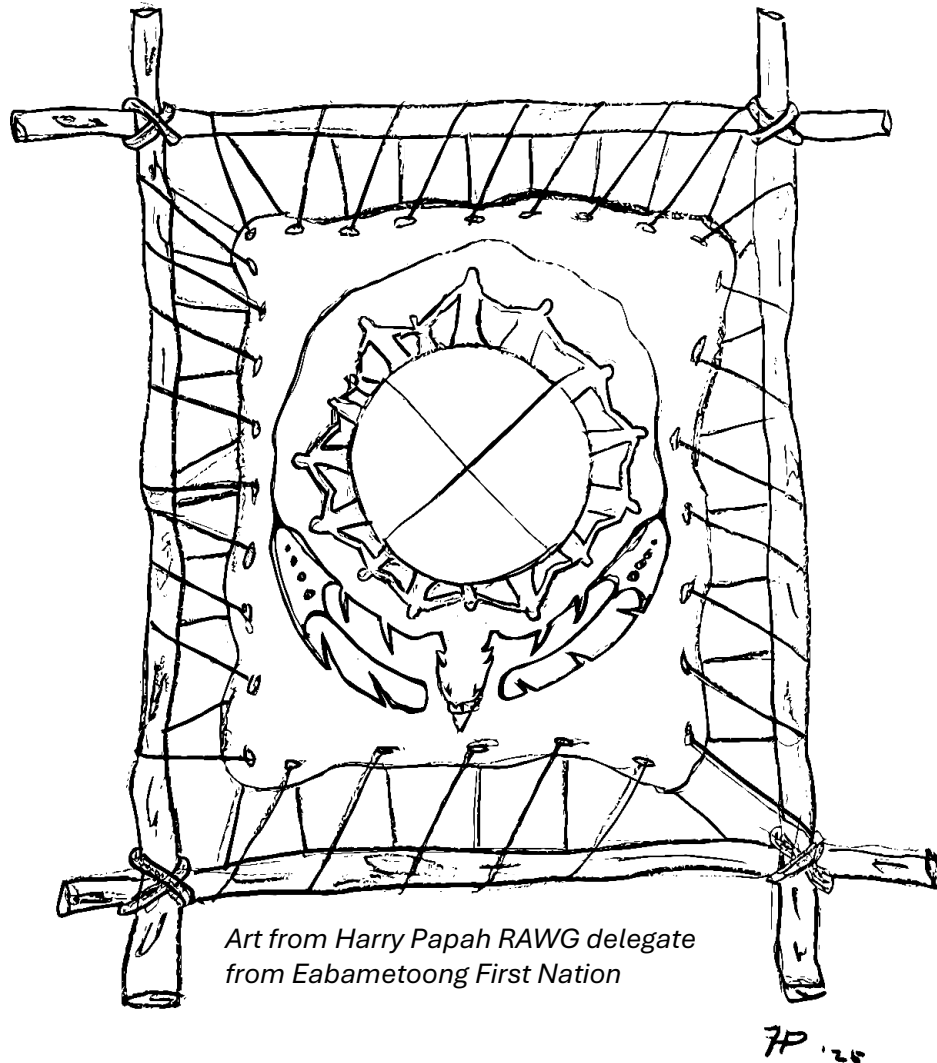


Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area

Participation Plan

June 2025



Art from Harry Papah RAWG delegate
from Eabametoong First Nation

If you can imagine a hide where we sit in formation like a stretching board. The framework is where we all have a part where we stretch that hide together. If one doesn't do their part, the hide is not what we want to be when everyone is doing their part. At the end of the day that hide wouldn't be stretched, and everyone would be disappointed where that hide wasn't stretched properly. We as Indigenous people, we analogize in that format, and we come from that lens."

– Brian Nakogee, RAWG member's teaching on Participation Plan discussions.

