attainment and lack of experience in related employment (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b). Those respondents between the ages of 19 and 30 who completed post-secondary education or training primarily studied topics related to the arts (e.g., education), indicating that the skills present in the community amongst young people may not align well with positions required for the Project, which include occupational categories such as trades, equipment operators, health, and natural and applied sciences in addition to business administration (see **Section 1.1.1**).

Women are less likely to seek education and training in trades and resource industries despite the number of options in these industries in Northern Ontario, often focusing on education and training that can fulfill their community's needs, such as healthcare and education (CRIAW, 2014). Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) responses by female Webequie members showed that few women in the community have experience in Project-related fields of study/work, with approximately 6% of female member respondents having studied business administration, 2% having studied health sciences, and none having experience in the trades. Thus, the low educational attainment of Webequie women and the limited fields of those who completed post-secondary education means women in Webequie are less likely to benefit from the WSR Project in terms of employment opportunities. Further, women with low educational attainment are at a higher risk of experiencing abuse, a major concern with the establishment of an industrial project, which are known to increase rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls (Daoud et al., 2012; Bond & Quinlan, 2018).

Webequie members fear that, without appropriate planning, community members will not be able to benefit from employment opportunities with the Project due to the current levels of educational attainment and training and current skills of the local workforce. Webequie members are hopeful that the WSR Project could build the community's capacity to benefit from the Project by increasing education and training opportunities, stressing the importance of on-reserve training provisions for members. In particular, members expressed the desire to train young people in the trades and heavy machinery (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

3.5 EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

This section describes the existing state of employment and economy of Webequie First Nation members while highlighting diverse groups who experience barriers to employment. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding current and potential employment and economic opportunities as related to the WSR Project. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on employment and economy for Webequie members and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.5.1 Existing Conditions

Understanding the current state of employment and the economy in Webequie First Nation helps to identify sub-populations, such as women, youth, and individuals living with disabilities, who might experience disproportionate barriers to employment, and further, who may be at a disadvantage to benefit from a potential increase in employment opportunities associated with the WSR Project due to such barriers.

The majority of Webequie's population is not in the labour force (61.7%). The participation rate for Webequie's working age population (ages 15-64) is 37.9%, with the female participation rate (39.2%) and male participation rate (38.6%) being nearly the same. This participation rate is low compared to Ontario (63%). Of Webequie residents in the labour force, 94.6% are employed. The unemployment rate in Webequie is 5.5% which is roughly on par with Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2022). Business, finance, and administration occupations was the leading job category in Webequie, with 69 jobs in 2022 (Lightcast, 2023). This accounted for 22.6% of the total jobs in the community.

Webequie residents are concerned with local employment opportunities, particularly for youth, with 67.6% of Webequie resident respondents sharing they felt there are not enough local job opportunities (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). Of these respondents, nearly one third (31.6%) were between the ages of 15 to 30. Approximately 69% of unemployed Webequie youth between the ages of 15 to 30 responded that they are searching for work. This suggests that some Webequie youth struggle to find employment in the community.

When asked if they experience barriers in obtaining or maintaining employment, Webequie resident respondents shared they felt lack of education or training (47.5%), childcare (43.4%), and traditional needs (i.e., hunting, fishing, and gathering) (30.3%) were the top three barriers to employment. Approximately 29% of those who noted lack of education or training as a barrier to employment were youth aged 15 to 30, suggesting some Webequie youth struggle to obtain education and training (see **Section 3.4.1**).

Community members have also expressed concerns regarding a lack of motivation among youth to seek employment (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Webequie members are hopeful that potential development in the area might help improve opportunities in education and employment for younger members (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

Indigenous women often already face barriers to education and employment due to gender norms, familial responsibilities and lack of childcare options, discrimination, and risks to their personal safety (Dalseg et al., 2018). The impact of patriarchal colonialism and its devaluation of Indigenous women in society cannot be understated when considering the inequalities Indigenous women face (Mckinley, Liddell, & Lilly, 2021). Results from knowledge holder interviews and the women's focus group express community concerns for women's barriers to employment. Participants shared that several women in the community want to work and/or receive training to gain employment, but several barriers stand in their way, the largest of which include a lack of education and childcare responsibilities. Caring for dependents prevents women in Webequie from seeking further education and training as well as employment. Participants felt strongly that if the childcare and education issues could be solved, more women would be involved in the labour force (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). A focus group participant shared that they felt women must work twice as hard as men to prove themselves when it comes to employment (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Approximately 47% of the unemployed females living in the community responded that they are searching for work. Approximately 50% of Webequie resident respondents who noted education or training as a barrier to employment were female, suggesting some women and girls in Webequie experience challenges in obtaining education and training (see **Section 3.4.1**). Further, when Webequie residents were asked if they experience barriers in obtaining or maintaining employment, more females (73.6%) than males felt childcare was a barrier to employment (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b).

In 2020, the most common individual income groups for Webequie females were "under \$10,000 (including loss)" and "\$10,000 to \$19,999", with 40% of Webequie females falling into these income groups. The most common individual income group for Webequie males was "under \$10,000 (including loss)" (Statistics Canada 2022). Colonialism economically disadvantaged Indigenous peoples in Canada (Paul, 2020). Income inequality persists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people making less than non-Indigenous people (Wilson & Macdonald, 2010). Further, those living on-reserve typically earn less than those off-reserve (Raphael et al., 2020). These inequalities coupled with being in a remote, northern community and high costs of living have substantial socio-economic impacts on households. In the past, Webequie individuals did not need to depend on employment income for subsistence the way they must today (Webequie First Nation, 2019a). This dependency takes away from members' ability to go out on the land.

The traditional subsistence economy still plays an important role in many Indigenous communities. The traditional economy is particularly important to those communities which are rural and remote, facing expensive or inaccessible health foods due to the population size and lacking transportation infrastructure and limited formal economic opportunities (NCCIH, 2020). Traditional economic activity is not easily captured by common data sources and thus is not available to provide an understanding of the traditional economy in Webequie First Nation.

3.5.2 Potential Project Effects

The WSR Project has the potential to improve employment and economic opportunities for Webequie First Nation members. However, certain subpopulations of Webequie face additional barriers to taking advantage of such opportunities, including women and youth. As noted in **Section 3.4.2**, many direct and indirect employment opportunities related to the Project will require education, training, and/or experience. Education and training attainment for Webequie members, particularly women and youth, is a challenge (see **Section 3.4.1**).

Further, Project-related employment could decrease the time Webequie members have to participate in traditional economic activities. It is anticipated that shifts during the construction phase of the Project will be limited to 14 days on and 7 days off. Webequie members employed by the Project during the construction phase may have limited ability to spend time on the land harvesting as a result (CRIAW, 2014). This presents problems for those who are more likely to depend on the traditional economy, such as Elders who may rely on the sharing economy, as well as challenges the well-being of those employed, as traditional activities can provide individuals with their sense of identity and worth (DesBrisay, 1994).

3.6 HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATIONS

This section describes the existing conditions of housing in Webequie First Nation while highlighting the effects of housing conditions on the diverse sub-populations that live there. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding the state of housing and potential affects of the WSR Project on housing. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on housing and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.6.1 Existing Conditions

The existing state of housing in Webequie First Nation is important to understand in order to determine what sub-populations are most at risk from a poor state of housing and are more vulnerable to further stresses on housing. Housing characteristics and conditions are presented briefly to help assess the potential affects the WSR Project could have on housing and the populations most vulnerable to these changes.

There are 171 total private dwellings in Webequie, 166 (97.1%) of which are occupied by usual residents¹³. Of the private dwellings in Webequie First Nation, 94.3% are government or band housing¹⁴ (Statistics Canada, 2022). Of the occupied dwellings in Webequie, 65.6% were constructed during or prior to 2000, with only 55 dwellings (34.4% of the occupied housing stock) being constructed in the community over the last 20 years. The majority of dwellings (84.8%) in the community are single-detached and the remainder are semi-detached. The majority (33.3%) of households in Webequie consist of 5 rooms, followed by 1 to 4 rooms

¹³ Private dwellings occupied by usual residents refers to a private dwelling in which a person or a group of persons is permanently residing (Statistics Canada, 2019b).

¹⁴ Government/band housing is a dwelling provided by the local government, First Nation or Indian band (Randle & Thurston, 2022).

(27.3%). As of 2021, 37.7% of occupied dwellings in Webequie were considered unsuitable¹⁵ and 47.1% require major repairs¹⁶, compared to the Ontario rates of 6.7% and 5.7%, respectively. Further, nearly half (48.5%) of Webequie households are occupied by more than 5 people, compared to the Ontario rate of 9.9%, making overcrowding a major issue in the community. Results from knowledge holder interviews and the Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey confirmed that overcrowding, poor conditions, and lack of availability are major housing concerns for the community.

Webequie First Nation members have expressed that every community member is affected by the lack of housing and overcrowding that is occurring (Webequie First Nation, 2014; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Residents face many housing challenges, including having too few bedrooms for household members, safety concerns like mould and lack of fire alarms, and high costs of fuel to heat their homes (Webequie First Nation 2019a). The age and general state of disrepair of homes in the community as well as the limited housing stock can be linked, in part, to lack of funding, lack of local tradespersons to construct and repair homes, and the high costs associated with bringing materials to the community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; Webequie First Nation, 2021).

There is an immediate need for new and repaired homes in the community, and, according to a knowledge holder, there has not been enough housing in the community for at least 15 years (Webequie First Nation, 2021; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). The participant estimated that, of the 170 dwellings in the community, 100 need repairs and 50 of which need major repairs, including repairs for defective plumbing, electrical wiring, and structural problems (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Another knowledge holder estimated that mould is an issue in 80% of homes, further stating that the First Nation needs over 100 housing units.

Individuals who are unhoused or precariously housed, such as those who are “couch-surfing”, are vulnerable to the state of housing in Webequie. Knowledge holders expressed concerns for families who are or become homeless (e.g., their house burned down) in the community, sharing that some residents live in the local hotel and others began living in the COVID-19 isolation units provided to the community during the pandemic (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Short term accommodations are limited in Webequie. The community has the Webequie Motel for lodging convenience and temporary accommodation, which has five double rooms and one suite (Webequie First Nation, 2023).

Lack of availability of housing and accommodations in Webequie also affects the ability for important services to be provided in the community, such as teachers and health care providers, and the ability of off-reserve members to return home (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Several knowledge holders shared that the vast majority of off-reserve members, many of whom live in Thunder

¹⁵ Housing suitability assesses the required number of bedrooms for a household based on the age, sex, and relationships among household members according to the National Occupancy Standard (Statistics Canada, 2017a).

¹⁶ The 'major repairs needed' category includes dwellings needing major repairs such as dwellings with defective plumbing or electrical wiring; and dwellings needing structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings (Statistics Canada, 2021b).

Bay, want to return home but that they cannot because there is nowhere for them to live (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

The poor state of housing in Webequie impacts the physical and mental well-being of residents, particularly youth, who do not receive enough privacy when sharing rooms with multiple generations. A knowledge holder shared that this can be difficult for adolescents, particularly those reaching the age of 12, who begin wanting their own space and privacy but cannot have it, causing them hardship. Members shared they felt overcrowding provokes substance use and other negative behaviours, such as vandalism, as youth are looking to escape the reality of their overcrowded homes (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

3.6.2 Potential Project Effects

The WSR Project has the potential to impact housing and accommodations in Webequie First Nation through an increase in demand. The lack of available housing the community creates a barrier to off-reserve Webequie members returning home for employment opportunities, while an increase in off-reserve Webequie members returning to the community could further exacerbate the overcrowding issues the community already faces. Further, Project-related activities have the potential to bring non-residents into the community on visits who require short term accommodations, which are already limited in Webequie and often used by Webequie residents themselves. Overcrowding and lack of housing availability is a challenge faced by many in Webequie, but it can disproportionately impact subpopulations more vulnerable to changes in housing, including individuals who are unhoused or precariously housed and youth. However, presence of the Project, if planned for appropriately, also has the potential to increase the availability of housing for Webequie residents and lower the costs associated with transporting materials to the community.

