

WAASIGAN TRANSMISSION LINE NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024



Latest Project News

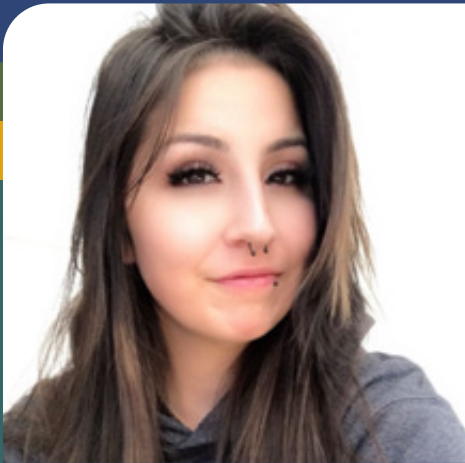
On November 17, 2023, Hydro One submitted the Final Environmental Assessment to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), with the full support of all nine First Nation partners. MECP invited the public, Indigenous communities, and other government agencies to share their comments on the report. Since January 2024, Hydro One has provided responses to all the comments received and continues to work with Indigenous communities and various government agencies to address any outstanding concerns. We are hopeful to receive approval of the Final Environmental Assessment and notice to proceed to construction for fall 2024.

In recent months, work has begun to advance the commitments made in the Final Environmental Assessment report. The priorities have been the development of the Environmental Protection Plan and an Indigenous Monitoring Program. Hydro One, Valard and all nine First Nation partners, including professional advisors from EnCompass, Maawandoon and North Vista, have been focused on drafting these plans, sharing approaches, and planning for joint workshops. Thank you to everyone who is bringing their knowledge and expertise to these working tables. We look forward to sharing draft plans for both the Environmental Protection Plan and the Indigenous Monitoring Program in April 2024.

About

The Waasigan Transmission Line Project is a proposed new double-circuit 230 kV transmission line from Thunder Bay to Atikokan, and a new single-circuit 230 KV transmission line from Atikokan to Dryden. To learn more about the Project, please visit: HydroOne.com/Waasigan.

HydroOne.com/Waasigan



Community Engagement Coordinator Spotlight

Say hello to Summer Bergman!

Summer was born in Sioux Lookout and grew up in Thunder Bay. After graduating from Confederation College, she moved back to her home community, Ojibway Nation of Saugeen. She has worked with other First Nation communities, building homes and structures on reserves, setting up unity gatherings and maintaining water. She enjoys being outdoors and spending quality time with her family and two dogs. She says she is looking forward to the traveling and new experiences that will come with being the Community Engagement Coordinator of the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen.

Welcome to the team, Summer!



GLP Workshop

Protection Committee Meeting

Gwayakocchigewin Limited Partnership (GLP) represents 8 of the First Nations partnering on the Project. In February, the GLP hosted a Protection Committee workshop in Thunder Bay. The GLP Protection Committee provides oversight on environmental matters in order to protect the lands, waters, and cultural values potentially impacted by the Waasigan Transmission Line Project. Hydro One, Valard, and GLP project advisors, were invited to participate in the workshop to talk about the Environmental Protection Plan, the Traditional Land and Resource Use Protection Plan, the Indigenous Monitoring Program, the upcoming Archaeology Program, Ceremonies, as well as community resource planning. The Project is benefiting greatly from these collaborative planning forums. ●

Community Visits & Open Houses

At the start of the year, Hydro One enjoyed several community visits to meet with Chiefs & Councils, and host Open Houses about the Waasigan Project.

- In January, Hydro One's Indigenous Relations Director, Matthew Jackson came to the north and met with several of the partner Nations including Eagle Lake First Nation, Fort William First Nation, Lac des Milles Lacs First Nation, Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation, and Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation. Miigwech to every Nation for making time for the Hydro One visits.
- The Waasigan Project team also attended two Community Open Houses: one in Eagle Lake First Nation and another in Couchiching First Nation. The team was pleased to meet newly elected Chief Bernadette Wabange and her Council in Eagle Lake First Nation, and to engage with the many community members who came out to hear an update on the Project. We are also grateful to Couchiching First Nation for their support in organizing a community meeting and supper.
- Some of the Hydro One Indigenous Relations team had the opportunity to participate in Cultural Training in Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation this winter. Miigwech to Waasigan Community Engagement Coordinator, Bert Cantin for organizing the training.
- At the end of February, the Waasigan Indigenous Relations team met with the newly elected Chief Shane Whitecrow and Council for Seine River First Nation in Thunder Bay. ●





Understanding the Traditional Land and Resource Use Protection Plan and Indigenous Monitoring Plan

The **Traditional Land and Resource Use Protection Plan** is meant to address many of the issues and concerns identified by the affected Indigenous Nations throughout the EA process.