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1. Introduction

Context and Purpose

In February 2020, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (Minister) announced that a regional assessment (RA) is to be undertaken in the area centered on the Ring of Fire critical and other mineral deposits in Northern Ontario. The regional assessment applies to an area described as the Ring of Fire, also known as Kawana 'bi 'kag by many First Nations, and to the traditional territories of the First Nation Partners who may be impacted by development in the Ring of Fire and surrounding area, and who hold and exercise Aboriginal and Treaty rights protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. On January 20, 2023, a co-led RA process was launched between the Government of Canada, nine Matawa member First Nations, five Mushkegowuk member First Nations and Weenusk First Nation. This included establishing a Working Group with representation from 15 First Nation Partners and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC). The First Nation Partners include: Aroland First Nation, Attawapiskat First Nation, Constance Lake First Nation, Eabametoong First Nation, Fort Albany First Nation, Ginoogaming First Nation, Kashechewan First Nation, Long Lake #58 First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Missanabie Cree First Nation, Moose Cree First Nation, Neskantaga First Nation, Nibinamik First Nation, Webequie First Nation and Weenusk First Nation. Matawa and Mushkegowuk Councils are also active members of the Working Group providing administrative, logistical and technical support.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire were approved by both First Nation Partners and the Minister on January 20, 2025. According to the TOR, a Working Group has been established to carry out the Regional Assessment. This group includes community members from all First Nation Partners and representatives from IAAC. The members possess diverse expertise or experience relevant to conducting regional assessments, as well as knowledge of Indigenous and First Nations contexts, including the specific communities and customs of the First Nation Partners.

The purpose of the Regional Assessment is to provide information on key priorities of importance to the First Nation Partners and the Government of Canada in the assessment area and provide an analysis of the potential positive and negative effects, including cumulative and interactive effects, due to possible development activities throughout the assessment area. The Regional Assessment will also identify and provide recommendations on how the potential cumulative and other effects may best be managed to avoid adverse consequences, enhance positive ones and how (and by what governance body or bodies) the follow-up steps would be determined and initiated.

For more information on the Regional Assessment or to view the information and comments received, visit the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry website (the Internet Site) at <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80468?culture=en-CA>.

Working Group Mandate and Commitments

The following Principles pertaining to participation guide the Regional Assessment. As stated in the TOR, the Regional Assessment will:

- Be collaborative, co-led and undertaken in an interdisciplinary and holistic approach that uses both Indigenous knowledge systems and western science. This process will be driven by the First Nation Partners' communities along with the guidance of the IAAC. The combining of traditional values and teachings, along with western perspectives, will enrich the processes and give understanding of community processes.
- Ensure that both assessment processes and outcomes are shared transparently, making participation in the assessment and use of the assessment results accessible, while being respectful of the confidentiality of certain information.
- Maximize opportunities for meaningful participation by Indigenous Peoples and communities with interests, rights and values within the area of concern, as well as the public in general, this includes experts, non-governmental organizations and any other interest groups.

Further to these Principles, section 10 of the TOR stated that:

- The First Nation Partners and IAAC will recognize the importance of the participation of public and Indigenous Peoples in the assessment process and provide them with the opportunity to participate in that process and the information they need in order to be able to participate in a meaningful way.
- To ensure that Indigenous Peoples and organizations, the public, government and non-government organizations are provided with opportunities to participate meaningfully in the Regional Assessment, the Working Group will develop and implement a Participation Plan. This plan will emphasize that this is a transparent and open process and as such will include opportunities for their participation to contribute to the conduct of the Regional Assessment.
- The Participation Plan will include procedures for handling confidential information, liaison with Expert Supports, and for developing and communicating timely and consistent key messages to Indigenous Peoples and communities and the public about the Regional Assessment.

- Once completed, the Participation Plan will be posted to the Internet Site and made available to First Nation Partner communities, and updated regularly by the Working Group, to ensure that participants are aware of planned participation approaches and upcoming activities.
- Communication material that is posted to the Internet Site will be provided in both French and English [as well as in Cree, Ojibway and Oji-Cree as appropriate].

In accordance with the TOR, this Participation Plan outlines the approach of the Working Group to allow for Indigenous Peoples and organizations, the public, government and non-government organizations to participate meaningfully in the Regional Assessment. This Participation Plan does not preclude the 15 First Nation Partners to use other approaches to engagement with their own community members, as is deemed appropriate.

This Participation Plan is flexible and does not preclude the Working Group from making changes to the approaches described in it to accommodate changes that may occur during the assessment.

For additional information on meaningful public participation, please refer to the [Framework: Public Participation under the *Impact Assessment Act*](#) and the [Guidance: Public Participation under the *Impact Assessment Act*](#).