As noted in **Section 3.5.1**, lack of available housing affects the ability of off-reserve members of Webequie First Nation to return home to benefit from direct and indirect opportunities associated with the Project. One's ability to live in their home community can affect their physical and mental well-being; this is particularly the case for Indigenous peoples, whose concept of home encompasses more than the physical and social environment in which they live (Bowra & Mashford-Pringle, 2021). The people, land, animals, ancestors, stories, language, and traditions of one's birthplace can be conceived as 'home' and have great impacts on the health and well-being of First Nations peoples (Bowra & Mashford-Pringle, 2021). Being around one's culture provides a sense of identity and belonging, both of which are critical elements of good health and well-being (Oster et al., 2014). It is important for Webequie members to be able to return home should they wish to do so. Participants of knowledge holder interviews shared that moving off-reserve can be a major culture shock to many members and cause serious hardship (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

An influx of off-reserve Webequie members to the community for employment has the ability to contribute to overcrowding (Myette & Riva, 2021). Not only does this have the potential to exacerbate the challenges faced by those who are already homeless or precariously housed by increasing competition for housing, but Webequie members also fear this could result in more

individuals being pushed onto the streets (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). As described in **Section 3.6.1**, youth are particularly vulnerable to overcrowding.

The limited short-term accommodations in Webequie mean that any incoming visitors related to the Project could place additional pressures on the community. As noted in **Section 3.6.1**, some Webequie residents rely on the local motel for housing. An increase in needs for the motel could cause further issues for those Webequie members who are unhoused or precariously housed.

Many Webequie members have expressed hopefulness toward the ability of the WSR Project to improve the state of housing in their community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

3.7 COST OF LIVING

This section describes the existing cost of living in Webequie First Nation while highlighting the effects of cost of living on the diverse sub-populations that live there. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding the cost of living and potential effects of the WSR Project on cost of living. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on cost of living and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.7.1 Existing Conditions

Due to the remoteness of Webequie and neighbouring LSA communities, and associated difficulties in transporting goods to the community, the cost of living is substantially higher than in southern, urban centres. The remoteness of the fly-in community creates both challenges in bringing goods up to Webequie and challenges for residents to travel south for goods and services. High cost of living can disproportionately affect more vulnerable community members, including those who are low income, youth, Elders, women, and individuals living with disabilities. This section briefly describes the cost of living in Webequie First Nation, including household income and the percentage of income spent on rent/mortgage, energy, and groceries per month, highlighting the effects of high cost of living on vulnerable populations in the community.

The Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) indicates approximately a quarter of Webequie respondents spent less than 30% of their household income on rent or a mortgage, 15.5% spent between 30% and 50% of their income, 1.3% said they spent more than 50% of their income, while nearly 60% of respondents said they were unsure/did not know. This may be due to approximately 94% of Webequie private dwellings being government or band housing (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Energy costs are a concern in Webequie, with the majority of survey respondents sharing that they spend the same amount (\$100 to \$200 per month) on energy costs in the summer as they do in the winter (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). Costs of utilities in the community have presented substantial financial challenges for some households. The Webequie First Nation Well-Being Survey (Webequie, First Nation, 2014) indicates 83% of household members said they found it difficult to pay their electricity bills some or all of the time, and 90% said it was difficult to make fuel payments some or all of the time. Knowledge holders explained that most Webequie

residents use wood to heat their homes. Wood can be expensive, with one informant sharing that people must go across the river to get wood at a cost of \$180 per sled load (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Heating costs can be a particular barrier for young people in the community, some of whom are on social assistance, with one participant explaining the difficulty of having to use the small amount of money people receive to purchase all their essentials when goods in the community are so expensive (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Knowledge holders echoed that the payments people receive, such as those provided by Ontario Works¹⁷, are not enough to pay for the things they need, particularly with the high cost of food in the community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). With the largest group living in low income in Webequie being between the ages of 0 to 17 (Statistics Canada, 2022), high cost of living can have disproportionate affects on young people.

Approximately 31.2% of the Webequie population is considered low-income (Statistics Canada, 2022). Over half (52.8%) of Webequie households earn under \$70,000 (Statistics Canada, 2022). The community's cost of living is a major concern for community members, with one participant sharing that some families cannot afford Starlink (internet service), stating the inequality that low-income households in the community face. Others shared that high costs also impact their ability to carry out traditional activities like going out on the land (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Knowledge holders shared that the lack of infrastructure and lack of access to the land means people need the right equipment to travel for activities on the land, such as a boat, snow machine, and survival gear, which is a substantial cost to bear in addition to their other expenses (e.g., utilities, food) (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Both knowledge holders and focus group participants shared that the high costs associated with getting out on the land have disproportionate affects on Webequie youth, who must often rely on others, such as parents and family members, to have the means to go fishing or hunting. Youth can end up feeling stuck and unable to move around as a result (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Connection to the land is a critical determinant of health for Indigenous youth (Lines et al., 2019). Thus, the barrier of high costs in the community has effects on the health and well-being of Indigenous youth who may be inhibited from learning and practicing their culture on the land.

The high cost of living in Webequie also means many members are food insecure. In particular, fresh and healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables can be extremely expensive in the community (Webequie First Nation, 2014). People are food secure when they have physical, social, and economic access to safe, sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods to live an active, healthy life at all times (OECD, n.d.). Food security can be assessed by four categories, including access (physical, financial, and social), availability, meaning an adequate supply of food, utilization, meaning the ability to have food that is nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate, and stability, meaning the ability to maintain food access, utilization, and stability. Being food secure helps maintain physical and mental well-being. Understanding the level of food insecurity in the community helps to identify who is most vulnerable to high food

¹⁷ Ontario Works is a program which provides individuals with up to \$733 per month to help with living expenses, including food, and rent, health benefits, and employment supports to help individuals find and keep a job (e.g., workshops for resume writing, job counselling, job-specific training and basic education) (Government of Ontario, 2023).

costs and who may experience changes to food costs disproportionately. Food insecurity can be the result of several factors, including inflation, poverty, addictions, mental health, and lack of education and employment opportunities. Changes as a result of industrial development can impact a community's food security (IAIA, 2023).

The majority (30%) of Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) respondents said they spend approximately \$751 to \$1,000 per month on groceries, while 29% of respondents said they lacked access to food distribution programs, and 13.7% said they had access to a food distribution program but chose not to use it. Approximately 57% of respondents who live in Webequie said they access food distribution services either daily, weekly, monthly, or annually. Of those who accessed food distribution programs, 35.9% said they do so annually. Food insecurity in Webequie is not a new issue, as the Webequie First Nation Well-Being Survey (Webequie First Nation, 2014) revealed that 94% of households were affected by some form of food insecurity, including that they did not have enough food, skipped meals, or consumed reduced portion sizes, with 38% reporting that this was often the case. Further, 90% of households were unable to afford healthy balanced meals sometimes or often. Only 45% of households said they include traditional food items (e.g., local fish, game meat, berries) in their meals two or more times per week, which could, in part, be due to the high costs associated with accessing the land for traditional activities like hunting and fishing. Thus, not only do the high costs of food from the store create a barrier to food security for Webequie residents, but high costs associated with land-based activities further create a barrier to consuming country foods to supplement their diets.

Women are often more vulnerable to food insecurity, as they are more likely to skip meals to ensure their children, family members, and household breadwinner(s) are fed before them (Koutouki, Lofts, & Davidian, 2018). One knowledge holder shared that food insecurity presents another barrier for women's education and training in the community, questioning how women could have the opportunity to think about education and training when instead they must worry about more pressing issues like food and health (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Lack of healthy affordable foods also has a disproportionate affect on children and youth, who, according to Webequie residents, are often consuming unhealthy "sugary" foods (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Results from the Webequie First Nation Country Foods Consumption and Use Survey suggest some Webequie residents consume country foods at least on a weekly basis. Approximately 71% of respondents indicated they consume locally harvested fish for at least one meal per week, with some indicating 2 to 3 meals per week. Approximately 86% said they consume wild game at least one meal per week, with one respondent indicating they consume wild game 4 or more meals per week. Approximately 64% said they consume migratory birds at least one meal per week, with some indicating they consume migratory birds up to 3 meals per week. Other country foods consumed in Webequie, but less frequently, include gooseberries, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, service/June/saskatoon berries, Labrador (tea), muskrat root, mint, cedar (tea), and bear root (SNC-Lavalin, 2022c). Despite the high costs associated with getting out on the land to harvest foods, survey responses indicate some members still have somewhat regular access to country food in their weekly diet. This may be attributed, in part, to a collective value of sharing in the community. According to the Webequie First Nation Well-Being Survey

(Webequie First Nation, 2014), over 60% of households sometimes or regularly share food, wood, or help others, with sharing food between households being the most common practice as 86% of households indicated they share food sometimes or regularly with other households. This suggests that those who do have the means to go harvesting are able and willing to share their harvest with their fellow family and community members, indicating social connectedness of the community (see **Section 3.9**).

3.7.2 Potential Project Effects

The WSR Project will reduce the length of winter road used to transport goods to the community in the winter but will not eliminate it entirely (i.e., will not provide all-season access south), therefore no impacts to costs of goods and services in the community are anticipated.

If planned for appropriately, the Project could increase employment in the community, both directly and indirectly, increasing jobs and income and subsequently allowing residents increased means to obtain the essentials they need to be more food secure, heat their homes, and access to the supplies that enable people to spend time on the land for harvesting (CRIAW, 2014). Many Webequie residents are hopeful that Project-related employment and increase in incomes could alleviate burdens of the heavy costs in the community, particularly when it comes to fresh foods, household materials, fuel, and transportation (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b). However, vulnerable community members, such as women, youth, Elders, and individuals living with disabilities, face additional barriers to employment opportunities, making them less likely to benefit from income opportunities brought by the WSR Project. Community members employed by the Project are likely to experience higher incomes, which can create disparities between these subgroups (CRIAW, 2014; Ninomiya et al., 2023).

3.8 COMMUNITY SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

This section describes the existing conditions of community safety and emergency services in Webequie First Nation while highlighting the effects of crime and violence on the diverse sub-populations that live there. The section notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding community safety and potential affects of the WSR Project on community safety. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on community safety and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.8.1 Existing Conditions

Understanding the current state of community safety in Webequie First Nation and protective and emergency services helps to recognize the types of harms the community faces, identify influences on crime and violence, and identify victimized groups. Crime and violence statistics are not available at the Webequie First Nation community level. Rates of gender-based violence¹⁸

¹⁸ Gender-based violence is violence against an individual because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender (Government of Canada, 2023c).

and family violence¹⁹ could not be obtained. Thus, existing conditions largely rely on information shared by knowledge holders, focus group participants, and survey data.

Webequie knowledge holders shared that issues within the community include vandalism and lateral violence, including family violence, which can largely be linked to intergenerational trauma and related mental health and addictions challenges (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). The Webequie First Nation Well-Being Survey (Webequie First Nation, 2014) reported that 27% of households had their house vandalised in the past year. Vandalism in Webequie has been known to be carried out by youth, as they face boredom, isolation, and overcrowding and may use vandalism as well as substances as a way to cope with their reality (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Lateral violence is a cycle of abuse which effects Indigenous peoples, who may carry out violence and abuse on other Indigenous people as it was inflicted upon them, a long-lasting effect of the colonialization and oppression which Indigenous peoples faced (NWAC, 2011). Those most vulnerable to lateral violence are Elders, women, and children (NWAC, 2011). Knowledge holders noted that lateral violence in Webequie is a particular issue in the workplace and that family violence is also present in the community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Webequie First Nation members have expressed concern for the safety of women and girls due to the WSR Project (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b). Industrial projects and man camps are known to have disproportionate effects on rates of gender-based violence on Indigenous women and girls, with increased rates of sexual violence, substance use, and STIs occurring for women and girls who work and live in proximity of these projects (Bond & Quinlan, 2018). Temporary workforces are generally disconnected from the local community in which they temporarily work and reside, which can increase their participation in risky behaviours including alcohol, substance use, and sex which can lead to sexual assault and violence against women and girls who live and work near such projects (Bond & Quinlan, 2018). The first camp will be located close to the community (see **Section 1.1.1**) and may present these risks. Webequie women and girls who may be particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation include those of low income, those with low educational attainment, and those living with addictions (Daoud et al., 2012; CRIAW, 2014).

Results from the Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) indicated that Webequie resident respondents feel that high rates of substance abuse (72.4%), bullying or cyber-bullying (64.8%), high rates of domestic (family) violence (43.5%) and child negligence (40%) are the largest safety concerns in the community. When asked what their safety concerns are related to the WSR, Webequie resident respondents indicated road safety (70.8%) and the safety of youth (66.8%) were their two largest concerns.

Webequie First Nation Well-Being Survey (Webequie First Nation, 2014) results suggest community members trust one another, with 71% of households with children under 12 years old reporting they often or sometimes allow their children to play outside unsupervised.

¹⁹ Family violence is any form of abuse, mistreatment, or neglect that a child or adult experiences from a family member, or from someone with whom they have an intimate relationship (Government of Canada, 2022).