The plan commits to protecting Indigenous rights, values and interests as they relate to the project through the use of both Western Science and Indigenous Knowledge. In addition to the protection of the land, water, and air, the plan will also focus on the protection of cultural values such as grave sites, spiritual sites, gathering sites, harvesting areas/activities, traditional plants & medicines, and more. Wood management will also be important as the communities have made it clear that where possible in the clearing activities, wood must not be wasted.

Gwayakocchigewin advisors, the Protection Committee, and Community Engagement Coordinators are developing an Indigenous Monitoring Plan for the GLP Nations. The goal of this plan is to ensure compliance on the guiding principles, community protocols, and environmental commitments for the Project.

First Nations monitors will be employed by communities, and be trained by GLP in order to understand the construction activities, environmental commitments, and protection measures. They will be provided the required equipment and resources, and work closely with Hydro One's field staff to ensure compliance at the workfronts. Monitoring activities will take place before, during, and after construction. The plan will include clear steps for reporting concerns and addressing issues.

In developing the plan, GLP has been drawing on the experience of Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation's monitoring program and will continue to seek their mentorship in the monitoring program activities. ●



2024 Archaeology Season is Coming

Despite a late start to the season, the teams managed to complete the Stage 2 assessment on almost 25% of the Phase 1 Project footprint. A highlight was a significant find outside of Thunder Bay that will now require a Stage 3 archaeological assessment. Hydro One will work with Fort William First Nation to continue work in the area in order to determine the size of the site, evaluate the cultural heritage significance, and adhere to community protocols related to the artifacts.

Planning for the 2024 season is already underway with teams preparing to continue the Stage 2 work throughout Phase 1 (Thunder Bay to Atikokan) of the Project, after which they will move towards Phase 2 (Atikokan to Dryden).

Woodland Heritage is looking for Indigenous community members interested in training to become a field technician to complete archaeological work for the Waasigan Transmission Line Archaeology program. This training program is designed to offer an introduction in archaeological survey so that participants can apply to companies for the Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment along the line. Those who successfully complete the training will receive a certificate from the Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS) and will be eligible to apply for employment purposes. The training course will be offered in May 2024 in Thunder Bay with employment expected to last from May until fall 2024, or when the work is completed.

Individuals interested in training and employment opportunities should contact:

Dave Norris, PhD, Woodland Heritage Northwest
E: dave.norris@woodlandheritage.com
T: (807) 632-9893 ●

WAASIGAN TRANSMISSION LINE

2024 Look Ahead

CEREMONIES

ARCHAEOLOGY

MONITORING

TRAINING

CONSTRUCTION
START

Project Schedule

As this year advances, so does the Project Schedule. Here is a high-level summary of the target Project Schedule – although like everything else, these target dates are subject to change pending the necessary regulatory approvals.

Activity	Target Date
Construction Readiness Period	Fall 2024
Continue Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment Phase 1	Spring 2024
Initiate Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment Phase 2	2024
Leave to Construct Approval	Spring/Summer 2024
Environmental Assessment Approval	Summer 2024
Start of Training Activities	Spring 2024
Construction Permitting	Summer/Fall 2024
Phase 1 Construction Start	Summer/Fall 2024
Phase 1 in Service	Fall 2025
Phase 2 in Service	Fall 2027

From Valard & Chi Mino Ozhitowin

Valard Construction is the construction contractor for the Waasigan Transmission Line and has been hired by Hydro One to work with Indigenous communities on a variety of economic initiatives including training, employment, and business opportunities.

Those interested in learning more about Indigenous economic opportunities should contact: Blaine Collett | Senior Director – Community & Indigenous Relations. Email: bcollett@quantaservices.com

Chi Mino Ozhitowin (CMO) is subcontracted by Valard to provide services to seven of the participating First Nation communities. This year, the CMO team has visited the seven communities and continues to build connections to maximize avenues for participation by those communities and others in the Waasigan project. CMO’s business department has recently signed various Joint Venture partnerships, notably with Indigenous-owned businesses, ensuring economic opportunities are shared equitably by the seven Nations. Additionally, Chi Mino Ozhitowin’s focus on Cultural Awareness Training development aligns with its goals to honoring community voices and fostering respect for diverse perspectives. As CMO continues its outreach efforts through attendance at career fairs, local conferences, and community visits, it is excited to announce upcoming recruitment initiatives and training opportunities.

To learn more about CMO and dates for recruitment and training opportunities, please visit: www.cmo-fn.ca