2. Objectives of Indigenous and Public Participation

The Participation Plan was developed through engagement during the Planning phase and outlines the various ways Indigenous Peoples and/or the public can participate in the Conduct phase of the Regional Assessment. The following objectives reflect the views heard during the Planning phase:

- Indigenous Peoples and members of the public who wish to participate in the Regional Assessment have the opportunity to do so in an informed manner, with the necessary information;
- Ensuring there are opportunities for Indigenous Peoples who wish to share Indigenous Knowledge in a manner deemed appropriate by the knowledge holder(s).
 - It is understood that Indigenous knowledge is holistic and based in the cultures and worldviews of Indigenous Peoples, which is built up through generations of living in close contact with the land.
 - Knowledge shared in the context of this Regional Assessment may include but is not limited to potential impacts on environmental, health, social, cultural and economic conditions and on Indigenous Rights and interests, or

any other cultural considerations and customs that should be considered when conducting the Regional Assessment;

- Treat Indigenous Knowledge equally with western science throughout the Regional Assessment;
- Honor protocols for sharing and using Indigenous Knowledge;
- Engaging Indigenous Peoples and the public in a way that removes barriers to ensure full participation of all demographics;
- Ensuring that participation opportunities commence from the outset and continue on a regular basis, at key stages of the process;
- Indigenous Peoples and the public review and comment on a draft version of the Final Report developed by IAAC;
- The Working Group stays informed of concerns raised by Indigenous Peoples and the public; and
- Views shared by Indigenous Peoples and the public throughout the process are documented and inform the contents of the Interim and Final Report.

Note: The Working Group can amend this Participation Plan to include other objectives for engagement with Indigenous Peoples and the public based on comments received during the conduct of the Regional Assessment.

3. Identification of Participants

The appended list includes Indigenous Peoples, organizations and other stakeholders identified by the Working Group or who have expressed an interest in participating in the Regional Assessment. The list has been informed by the following:

- Comments submitted during the first public comment period
- Expressions of interest in the Regional Assessment
- Indigenous Peoples or organizations who are active in the assessment area and may have an interest in the process and the Regional Assessment

The Working Group will communicate with participants through the use of a *distribution list*. Contacts in the distribution list will receive key updates and notices about the Regional Assessment during the Conduct phase. If you or your organization would like to be added to the distribution list, please contact us directly at this email address: regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca. Individual names and private information will not be published.

Note: The Working Group can amend this Participation Plan to include participants, not included individuals' names, based on comments received during the conduct of the Regional Assessment.

4. Participation Tools

The Working Group has identified a series of potential tools to ensure meaningful participation opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and the public through the Conduct phase, including the following:

- A Regional Assessment-specific email address to contact the Working Group via IAAC: regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca;
- Offering virtual or in-person information sessions at key stages of the process.
 - If Indigenous Peoples or the public wish to organize gatherings to share information relevant to the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire area, supports can be made available by contacting the inbox (regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca);
- Availability of funding under the Participant Funding Program to support the public in participating in the Regional Assessment process;
- Public notices on the Internet Site: [Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area](#);
- "Submit a comment" tool on the Internet Site;
- Social media updates (e.g., IAAC's X (formerly Twitter) feed: @IAAC_AEIC #RingOfFire) about the Regional Assessment process, announcements of public participation opportunities, and public funding opportunities;
- Availability of an Information Sharing Platform for publicly available data, analyses, and maps;
- Information or technical sessions on specific topics; and
- Informative emails with key messages sent to those on the distribution list created for the Regional Assessment.

At any time during the Conduct phase, participants are encouraged to contact the inbox (regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca) or submit a comment on the Internet Site to let the Working Group know of any:

- Views about the communication tools listed above.
- Preferences or suggestions for new tools to facilitate your participation.
- Any cultural, economic, technical, linguistic or other accessibility barriers that may restrict or prevent you, your community or your organization from participating in the process for this Regional Assessment.

Note: The Working Group can amend this Participation Plan to include more participation tools and engagement approaches based on comments received during the conduct of the Regional Assessment.