Webequie community members have expressed they feel safety in the community may be changing as a result of drug and alcohol issues. Knowledge holders shared that they worry when they send their child out, something that was not a source of worry in the past, not only a result of a lack of traditional teachings and preparedness of younger generations, but also dangers associated with drugs, alcohol, and methods of transportation in the community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Protective and emergency services in Webequie First Nation include Crisis Intervention, Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS), Family Resource Centre, and Peacekeepers. Crisis Intervention helps support community members affected by family violence, suicide, and other crisis situations, either on-site or over the phone and can dispatch police if necessary. The service also facilitates family meetings to explore potential solutions for their crises, coordinates crisis plans for suicide and domestic violence intervention, and provides resources and referrals (211 Ontario North, Webequie First Nation, 2023a). NAPS has a detachment in Webequie, with a police station on-reserve and two local Webequie members serving as constables (NorthWest Healthline, Nishnawbe Aski Police Service, 2023). The Family Resource Centre is for women and children suffering from violence (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Peacekeepers help control drugs and alcohol in the community (Webequie First Nation, 2021). One knowledge holder noted that sometimes police intervention is not well-received, and that it can be more helpful for non-police community members to intervene in a situation due to some police officers coming from outside the community and lacking local community knowledge (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Webequie does not have a formal fire service but does have a volunteer fire department which focuses on prevention, administration of the Ontario Fire Code, issues applicable burn permits, and provides education, emergency planning, fire investigation, fire suppression and home safety information (211 Ontario North, Webequie First Nation, 2023b). It is noted that existing fire hydrants in the community were said to not be functioning as of 2019 (Webequie First Nation, 2019b). If Webequie members require emergency medical services, an air ambulance is dispatched to the community and most often transports patients to Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay, or Winnipeg (211 Ontario North, Webequie First Nation, 2023c).

3.8.2 Potential Project Effects

Presence of the WSR Project could affect community safety and perceptions of community safety in Webequie through a potential increase in gender-based violence, family violence, and transportation-related safety issues (e.g., drunk driving). These changes may occur through the presence of camps, an increase in incomes, and driving on the all-season road.

Potential Effects on Violence

As noted in **Section 3.8.1**, temporary construction camps can jeopardize the safety of women and girls both onsite and in the community. Indigenous women who are employed with the Project during the construction phase are at risk of experiencing gender-based violence while at work. Labour camps can be unsafe environments for women and these risks may be a deterrent for women seeking employment with the Project (Amnesty International, 2016).

The first camp's proximity to the community and the transportation of non-locals through the community airport (see **Section 1.1.1**) could result in workforce interactions with Webequie residents should employees wish to enter the community for any reason (e.g., to visit a store or service). Indigenous women and girls of Webequie First Nation could face a substantially increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence through workforce interactions. Temporary construction workforces tend to be predominantly composed of young males who are disconnected from the host community, coupled with high disposable income, and may be involved in behaviours (e.g., substance abuse, sexual violence) they would not normally be involved in at home (Gibson et al., 2017; Eckford & Wagg, 2014). The current lack of capacity in the community to handle gender-based violence could force victims to travel outside the community to seek help, where an extended travel period can be retraumatizing (Gibson et al., 2017). Trauma of women and girls from gender-based violence could further lead to an increase in mental health and addictions challenges.

There is also concern amongst community members that the WSR Project could increase rates of family violence in the community as a result of increased drug and alcohol use associated with new disposable income (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). Increased income through employment with the WSR Project could increase alcohol and substance use, which can also be a catalyst for family violence (Dalseg et al., 2018). Experience suggests that Indigenous men employed by major resource projects can face racism and discrimination from other employees which can be a catalyst for family violence against women and children when they return home (Gibson et al., 2017). Women, youth, and Elders who do not have financial independence are more vulnerable as they do not have the means to leave abusive relationships (Shandro et al., 2011).

Potential Effects on Transportation Safety

Webequie First Nation members have expressed widespread concern for transportation safety as it pertains to the WSR Project and introduction of an all-season access road (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). These concerns include the risk of impaired driving, hitchhiking, and people driving without a license, with several members noting the need for checkpoints along the road to monitor transportation safety (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b). Of Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) Webequie member respondents between the ages of 15 to 30, 60% reported not having a driver's license and 53.3% reported not having regular access to a vehicle. Focus group participants also noted the increased dangers if no street lights are along the corridor (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Youth are vulnerable to these risks due to their social isolation and boredom in the community, who may desire exploring outside of the community but many of whom do not hold a driver's license or have regular access to a vehicle.

Any increases in crime and violence associated with the WSR Project, particularly gender-based violence, sex trafficking, and transportation safety, would have adverse outcomes on community members.

3.9 CULTURE AND COMMUNITY COHESION

This section describes Webequie First Nation culture, including traditional activities, and community cohesion. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie

community members regarding current culture and community cohesion and potential changes to Webequie culture and cohesion as related to the WSR Project. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on Webequie culture and cohesion and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.9.1 Existing Conditions

Understanding Webequie First Nation culture and community cohesion²⁰ helps to understand who may be more vulnerable to potential Project-related changes to Webequie's culture and cohesion, such as youth, women and girls, Elders, and land users. This includes understanding traditional activities practiced by community members, social and cultural events in the community and level of participation by community members, and social connections within the community.

The colonization and land dispossession experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada contributed to a loss of culture, language, and the transmission of intergenerational traditional knowledge, and ultimately led to the intergenerational trauma Indigenous peoples experience today (Ninomiya et al., 2023). The connection of Indigenous peoples to their culture and community and their sense of identity are critical to addressing these traumas (Maracle, 2021). Indigenous identity is an active process that needs affirmation, support, and enhancement through the practice of culture and social connection (Maracle, 2021). The expression of Indigenous identity is important for both individual and community well-being and allows individuals to reconnect with their culture and history (Maracle, 2021).

Webequie's Oji-Cree culture has survived the severe impacts of colonization and residential schools, however, many suffered the loss of their language and cultural skills as a result of residential schooling (Webequie First Nation, 2014; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Residential schools had major impacts on the identities of Indigenous children, and this intergenerational trauma continues to affect youth identity in the community today (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Webequie First Nation members are aware of the risk of further potential changes to their culture and traditional practices as a result of industrial development, an inherently colonial system, and have expressed that community remoteness can help maintain and enhance their traditional way of life (Webequie First Nation, 2014; Markusoff, 2018; Webequie First Nation, 2019b). Development and subsequent in-migration of non-Indigenous people nearby the community has the potential to exacerbate the erosion of Webequie language and culture, particularly amongst youth, who already face challenges in the loss of their cultural identity (Heid et al., 2022).

Cultural continuity plays an important role in youth resilience (Heid et al., 2022). Webequie members have expressed that the well-being of their youth is a primary concern in the community, who currently face challenges including mental health, substance use, and isolation (see **Section 3.9** for more information on culture and community cohesion, **Section 3.10** for mental health and addictions) (SNC-Lavalin 2022a; 2022b). Members also feel that technology and outside influences have played a role in youth not learning Webequie culture (Webequie First

²⁰ A socially cohesive community provides citizens with a shared feeling of belonging and inclusion, and where citizens participate actively in public affairs, tolerate existing differences, and enjoy relative equality in access to public goods and services and distribution of income and wealth (FAO, n.d.).

Nation, 2021; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). One way in which Webequie works to involve youth in cultural activities is through the Choose Life program, which facilitates the learning of land-related topics (e.g., hunting, canoeing, fishing) from Elders for youth aged 7 to 17, and by integrating culture into the school curriculum (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; Webequie First Nation, 2021). Webequie members stress the importance of youth involvement in cultural practices and developing their relationship with the land as critical to their physical and mental well-being (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

The cohesion of a community impacts its social capital, the maintenance of healthy social connections that can improve the flow of information, cooperation, trust, productivity, and reciprocity (Ratelle & Pакette, 2019). Small communities like Webequie First Nation often have strong social capital, which can be witnessed through acts such as neighbours sharing their harvest (e.g., meat, fish) with members who are unable to harvest themselves (e.g., Elders) or may be food insecure, something known to occur among Webequie residents (see **Section 3.7.1**). Sharing amongst community members can increase a community's resilience (Ratelle & Pакette, 2019).

Residents of Webequie First Nation have described the community as a friendly and good place to live but have expressed the desire for more community involvement and activities, noting the inconsistency of community events and programming, particularly for youth (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b). Webequie organizes community events throughout the year, including summer and winter festivals and summer powwows, which also bring in people from surrounding communities (Webequie First Nation, 2021). Other community activities held in the summer include sporting tournaments (e.g., floor hockey, broomball), talent shows, games, youth weeks, drum groups, ribbon-making, and wild game and fish cooking (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Results from the Webequie First Nation Community Well-Being Study (2014) showed that over 75% of households said that at least one member of their household participates in community sports, community events, and fundraising. Community events were the most popular for participation, with over 90% of households reporting that they attend community events. The Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) indicated that residents remain involved in community events. When asked if they participate in organized social and/or cultural activities/events always, sometimes, or never, the majority (76.5%) of those who responded said they sometimes do. This was also the response for the majority (81.1%) of respondents aged 15-30 and the majority (66.7%) of respondents aged 66+.

The Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) further helps provide an indication of social connections in the community. When asked to rate the number of their social connections in Webequie on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), the majority (38.3%) of those who responded rated the number of their social connections in the community as a 4, indicating they felt they were connected to a relatively high number of community members. The majority (33.3%) of female respondents rated the number of their social connections in the community as 3, indicating they felt they had a moderate number of social connections. When asked to rate the quality of their social connections in Webequie on a scale from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong), the majority (37.6%) of those who responded rated the quality of their social connections in the

community as a 3, indicating they felt their relationships are average in quality. This was also the rating for the majority (41.2%).

Some focus group participants, including land users and women, shared hopes that the Project could potentially improve social connection and community involvement (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Community cohesion can act as a protective factor against the most visible forms of abuse of women and girls (see **Section 3.8**) (Poix et al., 2022).

Webequie First Nation members take part in numerous traditional activities as a way of expressing their Oji-Cree culture, including hunting, trapping, fishing, ceremonies, and gathering/harvesting, which tie them closely to their land and culture. Results of the Webequie First Nation Well-Being Survey (Webequie First Nation, 2014) suggest Webequie members are highly involved in traditional activities, with approximately 95% of respondents indicating that at least one family member participated in some type of cultural activity at least three times per year. The Webequie First Nation Community Based Land Use Plan (Webequie First Nation, 2019b) indicates that the Webequie First Nation Traditional Customary Practice and Use Area extends 40 km to 50 km in radius around the community for traditional and recreational activities. In particular, Eastwood Island is an important place for harvesting and gathering. Webequie members hunt moose, caribou, and waterfowl amongst other species which provide a good source of healthy foods. Furbearing animals harvested from trapping are used for food as well as tools and clothing, such as moccasins, mitts, and fur hats. Harvesting trees not only provides wood for heating homes in the community, but is also used by members for snowshoes, sleighs, building, and medicine. Different fish species harvested by Webequie members are said to provide different cultural uses that go back many generations, such as using the skin of northern pike to make bags/containers for storing fat or oil for candles (Webequie First Nation, 2019b).

Fishing is common in the community, with over 80% of Webequie households taking part and over 30% of households having 3 or more members who fish. Further, 70% of Webequie First Nation households reported that at least one adult member had spent 4+ days on the land in the last year and nearly 48% of Webequie First Nation households reported at least one adult member participating in trips of four or more days that totaled to 14 days or more. 40% of households said they had youth or children spending four or more consecutive days on traditional land and 20% said they had youth or children spend a total of 14 or more days on traditional land (Webequie First Nation, 2014). The Community Health Survey found that the majority (55.6%) of respondents said they go out on the land (e.g., hunting, fishing, chopping wood, walking, snowshoeing) less often than once per week, with the second largest group (33.3%) saying they get out on the land a few times per week (Intrinsik, 2023).

When asked if concerned about the loss of traditional culture in Webequie First Nation, the majority (75.2%) of survey respondents answered yes (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). Of those concerned for loss of their traditional culture, 92% said they were concerned for loss of traditional land use and 90.2% said they were concerned for loss of traditional values. Webequie members have expressed specific concerns for loss of traditions amongst their youth, who face social isolation and boredom in the community as well as substantial expenses associated with

getting out on the land, and desire for more involvement of Elders in youth events (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

Seniors can also be more vulnerable to social changes, as they are prone to loneliness and isolation, which can be linked to poorer health outcomes. This includes changes to their social circumstances, such as changes to or loss of family and social groups. Engagement in meaningful social activities is important to reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation for Elders (Tonkin et al., 2018). Elders are key to the transmission of traditional knowledge, values, and culture to younger community members (Viscogliosi et al., 2020), and Webequie members have expressed a desire to improve Elder participation in social events, particularly with youth, and to provide them with more community services (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

As noted in the Webequie First Nation Community Based Land Use Plan (2019b), the protection of Webequie culture relies on harmonizing new activities with the existing pursuits of community members.