5. Participation Activities and Approach

Objectives of the Phase	Expected Activities ¹	Time Frame ²	Participation Tools
Phase 1: Planning			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support understanding of the Regional Assessment and increase the awareness of Indigenous Peoples and the public of the Regional Assessment process and opportunities to participate. Provide an opportunity for participants to apply for funding to support participation during the Planning phase. Obtain comments and feedback on the draft TOR during the Planning phase. Notify Indigenous Peoples and the public of key steps in the process such as the comment period on the draft TOR. 	The Working Group invited Indigenous Peoples and the public to a first public comment period to review and provide comments on the draft TOR.	From September 4, 2024, to October 14, 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notices on the Internet Site and through social media. Online commenting period. Virtual information and technical sessions. Emails to the distribution list.
	IAAC provided financial assistance during the Planning phase to support participation.	May 23, 2023	
	The Working Group held virtual information and technical sessions in both official languages.	September 26, 2024, and October 3, 2024.	
	Comments received during the public comment period on the draft TOR helped finalize the TOR and inform the Conduct phase, and were posted to the Internet Site.	From September 4, 2024, to October 14, 2024.	
Phase 2: Conduct			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness among Indigenous Peoples and the public about the regional assessment process and how to participate in a meaningful way. Provide an opportunity for Indigenous Peoples and the public to apply for 	IAAC will inform Indigenous Peoples and the public of the availability of funding to support public participation in the Conduct phase. Indigenous Peoples and the public are encouraged to contact the Participant Funding Program for information (See Section 7 for contact information).	Announcement of funding availability on June 19, 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online engagement period Notices on the Internet Site, social media, and other means as determined

¹ The Working Group can amend this Participation Plan to include more activities to enhance transparency and conduct public engagement during the assessment.

² On March 20, 2025, the Working Group completed the Maajitao/Majitata (Workplan) for the Conduct Phase, which included general time limits for the tasks for complete the Regional Assessment: [Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire area - Conduct Phase Workplan - Maajitao/Majitata](#).

<p>funding to support participation during the Conduct phase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an opportunity for Indigenous Peoples and the public to apply and support the Working Group as Expert Supports. • Encourage Indigenous Peoples and the public to share information with the Working Group. • Providing publicly available information gathered in the form of a shared electronic platform. • Engage Indigenous Peoples and the public by giving them the opportunity to participate and comment on a draft version of the Final Report (IAAC-led contents only). • Inform Indigenous Peoples and the public of the response of the Minister of Environment. 	<p>IAAC, on behalf of the Working Group, will post a Call for Expert Supports on the Internet Site and communicate it via an email to the distribution list, a Public Notice, and a Media Release targeting relevant media.</p>	<p>The Call for Expert Supports launched on March 24, 2025 and closes on April 17, 2025.</p>	<p>by the Working Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person and/or virtual presentations. • Emails to the distribution list. • Information Sharing Platform. • Translation of the Final Report into Inini mowin (Cree), Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) and Oji-Cree.
	<p>IAAC, on behalf of the Working Group, will hold information sessions for Indigenous Peoples and the public on ongoing activities related to the Regional Assessment.</p>	<p>Ongoing, as required.</p>	
	<p>IAAC, on behalf of the Working Group, will post a Call for Information and Data on the Internet Site and share it via the distribution list.</p> <p>The intent of the Call for Information and Data is to support the Working Group to gather information relevant to the assessment, such as baseline information analyses and modelling relevant to potential development in the assessment area.</p> <p>Participants may also use this opportunity to identify information and data gaps in the assessment area that should be addressed on the context of the regional assessment, as outlined in the TOR.</p>	<p>The Call for Information and Data will follow the close of the Call for Expert Supports.</p>	
	<p>IAAC, on behalf of the Working Group, will make available to Indigenous Peoples and the public an Information Sharing Platform for display and use of publicly available information and data (e.g. a geospatial tool, story maps, etc.)</p>	<p>No later than January 20, 2026</p>	
	<p>Updates on the Regional Assessment process will be provided by email to participants on the distribution list.</p>	<p>Ongoing, as required.</p>	