3.9.2 Potential Project Effects

The WSR Project has the potential to affect the culture and cohesion of the Webequie First Nation community, with youth, women and girls, Elders, and land users potentially feeling these effects disproportionately. As shown through the severe and long-lasting effects of colonization, destabilization of a community's culture and cohesion can affect the identities of its members (Maracle, 2021). Analysis of potential project affects on Indigenous peoples and their land and culture must be done with acknowledgment of these colonial and historical contexts (Hoogeveen et al., 2021).

Potential Effects to Culture

The Project could affect the ability of Webequie members to access their lands and practice traditional activities through environmental disturbances. Presence of the Project and the all-season road has the potential to interfere with animal migration and access to the land and have subsequent impacts on Webequie culture and way of life through a reduction in traditional land use (Myette & Riva, 2021). Whereas winter roads are usually not graded and allow for plants to grow in their place during warmer months, all-season roads do not allow for vegetation to regenerate, which can affect the presence of animals and, subsequently, traditional hunting and trapping (Mihalus, 2016). Further, potential changes to land access patterns as a result of the Project may not only impact land users but can impact who is able to participate in traditional activities, alienating certain sub-populations such as Elders, children, and individuals living with disabilities (Myette & Riva, 2021).

The inability to access the land and practice one's culture can cause a loss of connection to the land and a loss of identity which can negatively impact physical and mental health and well-being (Ninomiya et al., 2023). This can have disproportionate effects on community members who are more vulnerable to changes. Youth were identified by Webequie First Nation as a population of concern due to the several challenges they face while living on reserve, such as social isolation, boredom, lack of education and employment opportunities, overcrowded homes, poor mental health, and addictions (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Changes to traditional practices can result in youth

being less willing to get out on the land for traditional activities like hunting (Adam et al., 2012). Cultural continuity is a critical factor in the resilience of Indigenous youth mental health (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019). Thus, changes to the ability to practice one's culture could have negative impacts on the physical and mental well-being of Webequie youth.

In contrast, presence of the road, once complete, could provide greater access to areas for traditional activities, which could make getting out on the land easier and more appealing for certain subgroups including Elders and youth. Employment opportunities with the Project could also increase incomes, allowing community members increased ability to get out on the land, which has been noted by community members to have high costs (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Potential Effects to Community Cohesion

Community cohesion could be disrupted through interactions with the temporary construction workforce. Non-locals associated with the Project, many of whom are likely to originate from southern, urban centres, often have different values than rural communities when it comes to the environment, land use, and community development. The presence of a temporary population with drastically different values interacting with Webequie community members can cause social conflict. Tension and conflict between locals and non-locals can stem from various reasons, including differences in ways of living (Smith & Krannich, 2000). Differences in attitudes and values of non-locals who stay at the temporary construction camps nearby Webequie First Nation have the potential to disrupt the cohesion and social stability of Webequie, which may particularly affect youth as there is fear that culture is being lost amongst younger generations (Stein & Stein, 2011; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Further, a potential decrease in the cultural engagement of youth as a result of increased employment, long shifts (i.e., rotations), and interactions with non-local, non-Indigenous employees could place youth more at risk of negative behaviours, such as substance use.

Indigenous women and girls are also disproportionately affected by changes to culture and cohesion. Potential effects on women and girls as a result of changes to culture and community cohesion cannot be assessed without recognition of colonial impacts on the position of Indigenous women and girls in society, which have caused long-lasting inequalities in their social position and treatment (Mckinley, Liddell, & Lilly, 2021). Potential changes to traditional culture and relationships with the land associated with industrial projects can impact substance abuse and familial and social structures in the community (Deonandan, Deonandan, & Field, 2016), which can have negative impacts on women and girls who are at higher risks of gender-based and family violence (Gibson et al., 2017).

3.10 MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

This section describes mental health and addictions, including mental health and addictions services available in the community of Webequie First Nation. The section also notes thoughts and concerns expressed by Webequie community members regarding current mental health and addictions challenges and potential mental health and addictions challenges as related to the WSR Project. Further, the section assesses the potential effects of the WSR Project on mental

health and addictions and how the potential effects may be experienced differently by diverse sub-populations.

3.10.1 Existing Conditions

Understanding current mental health and addictions challenges experienced by Webequie First Nation members and existing mental health and addictions support services available in the community helps to understand vulnerable populations, including individuals living with mental health and addictions challenges, particularly youth, two-spirited individuals, and women and girls, and how presence of the WSR Project could affect the mental health and addictions challenges of these groups in the community.

Indigenous peoples suffer a disproportionate burden of mental health, including higher rates of suicide and addictions, compared to non-Indigenous peoples in Canada as a result of their cultural genocide and land dispossession (Nelson & Wilson, 2017; Ninomiya et al., 2023). The colonization and oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada (see **Section 3.1**) has had long-lasting effects on their mental, as well as physical, social, spiritual, cultural, and economic, well-being (Smallwood et al., 2021). These impacts have been passed down through generations, with risky behaviours amongst Indigenous youth being learned behaviours and a result of intergenerational trauma and poor mental health (Walls et al., 2014; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Acknowledging this past and present reality for Indigenous peoples in Canada helps to understand how industrialization may further impact vulnerable populations suffering from these traumas and mental health challenges.

Trauma is a primary concern for Webequie First Nation. The community points to unresolved traumas associated with colonization as a driver of mental health and addictions challenges amongst Webequie members (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Addictions have compounding effects on the community, such as violence and poverty, and there is an urgent need for healing amongst community members to end the cycle of trauma (Webequie First Nation, 2021).

Addictions in Webequie include alcohol, drugs, and gambling and are used as ways of coping with mental health challenges such as trauma and stress (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Addiction is an issue for both men and women in Webequie (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Women in Webequie face a number of challenges that can affect their mental well-being, including barriers to services and resources such as childcare, barriers to lands and transportation, nepotism, lack of family support, lack of communication, and lack of privacy while receiving counselling (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Knowledge holders indicated that young girls are a key demographic requiring mental health treatment, noting that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health challenges amongst this group (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Not only are women and girls living with mental health and addictions at higher risks of exploitation, trafficking, and gender-based violence (CRIAW, 2014; Hill, Madden, & Collins, 2017), but women and girls are more vulnerable to abuse by those living with addictions around them. Women experiencing violence are more likely to smoke, drink heavily, use illegal drugs, and misuse prescription drugs (BCSTH, 2011).

Knowledge holders noted that two-spirited community members can face disproportionate affects of trauma and feel isolated due to a lack of both social supports for LGBTQ2+ and understanding

of gender identity amongst community members (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). This can leave individuals suffering in silence and seeking coping mechanisms (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Young members of Webequie First Nation experience many challenges in addition to trauma which may contribute to poor mental health and addictions, including social isolation, irregular availability of recreational activities, overcrowding in their homes and subsequent lack of privacy, lack of education and employment opportunities, and lack of access to the land and land-based activities due to the expensive nature of transport on the land (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Knowledge holders also pointed out that some youth have lost their drive and motivation due to government promises for more funding towards opportunities in education and employment that were made but not kept. Poor mental health amongst Indigenous youth have led to substance use issues, a widely expressed concern amongst Webequie members (see **Section 3.11**) (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b).

Addictions distract individuals from practicing traditional ways of life, such as land-based activities, and remove people's desire to go out on the land (Webequie First Nation, 2019a). Practicing one's culture is an important resiliency factor for mental health, allowing individuals to maintain their sense of identity and social connection, where loss of identity can have severe effects on mental health and addictions (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019; Dingle, Cruwys, & Frings, 2015).

Suicide amongst Indigenous youth is an increasing concern amongst First Nations communities. High suicide rates amongst Indigenous youth, particularly young Indigenous girls, are prevalent in Canada and can be linked to several factors including loss of culture and language, community disruption, and discrimination (Government of Canada, 2023c). The emergence and increase in occurrence of suicide pacts, whereby groups of people within communities commit suicide around the same time or together, amongst Indigenous youth indicate that Indigenous youth suicide has become increasingly normalized and is a result of intergenerational traumas, as well as experiences like neglect, addictions, and social isolation (Walls et al., 2014; Smallwood et al., 2021). Based on analysis of suicide rates amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada from 2011-2016, suicide rates were significantly higher among Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people for most age categories under 45, with disparities being largest for those under 15 years of age and those aged 15-24. The disparity was particularly evident among females aged 15-24 (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019). Women have higher rates a self harm, a risk factor for suicide (Government of Canada, 2023e).

Webequie First Nation does not currently have any qualified mental health counsellors in the community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Community members must speak to someone outside the community. There is an immediate need for mental health services, including trauma-informed services, in Webequie. It is important to acknowledge that the impacts of colonialism on mental health are not just historical but are present in the structure and delivery of mental health services in Canada today (Nelson & Wilson, 2017).

Webequie has a Women's Group, which helps women of various ages with mental health challenges as well as cultural identity challenges. This includes helping women to develop their

identity as a First Nations individual, such as learning their language and values (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Crisis Intervention provides urgent support to individuals who are affected by family violence and suicide within the community. Crisis services are available on-site or by phone, and if needed, police can be dispatched promptly. Crisis Intervention helps coordinate crisis plans for suicide and domestic violence intervention as well as provides information and referrals to resources and other services. The service also facilitates meetings amongst family members to help explore potential resolutions for the issues they are experiencing (211 Ontario North, Webequie First Nation, 2023a).

The Choose Life Program is a suicide prevention program in Webequie designed for youth aged 7 to 17 years old, teaching participants their Webequie culture and taking them out for land-based activities such as fish netting, hunting, and canoeing. Knowledge and teachings are passed on to youth by Webequie Elders who are involved in the program. The program focuses on helping participants find their spirit, as well as developing trust and showing participants that they're cared for. Knowledge holders shared that the program is well-received and enjoyed by Webequie children and youth (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

Youth still face challenges when it comes to mental health services in their community, with 36.1% of Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey respondents noting a lack of access and 33.6% noting access without utilization (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). These responses indicate the need to better understand the availability and access of social support programs in the community. Individuals not utilizing mental health services available to them may be due, in part, to lack of privacy when seeking counselling due to the small and connected nature of the community, as noted by focus group participants (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Lack of mental health service provision in northern First Nation communities has negative effects on the mental health of Indigenous youth (Smallwood et al., 2021).

Webequie has a suboxone²¹ program that helps community members with opioid addiction and provides potential solutions to address their trauma, including land-based healing (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). The Webequie First Nations' Comprehensive Community Plan (2021) indicates nearly half of the community's adults participate in the suboxone program. One challenge regarding the suboxone program is that suboxone has become normalized and some members have continued using it for years (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). This may be due, in part, to the large proportion of community members who have been or are involved in the program. It was noted that some participants continue to use other drugs while taking part in the program (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

The National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program supports community members and families living with addictions challenges. Services include Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, public seminars, educational sessions in school, and cultural and spiritual events. The intervention program includes recreational activities, group discussions, and cultural gatherings to help with recovery (SNC Lavalin, 2023).

²¹ Suboxone is designed to replace opioid use.

Webequie community members noted the importance of traditional healing for individuals living with addictions. Cultural continuity is an important resiliency factor for Indigenous youth's mental health and is associated with lower suicide rates (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019). The Webequie First Nation Socio-Economic Survey (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b) indicates almost 19% of respondents noted the unavailability of traditional healing programs in the community, while 31% said they have access but do not utilize them. Of those who said they utilize traditional healing programs, 21.6% said they use them monthly and 17.3% said they use them annually. These responses indicate the need to better understand the availability and access of social support programs in the community.

Other protective factors for the mental well-being of Indigenous youth include family connectedness, success at school, community connectedness and involvement, higher income and employment, and tailored mental health services (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019). Community members shared that youth need more opportunities to keep busy and to be immersed in their culture through more programs such as drumming, family gathering, and camping. A knowledge holder also noted inconsistent access to internet for youth, sharing that youth need to be able to communicate with "the rest of the world" and should not have to live in trauma (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

3.10.2 Potential Project Effects

The WSR Project has the potential to affect mental health and addictions in Webequie First Nation, particularly for sub-populations identified as vulnerable including individuals living with mental health and addictions challenges, youth, two-spirited individuals, and women and girls.

Presence of the Project has the potential to attract a transient workforce and increase incomes of community members which can have impacts on mental health and addictions. Webequie First Nation members have expressed serious concern for the safety of the community related to the WSR Project, particularly for their youth and women and girls (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b).

Large-scale industrial projects and "man camps" are known to increase the prevalence of drug use and alcohol consumption (Dalseg et al., 2018). As noted in **Section 1.1**, temporary construction camps and the transient workforces they attract can create a hypermasculine culture where individuals "work hard, play hard", taking part in alcohol, drugs, and sex to decompress after long shifts (Gibson et al., 2017; MacKellar et al., 2018). Due to high incomes associated with employment by major projects and subsequent wealth disparities between the non-local workforce and local residents, man camps can push local residents and communities to increase the availability of goods and services desired by non-locals, including drugs, alcohol, and sex (MacKellar et al., 2023).

Presence of a transient workforce and subsequent increased risk of gender-based violence has the potential to increase addictions amongst victims of violence in the community. Gender-based and family violence against women, girls, and LGBTQ2+ individuals can lead to increased alcohol and drug dependency (BCSTH, 2011).

As noted, women and girls in Webequie and neighbouring LSA communities are placed at a higher risk with the presence of the WSR Project. Women and girls living with addictions are

more vulnerable to non-locals who may offer alcohol or drugs in exchange for sex and are at a higher risk of experiencing gender-based and domestic violence (see **Section 3.7**). Webequie members have expressed concern for abuse of women and girls related to increased addictions issues in the community in relation to the Project and presence of the all-season road (SNC-Lavalin, 2022b). Further, gender-diverse people, such as two-spirited individuals, are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence (Bond & Quinlan, 2018). LGBTQ2+ individuals who have been victims of abuse are more likely to use drugs or alcohol as coping mechanisms (Statistics Canada, 2020).

The WSR Project, if planned for appropriately, has the potential to increase employment opportunities and income for Webequie members and, in particular, youth, which could have positive impacts on their mental health, such as increasing their financial means to get out on the land (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). However, if not planned for appropriately, employment of Webequie members and youth by the Project could increase their risk of dealing with racism and discrimination in the workplace, impacting their mental health and well-being (Gibson et al., 2017). Experiences of racism and discrimination in the workplace can translate into lateral violence at home, with women, children, and Elders being most at risk.

Industrial projects, which are inherently colonial in nature, often structure employment and working hours in ways that do not align with Indigenous ways of life, such as having long shifts, which can increase stress (DesBrisay, 1994). The rotational work schedules anticipated for the Project could increase time spent away from family and community and may also decrease the time available to practice their culture, such as participating in community gatherings and land-based activities (e.g., hunting, fishing). Decreased time to practice one's culture due to Project-related employment could negatively impact the mental health of Indigenous individuals, which has the potential to disproportionately impact Webequie youth, for whom culture and land-based practices are key resiliency factors for their mental health. Further, the mental health of employees can be negatively impacted when operations slow or stop if transitional plans are not in place, leading to increased occurrences of stress, anxiety, depression, and addictions (Shandro et al., 2011).

Mobile workforces of industrial projects, such as temporary construction camps, are known to increase the risk of gender-based violence against women, girls, and LGBTQ2+ individuals who live nearby (see **Section 3.7**) (NIMMIWG, 2019; Ninomiya et al., 2023). If not planned for appropriately, the presence of temporary construction camps have the potential to substantially increase the risk of violence against these vulnerable populations and have severe impacts on their mental health. As noted in **Section 3.10.1**, Webequie girls are particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a).

As noted in **Section 3.10.1**, Webequie First Nation has limited access to mental health services and has an immediate need for more mental health supports for their members. Therefore, the community does not have the capacity to support any potential increase in mental health challenges as a result of the Project.

4.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects are important to consider alongside the WSR Project in order to gain a better understanding of potential future impacts on Webequie First Nation and how to mitigate or enhance such effects. The reasonably foreseeable developments to consider in cumulative effects include the MFCAR, NRL, Eagle's Nest Mine, and Black Horse and Big Daddy projects. These reasonably foreseeable developments represent drivers of change for Webequie First Nation by increasing regional connectivity, changing access to traditional territory, and creating new employment opportunities for community members. While these developments may generate positive economic outcomes, they may also contribute to adverse social shifts. Cumulative effects on Webequie First Nation community safety, culture, and community cohesion may arise when the WSR Project's effects interact with the impacts of reasonably foreseeable developments. While mitigation and enhancement measures are expected to support community resilience, cumulative pressures may still adversely affect the social and cultural well-being of Webequie community members, with disproportionate impacts possible for Indigenous women, Elders, youth, and other groups who may experience these pressures differently.

Cumulative effects have become particularly important for Indigenous communities in Canada, who have experienced disproportionate environmental and social impacts from development, received inequitable shares in the benefits, and have faced a legacy of exclusion from planning and decision-making processes (Sandlos & Keeling, 2016; Arnold et al., 2022). This broader context reinforces the need to carefully consider cumulative effects in the assessment of the WSR Project, particularly in relation to the social and cultural well-being of Webequie First Nation.

The WSR Project is expected to affect Webequie First Nation's community safety, culture, and cohesion during both construction and operation. During construction, the presence of non-local workers may increase safety risks for vulnerable populations—particularly Indigenous women, girls, youth, and Elders—through workplace and community interactions. These risks include gender-based and family violence. During operation, safety concerns may arise from increased transportation activity, including risks associated with impaired or unlicensed driving, hitchhiking, and lack of corridor lighting (see **Section 3.8.2** for details). The Project may also influence culture through both positive and adverse effects. Construction-related employment could increase household income and enable greater financial support for traditional activities. Operation of the WSR may improve land access for Elders and children, supporting cultural continuity. However, Project-related land changes may impact community members' cultural activities and connections. Community cohesion may be affected by interactions with non-local workers, whose differing values could lead to social tensions and reduced youth participation in cultural activities, with increased risks such as substance use. Indigenous women and girls may be especially vulnerable due to disrupted cultural structures and the compounding effects of colonialism (see **Section 3.9.2**).

Marten Falls First Nation is proposing the construction, operation, and maintenance of the MFCAR, an all-season, multi-use road approximately 190 to 230 km in length that would connect

the northern end of the Painter Lake forestry road to the community of Marten Falls (Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, 2023). The MFCAR would be located 100 km south of the WSR, enabling future access to mineral development opportunities in the Ring of Fire region (Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, 2023). The construction workforce of the MFCAR is anticipated to be similar in size to that of the WSR (see **Section 1.1.1**), approximately 140 workers annually and peaking around 200 workers. Construction camps will be used to house employees during the construction phase; similar to the WSR, there will be several mobile camps that move along the MFCAR route as construction progresses.

Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation are proposing the construction, operation, and maintenance of the NRL, an all-season, multi-use gravel road anticipated to span approximately 117 to 164 km in length (Northern Road Link, n.d.b). The NRL would connect the WSR, at its eastern terminus, with the MFCAR, providing access to mineral deposits in the McFaulds Lake area and establishing a key transportation corridor linking the proposed Ring of Fire mining development area to the provincial highway system (Northern Road Link, 2024). Similar to the WSR and MFCAR, the construction workforce is anticipated to be approximately 140 workers annually, peaking around 200 workers, who will be housed in mobile construction camps that will move along the route as work progresses through the construction phase.

All-season roads to communities that were previously isolated and/or only accessible by a winter road network can bring about substantial change (Nichols Applied Management, 2015). This change can provide various benefits to northern communities, but the potential negative impacts of all-season roads need to be identified and understood (Mihalus, 2016). The NRL and MFCAR projects would result in large construction camps having access to Webequie First Nation which could have adverse impacts on vulnerable community members. Further, once the NRL and MFCAR are in place, Webequie First Nation will be accessible year-round from southern urban centres in Northwest Ontario; depending on the routes chosen, the distance from Webequie First Nation to Thunder Bay via all-season road will be approximately 844 km to 931 km upon completion of the WSR, MFCAR, and NRL.

Employment opportunities during construction and increased connectivity to the provincial highway system during operation for Webequie First Nation as a result of the WSR, MFCAR, and NRL could have both positive and adverse impacts on socio-economic indicators, including community services, education and training, employment, housing, cost of living, safety, culture and community cohesion, and addictions, which may affect vulnerable groups in the community (e.g., women, youth, Elders) in different ways.

Potential positive cumulative effects on Webequie First Nation resulting from the all-season road projects may include:

- Improvements to service delivery and increased ability of residents to travel south for services which cannot be offered in-community. Year-round access to Webequie via all-season roads could increase the ability of Webequie residents to seek out additional options in health and social services (e.g., specialists) which are not presently offered in the community (see **Section 3.3**). This could potentially improve the well-being of community members. However, barriers remain for community members—particularly Elders and youth—who do not have a

valid driver's license or regular access to a vehicle in addition to the long distance and travel times required to get to urban centres like Thunder Bay (Affordability Action Council, 2024). These factors may limit the extent to which all residents are able to benefit equally from increased physical connectivity;

- Improvements to emergency response and evacuation. All-season road access could enhance emergency evacuation capacity during health, safety, or environmental crises (e.g., wildfires), improving community resilience particularly for vulnerable populations such as Elders who may have greater and more frequent healthcare needs;
- Increased ability to attract visiting professionals. Easier access could enable more frequent visits from health professionals, technicians, tradespeople, and program deliverers (e.g., mobile clinics), which may benefit vulnerable populations such as Elders, through increased access to medical professionals;
- Increased access to education and training for Webequie members due to an increased ability for residents to travel south to urban centres for post-secondary programs which cannot be offered in-community. For example, Thunder Bay hosts Lakehead University and Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology. This could improve education and training outcomes for youth, who must currently fly out of the community if they wish to continue their learning (see **Section 3.4**). Access to the south year-round via all-season roads could make this transition easier and increase the ability to visit home for individuals who wish to continue on to post-secondary learning;
- Increased access to employment for Webequie members due to opportunities to join the construction workforce on the NRL and MFCAR projects. Given the distance to urban centres like Thunder Bay, it is unlikely that all-season access to the provincial highway system will provide employment opportunities;
- Increased opportunities for economic development due to increased feasibility of small/local businesses, increased employment opportunities for community members, and increased opportunity for resource development (Community Government of Whatì, 2015) (see **Section 3.5**);
- Improved year-round road access could reduce the cost of living in Webequie First Nation by lowering the cost and increasing the availability of goods and materials, including food, fuel, and housing supplies (Mihalus, 2016; CCPPP, 2019). This improved accessibility could help address housing challenges, such as overcrowding, and improve food security and overall well-being by making it easier for residents to access essential goods and services more frequently (see **Section 3.7**);
- Increased access to traditional territory via roads to practice traditional land and resource use activities, particularly for individuals with limited mobility such as Elders and children (see **Section 3.9**); and

- Increase community-to-community interaction and improve community-to-community relationships. Year-round road access from Webequie may increase members' ability to visit family and friends in southern communities and may allow for stronger bonds to be built between reserves (i.e., Marten Falls First Nation) (Nichols Applied Management, 2015; Mihalus, 2016) (see **Section 3.9**).