	<p>IAAC, on behalf of the Working Group, will post a draft version of the Final Report contents developed by IAAC, including potential recommendations on the Internet Site.</p> <p>IAAC will seek comments from Indigenous Peoples and the public on this document.</p>	<p>Comment period of a minimum of 30 days will begin following the posting of the draft version of the Final Report on the Internet Site.</p>	
	<p>IAAC, on behalf of the Working Group, will hold virtual sessions on the draft version of the Final Report and potential recommendations (IAAC-led contents only).</p>	<p>Following the posting of the draft version of the Final Report and potential recommendations.</p>	
	<p>IAAC, on behalf of the Working Group, will post the Final Report and recommendations on the Internet Site.</p>	<p>Following the comment period and the consideration of comments by the Working Group.</p>	
	<p>IAAC will post any response provided by the Minister of Environment.</p>	<p>Following the Minister's response.</p>	

6. Participant Funding

Funding is available to support the participation of Indigenous Peoples and the public in the process. For information on activities eligible for funding, or to apply for funding, please refer to the IAAC Funding Programs information at <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/public-participation-impact-assessments/funding-programs.html>.

To contact the Participant Funding Program:

Telephone: 1-866-582-1884

Email: fp-paf@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

7. Submit Comments and Confidentiality

You can submit comments at any time during the regional assessment process by using the "Submit a comment" function on the Internet Site's Regional Assessment page (<https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80468>). Attachments can also be uploaded using this function.

If you have any difficulties with the submission process, please contact the Working Group, using the contact information below. Comments may also be submitted by email to regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

Comments and other documents received by the Working Group will be part of the Regional Assessment file and will be posted on the Internet Site, with the exception of comments or documents that are deemed confidential or subject to a non-disclosure clause. IAAC's [Submission Policy](#) determines what information can be shared publicly and what information should remain private. For more information on how we protect your privacy, please refer to IAAC's [Privacy Notice](#). If you do not want your comment to be posted on the Registry website, please contact IAAC before submitting your comment.

Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence is protected from disclosure under section 119 of the *Impact Assessment Act*, except if written consent is provided, or if the information is publicly available. The Working Group will also adopt the established standards for the management of Indigenous data (e.g. the First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) or standards adopted by an Indigenous group).

Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence could be shared with certain parties if disclosure is necessary for procedural fairness and natural justice, or for use in legal proceedings. This ensures that interested persons have a fair opportunity to participate in processes that would likely affect their interests, and that they have access to all the

necessary information and evidence relied on by a decision-maker. Disclosure, if necessary, will be discussed with the knowledge holders upon receipt of the information or upon request for disclosure. The Working Group may adopt more detailed procedures for managing sensitive or confidential information as necessary and will make those public.

Additional guidance on considering Indigenous Knowledge under the *Impact Assessment Act*, including for regional assessments, is available here:

- Guidance: [Indigenous Knowledge under the *Impact Assessment Act*](#)
- [Indigenous Knowledge Policy Framework for Project Reviews and Regulatory Decisions](#)
- [Protecting Confidential Indigenous Knowledge under the *Impact Assessment Act*](#)

If you have questions or need information, please contact:

Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

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160 Elgin Street

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For couriers and delivery services, use this postal code: K2P 2P7

Tel.: 613-957-0700

Fax: 613-957-0862

Toll free number: 1-866-582-1884

Email: regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

Appendix

Organizations identified as participants³:

- Indigenous Peoples and/or Organizations
 - Assembly of First Nations (AFN)
 - Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point First Nation)
 - Friends of Attawapiskat River
 - Grand Council Treaty 3
 - Indigenous Climate Action
 - Jackfish First Métis Nation
 - Métis Nation of Ontario
 - Minodahmun Development LP
 - Red Sky Métis Independent Nation

- Public organizations
 - Canadian Environmental Law Association
 - Crane Institute for Sustainability
 - Ducks Unlimited
 - East Coast Environmental Law Association
 - EcoJustice
 - Eco Strategy
 - First Nation of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute
 - Forest Stewardship Council
 - Legal Advocates for Nature's Defence
 - Mining Association of Canada
 - MiningWatch Canada
 - National Healing Forest Initiative
 - Northwatch
 - Osgoode Environmental Justice and Sustainability Clinic
 - School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo
 - Sierra Club of Canada - ON Chapter
 - West Coast Environmental Law Association
 - Wildlife Conservation Society Canada
 - Wildlands League
 - World Wildlife Fund Canada

³ Individual names not included.