Potential adverse cumulative effects on Webequie First Nation resulting from these all-season road projects may include:

- Increase in transportation-related safety issues for the community (e.g., drunk driving, driving without a license), particularly youth, who face boredom and isolation and may desire driving out of the community but many of whom do not have a driver's license (see **Section 3.8.2**). Further, individuals who are unable to drive or lack access to a vehicle may be at risk of physical harm if they wish to leave the community by other means, such as hitch hiking (Affordability Action Council, 2024);
- Increased vulnerability to unwanted visitors from the NRL and MFCAR project workforces and southern residents, which may have particular impacts to women, girls, LGBTQ2+ individuals, and youth as described in **Section 3.8.2**. Non-locals and/or non-Indigenous individuals may not have the same respect for local peoples (Mihalus, 2016), putting the safety of more vulnerable groups at risk for adverse interactions such as harassment, gender-based violence, and exploitation;
- Increased opportunities for misspending as a result of project employment and subsequent increased income, which may adversely affect the health and safety of vulnerable Webequie community members. Short-term employment and increases in income—especially for individuals without strong financial literacy or access to financial planning—such as those associated with construction, can lead to impulsive spending, financial stress, and/or increased risk behaviours (Scott & Lessard, 2002). Additionally, the environment often associated with construction camps—characterized by intense work followed by unstructured downtime with a 'work hard, play hard' culture—can lead to increased substance use and engagement in other high-risk behaviours (MacKellar et al., 2023). Thus, short-term, increased income through construction phase employment with the all-season road projects could increase alcohol and substance use, which can also be a catalyst for violence (Dalseg et al., 2018). These effects may pose specific risks for Indigenous women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and may face increased vulnerability in contexts where substance use and male-dominated transient workforces are present (see **Section 3.8**). For youth, increased substance use and related behaviours in the community may raise indirect exposure, normalize high-risk behaviours, and create environments where impressionable young people are more likely to experiment with substances—particularly in the absence of strong protective factors such as prevention programming, mentorship, or safe spaces. Youth may also turn to substances as a coping mechanism or form of escape from persistent social stressors, including overcrowded or unsafe housing conditions;

- Increased demand on community services during construction from non-local workforce influx, leading to increased demand for healthcare, social supports, and police and emergency services (see **Section 3.3**). This strain disproportionately affects Elders, who already face healthcare challenges, and women, girls, and LGBTQ2+ individuals who may require specialized, culturally safe services. Increased interactions with transient workers can raise risks of sexual violence, substance use, and STIs, heightening demand for sexual health and gender-based violence supports. These risks may also contribute to greater need for police and emergency services to respond to safety concerns. Vulnerable Indigenous women and girls—those with low income, education, or substance use challenges—may face greater barriers to care, worsened by stigma and intergenerational trauma. These combined effects risk undermining community health and well-being without adequate service expansion;
- Increase in access to Webequie First Nation and traditional territory by non-locals and/or non-Indigenous individuals and subsequent deterioration of the land and competition for resources. It is often perceived that non-Indigenous individuals do not share the same respect for the land, and may disrespect and misuse it (Mihalus, 2016). Webequie has expressed that Webequie peoples have a deep connection with the land and respect animals as equals, a sense of respect not often carried by outside visitors (Webequie First Nation, 2019b; SNC-Lavalin, 2022a) (see **Section 3.9**). Road development has been associated with an increase in hunting on traditional territories and resulting competition for resources (Mihalus, 2016). An increase in non-Webequie members using the area for recreation, such as hunting and fishing, may discourage Webequie members from going out on the land for traditional land uses and create competition for resources. Such changes to the environment and accessibility for Webequie First Nation members can have negative effects on traditional activities such as harvesting of medicines and ceremony, as well as food security (see **Section 3.7** for more information on food security) (Ninomiya et al., 2023); and
- Increased ability to bring substances (i.e., drugs and alcohol) into the community, putting those facing addictions at an increased risk, particularly youth. Many Webequie members, notably Elders and women during focus groups, have expressed fear for the all-season road's potential to increase the presence of substances in the community as well as the need for checkpoints along the all-season road to keep community members safe from the transportation of alcohol and drugs into the community (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; 2022b). Residents are concerned for the vulnerability of youth to this potential increase in access, as many youth already struggle with addiction and those who are not already living with addictions may turn to substances in order to cope with their environment and boredom (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a) (see **Section 3.10**).

Completion of the WSR, MFCAR, and NRL and subsequent provincial highway access from the McFaulds Lake area will allow mining developments in the Ring of Fire area to commence, including Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects located near the eastern terminus of the WSR. One of the primary mining developments expected to proceed following completion of the road network is the Eagle's Nest Mine—a proposed underground nickel-copper-platinum-palladium project located approximately 540 km north of Thunder Bay and 240 km

west of James Bay in the Ring of Fire (Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, 2024). Eagle's Nest Mine has an estimated 11-year mine life with an anticipated direct construction workforce of approximately 200 to 700 workers annually over the construction phase and a direct operation workforce of approximately 130 to 230 jobs annually (Avaanz, 2025).

In addition to Eagle's Nest Mine, other mineral exploration and development activities are underway in the Ring of Fire region, including KWG Resources' Big Daddy and Black Horse chromite projects, located approximately 280km north of Nakina, Ontario (KWG Resources Inc., 2022). The Big Daddy and Black Horse projects are anticipated to require a direct construction workforce of approximately 360 to 1,400 jobs annually and a direct operation workforce of approximately 240 to 470 jobs annually (Avaanz, 2025). Workers will be housed near the mine developments at the eastern terminus of the WSR. While the timing of construction for these projects is currently uncertain, it will coincide with the operation of WSR, MFCAR, and NRL. This overlap may open Webequie First Nation to new employment opportunities and increase the number of workforce camps operating in the region over the longer term.

Mining developments enabled by completion of the WSR, MFCAR, and NRL—including Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects—could have both positive and adverse impacts on socio-economic indicators for Webequie First Nation. These changes may affect vulnerable groups within the community—such as Indigenous women and girls, youth, Elders, and LGBTQ2+ individuals—in different ways depending on access to benefits and exposure to risks.

Potential positive cumulative effects on Webequie First Nation resulting from Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects may include increased access to employment and education. Increased access to employment opportunities and subsequent increased income through construction and operation phases at Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects may benefit vulnerable groups—such as Indigenous women, youth, and low-income individuals—by providing new pathways to financial independence, skills development, and long-term career growth (see **Section 3.4** and **Section 3.5**). Increased education, training, and skill development opportunities associated with the construction and operation of the Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects could support vulnerable groups—such as Indigenous women, youth, and individuals with limited education and/or prior work experience—by building transferable skills, improving employability, and fostering long-term participation in the labour market (see **Section 3.4**).

Potential adverse cumulative effects on Webequie First Nation resulting from Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects may include:

- Unequal access to education and training opportunities for Indigenous women and girls. Without proactive measures to address structural and caregiving barriers, Indigenous women and girls may be unable to participate equitably in the education and training programs associated with the Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects. Family responsibilities—particularly childcare and eldercare—often fall disproportionately on women and girls, limiting their ability to attend training programs that require travel, overnight stays, or irregular hours (CRIAW, 2014; Bond & Quinlan, 2018). The absence of childcare options

within Webequie First Nation may further reduce their participation. As a result, education and training benefits may be inequitably distributed, reinforcing pre-existing gender gaps in qualifications and access to employment (see **Section 3.4**);

- Indigenous women may face unequal access to employment opportunities due to systemic and project-specific barriers. The construction and operation phases of the Eagle's Nest Mine and Big Daddy and Black Horse projects are likely to create employment primarily in male-dominated sectors (e.g., mining, construction, transportation), where women—particularly Indigenous women—remain underrepresented. Without targeted hiring, mentorship, and gender-responsive workplace policies, Indigenous women may be excluded from these opportunities due to a combination of limited prior experience, educational barriers, caregiving responsibilities, and potential risks to their safety (Dalseg et al., 2018). Furthermore, lack of on-site or community-based supports such as childcare, flexible scheduling, and culturally safe work environments may constrain their ability to secure and maintain employment. These overlapping barriers could make it harder for Indigenous women to benefit from new jobs created by the project and may continue existing patterns of inequality in the workforce (see **Section 3.5**);
- Increased vulnerability to unwanted visitors associated with construction and operation workforces at Eagle's Nest Mine and the Big Daddy and Black Horse projects. During construction of the mining developments, camps will be located in the Ring of Fire area near the eastern terminus of the WSR. The presence of transient, predominantly male, non-local and/or non-Indigenous workers may increase risks to vulnerable groups due to differing cultural norms and attitudes toward local communities, should employees choose to access the community from the camps while off shift (Mihalus, 2016). These conditions may heighten the risk of harassment, exploitation, or gender-based violence against vulnerable community members;
- Increased opportunities for misspending and associated harms due to both short-term and sustained income from mining employment. During the construction phase, short-term jobs and sudden income gains—particularly for individuals with limited financial literacy or planning experience—may lead to impulsive spending, financial stress, and/or increased risk behaviours (Scott & Lessard, 2002). The camp culture associated with mining construction—marked by long shifts, periods of unstructured downtime, and a “work hard, play hard” mentality—can further contribute to alcohol and drug use, which in turn may increase risks of violence or community disruption (MacKellar et al., 2023). However, these risks may be mitigated through well-managed camps that incorporate clear behavioural expectations, substance use policies, and cross-cultural training to foster respect and minimize harm to local communities;
- During the operations phase, mining jobs are often among the highest-paying employment opportunities in remote regions, which could result in sustained income for select individuals. While this income may provide financial stability for some, without adequate financial planning supports, it may still be mismanaged or contribute to growing social inequities—particularly if wealth is unevenly distributed or creates financial pressure within families and peer groups. These dynamics may lead to social tensions, shifts in household roles, or increased risks of

interpersonal conflict. In some cases, the accumulation of income and assets may also contribute to unsafe situations for Indigenous women and girls, particularly in households where gender-based violence is already a concern. Youth may likewise be affected by changes in family behaviours or household financial stress, and may turn to substance use or other high-risk behaviours to cope in the absence of strong protective supports such as prevention programs, mentorship, and safe recreational spaces;

- Increased access to Webequie First Nation and its traditional territory by non-local and/or non-Indigenous individuals working in the Ring of Fire mining developments during both construction and operation phases—particularly during off-shift periods before or after rotation—may result in increased recreational land use such as hunting and fishing. This could lead to overharvesting, environmental degradation, and increased competition for culturally and nutritionally important resources for Webequie community members. These pressures may disproportionately affect Webequie members who rely on the land and country foods for food security, cultural continuity, and physical and mental well-being, particularly Elders, low-income households, and those who engage in traditional harvesting practices (see **Section 3.7** and **Section 3.9**);
- Increased availability and presence of substances (i.e., drugs and alcohol) in the area to supply mining development workforces during both construction and operation phases. This may lead to greater substance use locally—not only due to substances being brought up to the area to supply mining employees but also due to the potential for some Webequie community members employed by the developments to engage in substance use during their off-shift time, which can contribute to community health and safety challenges. Vulnerable Webequie community members who are more vulnerable to addiction and risk-behaviours may face heightened risks of exposure to substance-related harms (see **Section 3.8** and **Section 3.10**); and
- The combined effects of increased risks to vulnerable groups from transient workforces, heightened substance use and related harms, financial stress and misspending, and environmental pressures on traditional land and food sources may contribute to greater demand for health care, mental health, addiction, and social support services within Webequie First Nation. This increased demand may strain existing resources and highlight the need for culturally appropriate, accessible services that address the complex and intersecting health and social challenges exacerbated by mining developments (see **Section 3.3**).

Given the potential cumulative effects of the WSR with the MFCAR, NRL, Eagle's Nest Mine, and Big Daddy and Black Horse projects near Webequie First Nation and the risk of compounding effects on vulnerable Webequie community members including Indigenous women and girls, LGBTQ2S+ individuals, youth, and Elders, there is value in considering coordinated approaches to mitigation and monitoring. Webequie First Nation and proponents of the reasonably foreseeable developments should consider broader strategies that anticipate long-term pressures and enhance local services for Webequie First Nation. In combination, the application of mitigation and enhancement measures across projects and monitoring can help limit cumulative adverse effects and support the well-being of vulnerable Webequie First Nation community members over time.

The Community Readiness Plan (CRP) offers a key framework for supporting this type of coordinated, long-term planning (Atkins Realis 2025). Developed as a foundational tool for guiding sustainable and inclusive development alongside the WSR Project, the CRP outlines priorities and strategies that are not only specific to the WSR but are also applicable to other developments in the area. In particular, its focus on community safety, inclusion, and long-term capacity for vulnerable populations provides a strong basis for addressing cumulative effects of other reasonably foreseeable developments in the area. Proponents should be guided by the CRP's community-informed strategies to ensure cumulative effects are addressed and opportunities for collaborative planning are maximized. Implementation of the CRP will help address key social and cultural concerns by strengthening community capacity, safety, and infrastructure.

The CRP supports development of policies, programming, and partnerships that aim to ensure Webequie First Nation is not only informed and prepared for Project-related changes but also positioned to lead and benefit from them. Strategies outlined in the CRP aim to reduce risks associated with rapid or uncoordinated growth by increasing control over workforce planning, education and training, health and safety, and community well-being. If fully realized, the CRP's recommendations have the potential to reduce barriers and support equity for vulnerable groups in Webequie First Nation, including Indigenous women and girls, youth, Elders, and individuals living with low income. These recommendations aim to address specific challenges faced by these groups—for example, the creation of a childcare and youth services centre would enable greater participation by Indigenous women and youth in education, training, and employment opportunities; the development of an Elders complex would help prevent displacement, support aging in place, and strengthen intergenerational connections; improved access to mental health and addictions services—including in-community supports and sobriety programs—would respond to urgent health and wellness needs; and community safety measures such as cultural awareness training for workers, harassment and substance use policies, and ongoing engagement with Webequie First Nation would help protect vulnerable individuals and promote a safer, more inclusive environment (Atkins Realis 2025).

If implemented alongside strong monitoring and adaptive management, such measures could help mitigate cumulative adverse effects and promote positive, equitable outcomes for community members who may otherwise face exclusion from project benefits. However, if these initiatives are delayed, underfunded, or not prioritized across all phases of development, the adverse effects of regional development may fall more heavily on those already facing systemic barriers. This includes the risk that Indigenous women and girls, youth, Elders, and LGBTQ2S+ individuals may continue to experience limited access to education, training, employment, care, and culturally safe spaces.

To support equitable outcomes and uphold commitments to GBA+, proponents should prioritize community-defined mitigation and enhancement measures, ensure transparent and ongoing engagement with Webequie First Nation service providers, and commit to adaptive management that can respond to emerging issues. In combination, these actions can help ensure that the benefits of reasonably foreseeable development are shared more equitably and that vulnerable community members are protected from cumulative harm over time.

5.0 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

This section outlines recommended measures for mitigation of potential negative effects and enhancement of benefits related to the WSR Project to protect vulnerable populations in Webequie First Nation and provide them with equal opportunity to benefit from the project. Recommendations for mitigation and enhancement take into consideration the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice, including calls to action on health, justice, culture, and human security (TRCC, 2015; NIMMIWG, 2019b). Mitigation and enhancement measures should be developed collaboratively with Webequie First Nation to ensure the community's perspectives and needs are addressed.

5.1.1 Community Services

As described in **Section 3.3.1**, community services in Webequie, including health care, Elder care, and child care, are largely challenged by the community's remoteness. The Project has the potential to further stress Webequie's health services and disproportionately effect vulnerable groups like Elders, women, and girls through the presence of a non-local workforce (see **Section 3.3.2**).

Measures to protect and enhance Webequie First Nation's community services, particularly for vulnerable groups, against negative influences of the Project may be carried out through commitments by the Proponent. These may include:

- As part of the emergency response planning related to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), emergency response preparedness planning details should be considered. Preparedness planning can identify the potential risks of project construction (e.g., medical incidents, conflicts), assess the likelihood of emergencies, outline clear roles, responsibilities (e.g., camp staff, local authorities), and lines of communication, and define the procedures and strategies to respond to emergencies. Having plans in place to mitigate and respond to emergencies could help to limit potential reliance on local health services in the event of an emergency that cannot be handled onsite (Gibson et al., 2017). As stated in **Section 3.3.1**, Webequie does not have emergency medical services and therefore must rely on transportation out of the community to receive emergency medical care, where delays in transportation can be fatal. Having a plan and resources in place to address any emergencies which may arise during construction can help to avoid any added stress on Webequie's emergency response needs;
- Providing comprehensive in-camp health care services to avoid creating competition in Webequie for health services. Competition for health care could disproportionately affect both Webequie Elders who already struggle to receive care, and women and girls who may experience increased needs for reproductive and sexual health care through interactions with the project workforce (see **Section 3.3.2**). Workplace health services for Project employees are a positive way to support health and well-being both onsite and in-community. Further, in-camp health services, such as onsite paramedics, nurses, or nurse practitioners should be able

to address the primary care needs of the workforce, including Webequie First Nation employees, which could help to ensure Webequie's health care capacity is not strained further for the duration of construction. However, it is important to note that onsite health services could also have unintended consequences if they draw health professionals away from community services (IAAC, 2021);

- Provide healthy living and wellness education programming (e.g., how to maintain a healthy diet, sexual health) to inform and empower employees to lead healthier lifestyle practices, and also serve as preventative measures to minimize unsafe interactions (e.g., unsafe sex) between employees and Webequie community members (e.g., women). Workplace wellness programs can help meet different health needs of different subgroups of employees (IAAC, 2021) and help to safe guard vulnerable populations in the community;
- Establish an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) to offer support to employees and their families seeking health services. The EFAP could help offer a broader scope of health services to employees than what is available in-camp, where guidance is coordinated with offsite services (e.g., clinics in southern urban centres such as Thunder Bay). The EFAP should be culturally aware and relevant to best support Indigenous employees of the project (Nelson, 2012). See **Section 5.1.7** for more information on an EFAP to support individuals with mental health and addictions;
- Establish a liaison(s) to work with the camp and community to monitor and provide support/guidance for health concerns, including mental health, addictions, or physical health, as they arise (Gibson et al., 2017). The liaison(s) should be a community member, such as an Elder or counsellor, who Webequie members know and trust to ensure individuals feel comfortable interacting with them when a concern arises. Having mechanisms in place for individuals to share their health concerns (e.g., anonymous reporting system) is also critical to keeping a safe and healthy community, as some Webequie community members, particularly women and girls, can fear judgement and stigmatization which prevents them from wanting to seek services (see **Section 3.3.2**). Thus the location of such services is an important consideration and should aim to maintain people's confidentiality. Further to this, the liaison(s) should be trained in confidentiality and cultural sensitivity to help establish a safe space for people seeking supports; and
- Providing Webequie with funding to establish a culturally aware and relevant childcare and drop-in centre could help alleviate the barriers that prevent Webequie members from participating in project employment opportunities (see **Section 3.3.1**). Lack of childcare disproportionately affects women and lone parents, preventing them from fully participating in the workforce. Supporting childcare in the community will help to support equity in Webequie and diversity among the workforce (see also **Section 5.1.3** for recommendation on considering childcare responsibilities in employment).

5.1.2 Education and Training

As described in **Section 3.5.1**, the present skill set and educational attainment of the Webequie labour force is not well-positioned to take advantage of Project-related employment

opportunities, particularly professional, scientific, and technical positions. Education and training opportunities are limited in the community (see **Section 3.4.1**). The need to leave the community in order to pursue further education and training after high school presents particular barriers for women and youth, who often face familial responsibilities which prevent them from pursuing opportunities away from home, unmanageable costs associated with living away from home while studying/training, and/or culture shock moving to southern, urban centres (see **Section 3.4.1**).

Where proponents often focus more narrowly on providing opportunities to meet the project-related demand for labour, a more holistic approach is recommended for Webequie First Nation to support future cumulative opportunities. Supporting underrepresented groups like women and youth to pursue education and training is critical to Webequie's capacity to take advantage of Project-related employment opportunities and reap the social and economic benefits of the Project. This type of support also helps to ensure the sustainability of community member employment, by providing them with the knowledge and skills to pursue employment opportunities beyond the Project, such as resource development in the Ring of Fire. For example, the resources sector is trending away from a demand for low-skill labour (i.e., jobs requiring little to no advanced education/training) and toward Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) skill sets (CCAB, 2019; Government of Canada, 2023f). There is a need to engage Indigenous women and girls in STEM to meet emerging labour market demand (CCAB, 2019). Thus, post-secondary education and training of Webequie members in scientific and technical fields can be advantageous for both the Project and future employment. Similarly, there are benefits to supporting education and training relative to careers in the public and para-public sectors (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a; Abele & Delic, 2014), which may result in more readily transferable skills than those available during construction and operation.

Webequie First Nation lacks the capacity to provide local training to community members. As such, measures to enhance the education and training of Webequie First Nation members, particularly underrepresented groups like youth and women, and their employability on the Project may be carried out through commitments by the Proponent. These may include:

- Partnering with training programs like KKETS and Matawa First Nations (see **Section 3.4.1**) to help Webequie members who did not complete high school obtain their high school equivalent and pursue skilled training for Project-related employment. Types of training available through these partnerships may include drilling, line cutting, heavy equipment mechanic, millwrights, heavy equipment operators, and remote camp cooks (SNC-Lavalin, 2022a). Facilitating in-community training when possible would help reduce barriers to participation for Webequie women and youth. Feasibility to provide in-community training should be assessed and considered alongside measures that may help to reduce barriers for education and training, such as determining what sorts of supports are necessary to enable students receiving training outside the community;
- Planning beyond the immediate needs of the project and aiming to develop scholarships and partnerships with colleges and universities, such as Lakehead University, could be beneficial for Webequie First Nation members, including youth and women, to take on more specialized

roles in the Project that can only be obtained through post-secondary education, such as natural and applied sciences, business, and finance (see **Section 1.1.2** for workforce requirements and **Section 3.4.1 Education and Training**). Education on reserves can be insufficient in preparing First Nation youth for post-secondary education, leaving them at an academic disadvantage (ICT, 2023). Therefore, consideration of additional supports to prepare and support youth for continuing education should be considered;

- Opportunities for diverse groups, such as women and youth, to be employed in higher-skilled jobs through provision of on-reserve and on-the-job training (e.g., trades apprenticeships, surveyors, road safety auditors, and heavy equipment operators). The majority (70%) of youth participants, aged 18 to 30, of the Aboriginal Youth Employment and Training (AYET) Survey agreed that employment training programs would help them prepare to enter the workforce, however over 50% agreed that it was difficult to know what programs were available and 55% agreed there were not enough employment training programs available to them (NWAC, 2015b); and
- Pre-employment training to help prepare underrepresented Webequie members (i.e., youth, women) for the Project workforce, particularly individuals who have not previously been employed or worked in a formal position (NWAC, 2015a). This might include supporting the completion of basic workplace certifications, such as First Aid training and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training, learning time management skills and tools, understanding employment standards and rights, and other fundamental employment and life skills.

5.1.3 Employment and Economy

Measures to enhance employment and economic opportunities for Webequie First Nation members and mitigate adverse effects of the Project might include the following Proponent commitments.

Supporting Opportunities for Diversity

Indigenous people, particularly men, are employed in the natural resources sector in higher numbers than the general Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2017b; 2018). Indigenous women, and female youth in particular, have a higher level of post-secondary completion rates (FNIGC, 2016), but report barriers to employment in the natural resources sector (NWAC, 2015b). Similarly, construction workforces are predominantly composed of men and present various barriers to female participation. As described in **Section 3.5.1**, Indigenous women in Webequie face barriers to employment that include gender norms, familial responsibilities and lack of childcare options, discrimination, and risks to their personal safety (Dalseg et al., 2018). Additionally, Indigenous women may face lack of work experience and lack of appropriate skill sets or education in order to take advantage of Project-related employment opportunities (NWAC, 2015b).

Lack of work experience is a greater barrier for Indigenous women than men (Statistics Canada, 2018). Work experience is also a major barrier for Indigenous youth. Nearly 75% of Indigenous

youth AYET Survey participants agreed that lack of specific work experience prevents them from becoming employed (NWAC, 2015b). As described in **Section 3.5.1**, the present skill set and education of the Webequie labour force is not well-positioned to take advantage of Project-related employment.

Recommended measures may be taken by the Proponent to help underrepresented Webequie groups overcome various barriers to employment and increase diversity in the Project workforce while supporting the sustainability of Webequie members beyond the Project. These include:

- Procurement policies for the recruitment, development, and retention of underrepresented groups of Webequie in the Project. This may include setting Mandatory Minimum Indigenous Requirements in order to hit targets for employment of specific groups like women and youth (see **Section 3.5.1**) (CCAB, 2021). Deliberate efforts to collaborate with Webequie First Nation to recruit, develop, and retain underrepresented groups in the Project workforce, such as those outlined below, are critical for reducing barriers to participation and supporting the social and economic well-being of Webequie and vulnerable community members;
- Creation and implementation of workplace policies and programs, including a diversity and inclusion strategy, codes of conduct, workplace safety programs, and cultural training programs (e.g., Indigenous Awareness Training) (PDAC, n.d.). Barriers and deterrents for both Indigenous women and youth to find and keep a job can include unsafe work environments (e.g., lateral violence, gender-based violence) and prejudice in the workplace (see **Section 3.5.1** and **Section 3.8.1**) (NWAC, 2015b). Establishing policies and programs such as Indigenous Awareness Training and zero-tolerance policies on racism and violence in the workplace can help to provide a safer, more understanding work environment for Indigenous employees and encourage potential Indigenous employees (ICT, 2013);
- Support for developing job-hunting skills. Only 37% of First Nations youth participants of the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education, and Employment Survey said they'd received full support in three critical job-hunting skill areas: writing a resume, writing a cover letter, and preparing for a job interview (FNIGC, 2016). Providing programming that assists youth and other underrepresented groups in gaining the necessary skills to gain employment may help in reducing barriers to their Project-related employment;
- Supporting full-time paid employment of underrepresented groups (i.e., youth and women) through opportunities such as job shadowing, mentorship programs, and paid internships to improve employment outcomes, such as Indigenous women as mentors to junior female employees (Gibson et al., 2017; NWAC, 2015b). Lack of full-time paid employment such as contract work, short term employment and temporary positions, and unpaid internships, is a barrier to employment for vulnerable groups, particularly youth (NWAC, 2015b);
- To the extent practicable, ensuring working shifts and hours consider childcare responsibilities to help remove barriers to employment for women (see **Section 3.5.1**) (Gibson et al., 2017; NWAC, 2015a);

- Policies supporting flexibility in work schedule and/or opportunities for leave for Indigenous employees in order to support important cultural practices, such as harvesting which may allow them to continue to participate in the traditional economy (i.e., hunting, trapping, fishing); and
- Screening of employees during hiring process for suitability for shift work as well as educating potential employees on shift work and its potential effects on way of life (see **Section 3.5.2** and **Section 3.9.2**). Providing career counselling and financial management training to help individuals both throughout and beyond the Project can particularly help those individuals who may not have been employed before and/or had disposable income.

Procurement Policies for Local and Indigenous-Owned Businesses

Indigenous procurement improves the well-being of Indigenous peoples and plays a key role in closing the economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (CCAB, 2021). Building business relationships through sustainable and meaningful participation of local and Indigenous-owned businesses supports the process of reconciliation by acknowledging the rights of Webequie as the hosting community (Mines Canada, 2024). The procurement of goods and services from local and Indigenous-owned businesses is critical for economic development in the community, as goods and services compose the largest flow of finances from a project to a host. Procurement of local and Indigenous businesses also helps build their capacity and competitiveness for sustainability into the future, creating benefits for the community, including employment of community members.

Procurement policies for Indigenous-owned businesses can be daunting for some Indigenous owners, such as those that are new (Government of Canada, 2024). Ensuring procurement policies create a safe and inviting environment for local and Indigenous businesses to participate and grow is critical for their success.

Recommended measures that may be taken by the Proponent to procure local and Indigenous businesses for the Project include:

- Provide advanced notice of procurement opportunities (e.g., public announcements, advertisements) and establish clear and equitable certification processes for local and Indigenous businesses (Mines Canada, 2024; CCAB 2021). This could include providing a clear definition and requirements of local and Indigenous businesses and/or asking Webequie First Nation to define eligibility criteria for their businesses, maintaining a list of qualified businesses, increasing the time to submit bids, and reducing technical requirements in order to reduce barriers for Indigenous business participation and encourage new Indigenous business owners (ISC, 2019);
- Procurement policies for joint ventures with Indigenous-owned entities. Joint ventures can benefit Indigenous businesses by providing the financial and human resources support that may be required to carry out a contract that they otherwise may not be capable of participating in (Mines Canada, 2024). However, for Indigenous partners to benefit, Indigenous ownership (i.e., at least 51%) and retention of majority gross profit

margin by the Indigenous partner must be evident and monitored (ISC, 2019; CCAB, 2021).

- Set-aside procurement, whereby certain contracts are set aside for local and Indigenous businesses to guarantee procurement opportunities by limiting competition (Mines Canada, 2024; OPO, 2023). Due to the limited number of existing businesses in Webequie, set-aside procurement may be conditional as it is uncertain whether local and Indigenous businesses have the capacity to fulfill the contract (OPO, 2023); and
- Provide options for scalable contracts and training. Providing scalable contracts and options for training to develop skills can reduce barriers to participation and help build capacity of local and Indigenous businesses to increase opportunities with the Project as well as support their sustainability beyond the Project (CCAB, 2021; ISC, 2019).

5.1.4 Housing and Accommodation

As described in **Section 3.6.1**, Webequie First Nation faces a lack of available houses, poor housing conditions, and overcrowding. These housing challenges particularly effect unhoused individuals, individuals who are precariously housed (e.g., couch surfing, living in temporary accommodations like motels), and youth, and further effect Webequie's ability to procure certain services and regular staffing such as health care providers and teachers (see **Section 3.6.1**). Should Webequie members currently residing off-reserve choose to move back to Webequie First Nation to take part in employment opportunities with the project, these housing challenges could be exacerbated (see **Section 3.6.2**). As noted in **Section 1.1.1**, construction employees will reside in temporary construction camps for the duration of their rotation. A commitment by the Proponent to require that all non-local employees, including non-local Webequie members, reside in the camps for the duration of construction may help to prevent additional pressures on Webequie housing and mitigate the associated effects on vulnerable groups.

5.1.5 Community Safety and Emergency Services

As described in **Section 3.8.1**, community safety and emergency services in Webequie are challenged by issues including the past and present harms of colonialism, mental health and addictions, and lateral and family violence. The Project has the potential to worsen these challenges through the presence of a non-local workforce and construction camps. Interactions between the non-local workforce and residents of Webequie may have disproportionate negative impacts on Indigenous women, girls, and youth (see **Section 3.8.2**).

Measures to protect Webequie First Nation members, particularly underrepresented groups, against negative interactions with the non-local workforce may be carried out through commitments by the Proponent. These may include:

- Developing workplace policies and training for people employed on the Project (both during construction and operation) regarding Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2+ individuals' safety (e.g., sexual harassment, sex trafficking) that are clearly communicated and enforced to all employees at all levels. Policies and educational opportunities to address hyper-masculine culture, such as teaching employees about privilege based on gender, ethnicity, and class,

could help to counteract the values and attitudes that lead to violence against women (Gibson et al., 2017). As noted in **Section 5.1.3**, creation and implementation of workplace policies and programs, such as codes of conduct and cultural training, may help to establish a better-informed workforce and help protect vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous women, girls, and youth, from unsafe interactions with non-locals. It is critical that policies include real consequences for racist, harassment, and violent behaviors (IAAC, 2021);

- Provide education to all employees on the types and signs of violence and abusive relationships, as well as the negative impacts that industrial camps can have on First Nations communities (Gibson et al., 2017);
- Provide a grievance mechanism for community concerns, inclusive of concerns regarding racism, sexism, gender-based violence, and other issues (Gibson et al., 2017);
- Establish local Webequie members as Community Liaison Officers as part of the Project workforce during construction to bridge the needs of the community and the Project, including the non-local workforce. Establishing positions for Webequie members to work as liaison officers could serve multiple purposes, including sharing the most recent information of Project activities and opportunities (e.g., employment), along with acting as a first point of contact if sensitive issues arise between the Project and either Webequie members employed by the Project, or Webequie members and the community more broadly. Community Liaison Officers would be trained and positioned to help deescalate issues that may arise between local Project employees and non-local employees before other interventions may be needed. This mitigation is recommended in part due to some distrust of community members of external parties and the imposition of colonialism, inclusive of organizations such as the police (SNC Lavalin, 2022a; BCFNJC, n.d.). To be effective, these positions would ideally be filled by trusted members of the community, with possibility of women or Elders to be prioritized in hiring; and
- Establish policies around drugs and alcohol. Policies may include dry camps or regulated and monitored consumption of alcohol, supports for seeking substance use treatment, and encouragement for seeking substance use treatment such as ensuring employees who are successful in their treatment and recovery have a job to return to (Gibson et al., 2017).

Introduction of an all-season road which will provide increased access beyond the community presents transportation safety issues for Webequie community members, particularly for Webequie youth as a large number do not have their driver's license or regular access to a vehicle (see **Section 3.8.2**). Measures to mitigate the risks of unsafe transportation, such as hitch hiking and driving without a license, may be carried out through commitments by the Proponent. These may include:

- Provide education to employees on road safety, including the dangers of impaired driving and hitchhiking; and
- Partner with KKETS to provide driver's education and licensing in-community. As mentioned in **Section 5.1.2**, a partnership with KKETS could help to remove further barriers for Webequie members who do not possess their drivers' license. Lack of a driver's license remains a barrier

for remote and Indigenous communities and presents significant safety issues, as licensing largely occurs in urban centres (e.g., Thunder Bay) that can be far from one's local community. In the past, KKETS has partnered with local employment planning councils in Ontario to offer in-community driver's testing for remote communities such as Webequie (NSWPB, 2017). Providing Webequie members, particularly youth, with the opportunity to obtain their driver's license could help to prevent unsafe driving and accidents on the all-season road.

These Proponent commitments may be considered for their inclusion in the Community Readiness Plan (CRP) to ensure their monitoring by the Community Well-Being and Safety, and Emergency Services Sub-working Group, and changes are adapted to as needed. Monitoring the efficacy of these mitigation measures should include data collection and regular reporting on both workplace and community grievances and safety issues that arise throughout the Project phases, particularly during the construction phase. It is important to note that because crime and violence data is unavailable at the Webequie community level, alternative ways to collect this information for monitoring purposes should be considered. Monitoring can help to inform necessary adaptations to maintain the well-being and safety of Webequie.

5.1.6 Culture and Community Cohesion

As described in **Section 3.9.1**, culture and community cohesion in Webequie are challenged by issues including the past and present harms of colonialism, influences of technology and urban popular culture on youth, and inconsistent community events and programs. The Project has the potential to further challenge Webequie's culture and cohesion through the presence of a non-local workforce (see **Section 3.9.2**).

Measures to protect Webequie First Nation's culture and cohesion, particularly for vulnerable groups, against negative influences of the Project may be carried out through commitments by the Proponent. These may include:

- Coordinating events which bring together Project employees and the community to promote sense of place (Gibson et al., 2017). As noted in **Section 3.0**, non-local individuals working in temporary construction camps often lack connection to the host community, which can result in employees carrying out behaviours that they otherwise would not in their home communities. This lack of connection can lead to negative interactions between other Project employees and community members. Hosting events such as barbecues and family days can facilitate connections between Project employees and residents of Webequie, providing non-local employees with a sense of place and accountability which may deter them from participating in negative behaviours; and
- Providing culturally relevant training and counselling supports for Indigenous employees while working on a rotational basis and the associated extended periods away from home, on how to foster and maintain healthy families and relationships (Gibson et al., 2017; Eckford & Wagg, 2014).

5.1.7 Mental Health and Addictions

As described in **Section 3.10.1**, mental health and addictions effect some Webequie residents, with youth, LGBTQ2+ individuals, and women and girls being particularly vulnerable. The long-lasting trauma of colonization continues to influence the mental health of Indigenous peoples and can contribute to the use of drugs and alcohol as a form of coping. The Project, through the presence of a transient workforce, has the potential to negatively impact mental health and addictions among Webequie residents, particularly vulnerable groups (see **Section 3.10.2**).

Measures to protect Webequie First Nation residents, particularly vulnerable groups, against negative influences of the Project on mental health and addictions may be carried out through commitments by the Proponent. These may include (see also **Section 5.1.5** for recommendations on drug and alcohol use):

- Providing education to employees on mental health, substance use, and addiction (Gibsons et al., 2017); this form of educational programming could be part of the greater health and wellness programming recommended in **Section 5.1.1** to help employees understand the nature of substance use and addiction and find alternative ways of coping with trauma and stress. Information on accessing mental health and addictions services could also be provided to employees in their benefits packages at the outset of employment (Gibson et al., 2017);
- As noted in **Section 5.1.1**, establish an EFAP to offer support to employees and their families when dealing with work and mental health issues. A confidential and well-communicated EFAP could help employees and their families receive guidance and understanding when facing challenges such as mental health and addictions. The EFAP could be aligned with remote mental health services to bridge the gap in care if these services cannot be offered onsite alongside other incamp primary health services;
- Establish a sobriety program for employees onsite who are living with addictions to invest in employee wellness (Gibson et al., 2017). A sobriety program can help individuals to support one another and reduce stigmas around alcohol and drug addiction. It is critical that employees are made to feel safe and are reassured that their employment will not be risked by engaging in the program;
- As noted in **Section 5.1.5**, developing policies and training around Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2+ individuals' safety (e.g., sexual harassment, sex trafficking) may help to protect these vulnerable groups from gender-based violence and associated impacts on the mental health and addictions of victims of violence (see **Section 3.10.2**); and
- As noted in **Section 5.1.3**, developing policies, to the extent practicable, that support flexibility in work schedules and/or opportunities for leave for Indigenous employees to support their participation cultural practices (i.e., hunting, fishing). As noted in **Section 3.10.2**, rotational work schedules and the associated decrease in time available for Indigenous employees to participate in their culture can negatively impact their mental health. Being on the land, i.e., land-based healing, can help individuals to reconnect with their cultural identity and community (Webequie First Nation, 2021).

6.0 MONITORING

Establishment of a monitoring program can help determine if socio-economic effects on vulnerable populations in Webequie First Nation are as predicted through GBA+, whether or not mitigation and enhancement measures are effective, and if additional actions are required. Follow-up should use GBA+ to collect data and assess outcomes set out in the monitoring plan relative to the indicators described in **Section 3.0**. Monitoring of Project effects on vulnerable populations should be an on-going process involving Webequie First Nation.

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