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# Draft Omushkego Wahkohtowin Conservation Plan

March 2024





## Disclaimer

This document was created by Mushkegowuk Council Lands and Resources Department in collaboration and with advice from Omushkego experts, through consultation with Nations, and building on prior Nations' work.

The purpose of this document is to explain the draft conservation plan, and to get input from each participating Nation. The Mushkegowuk Council is seeking to ensure your vision is incorporated in the future final plan. You play a vital role in determining the future of Omushkego lands and waters for generations to come.

This conservation plan seeks to assert and to affirm our Indigenous and Treaty rights and will not derogate from these rights; including the rights to hunt, fish, trap, and gather medicine in our homelands.







# Table of Contents

Letter From The Grand Chief ..... 3

Summary ..... 7

Background ..... 13

Vision ..... 15

Framework For Omushkego Wahkohtowin..... 16

    Stream 1: Protected Areas ..... 17

    Stream 2: Governance and Management ..... 21

    Stream 3: Ecosystem Health..... 25

    Stream 4: Community Livelihoods and Wellbeing ..... 31

Glossary and Abbreviations ..... 37

APPENDIX 1. Species-At-Risk In The Omushkego Homelands. 38

APPENDIX 2. Stream 1: Strategies, Milestones and Activities... 40

APPENDIX 3. Stream 2: Strategies, Milestones and Activities... 42

APPENDIX 4. Stream 3: Strategies, Milestones and Activities... 46

APPENDIX 5. Stream 4: Strategies, Milestones and Activities... 52



Clare Wark, WWF



## Letter From The Grand Chief

We the Omushkego draw strength from the land and waters and from our ancestors. As the Grand Chief of the Omushkego, I ask that you join me in honouring our elders when they speak of unity.

We the Omushkego, people of the lands and rivers draining into western Weeneebeg and Washaybeyoh, have always lived here and will always live here.

We live on these lands and waters, and we know that as Omushkego we share the past and we will share the future. We know that our ancestors lived and worked and travelled and harvested and cared for the land together with each other and that their cooperation and mutual assistance benefitted all.

We also see that today our people do not enjoy the same levels of material and economic wellbeing as the surrounding society. We know that if we want to protect our lands and waters and get the benefits of economic development and wellbeing for our communities, we must remember the cooperation that our Omushkego forebearers practised with each other, and we must continue that cooperation, and we must increase it.

We see that there are difficulties in our communities that are not being addressed because the voice of the united Omushkego people is not being heard. We see that our Treaty with the people of Ontario and Canada, an expression of our rights, is not being fully

respected, and that we must speak to defend our rights. We know that as Omushkego people, we share interests, and we share a vision which can only be protected and grown if we increase our coordination and further develop our ability to speak and be heard effectively.

We know that our ancestors practised values that helped them be stewards of the lands and waters and that helped them economically and politically in their lives, and we believe that these values are as valid today as in the past. To be able to survive, our ancestors had to plan on how to use the land together. They would agree on where to travel, harvest animals, live in different seasons and what animals or areas needed to be protected so that they could remain healthy. When Omushkego respected the land, everyone benefitted. When our ancestors showed respect for the geese and the moose, and for the animals and plants of the land and the fish in the water, they were spiritually strengthened, and the animals and the plants and the fish were there for future needs.

We believe that these Omushkego values are as important and as powerful today as they were then. We believe that these values are the basis for Omushkego unity.

We believe that in unity lies strength. When we create our own businesses and trade organizations, we benefit from trust and understanding. When we work together to respect the land, the waters,



## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



the animals, the fish, and the plants, we are spiritually stronger, and our future is more secure.

When each member of our communities can speak and be heard, whether Elder or youth or adult, their wisdom is shared, and all benefit. When the Chiefs and leaders of our communities work together, each leader's efforts are strengthened, and all Omushkego benefit. When our Chiefs and leaders speak with one voice in our dealings with other governments and other peoples, the Omushkego benefit and the lands benefit.

Therefore, we as Chiefs of our communities, and as joint leaders of the Omushkego people, recognize the present, existing fundamental unity of the Omushkego people, and will continue to work toward increasing that unity in

practice, based on the values that our people inherited from our ancestors.

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin is a step that we can take to confront the challenges that our communities and our lands face, leading to a harmonious balance between economic development and protecting our natural environment. Together we will have a future with healthy communities and a healthy environment.

We the Omushkego will use this opportunity to reclaim our rights to govern, to manage, and to be custodians of the land, waters, and resources. We will use this opportunity to build a better future for the land, for ourselves, and for generations to come. We are responsible for our land and water and the living things we find upon them and by our united actions we demonstrate this.









# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



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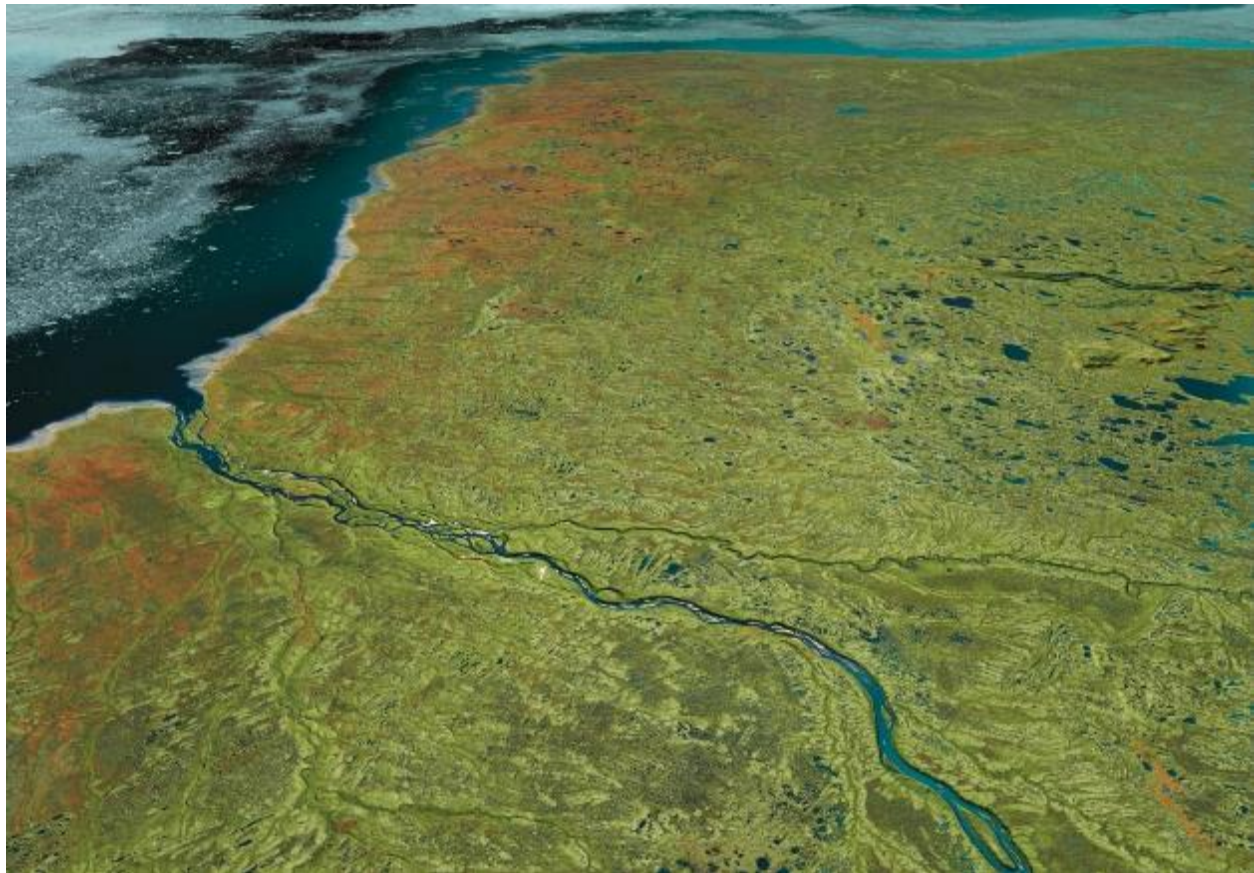
## Summary

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin Conservation Plan is written to provide people, especially Omushkego and adjacent Nations and communities, with information on community conservation planning for our lands and waters. This plan was made in response to many years of direction from Omushkego elders and leaders, including through Mamowihitowin (Annual Assembly) Resolutions to ensure the Omushkego continue to be responsible stewards of our lands and waters.

The report has three parts. The first part is a plain language summary. The second part describes the plan in more detail. The third part contains tables showing species at risk in our territories, and tables that show the steps and actions to implement the conservation plan.

### Omushkego Wahkohtowin

The term “Omushkego” means “the strong people” and is the name that Cree in the region use to describe themselves. “Wahkohtowin” refers to correct relationships between people and the natural world.







## Conservation Planning

The Omushkego (Cree) people have lived on the lands and waters beside Washaybeyoh (Hudson Bay) and Weeneebeg (James Bay) since time immemorial. Omushkego Wahkohtowin is a vision to take care of our homelands. Our people and communities will fulfil our role as custodians and guardians of our lands. We will do this by using conservation tools available to us.

## Conservation Planning For The Bays

The first tool we are using for conserving the water in the bays is the creation of a National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA). The area being discussed is highlighted in dark blue on the map in Figure 1. It covers the waters of southwestern Washaybeyoh and western Weeneebeg. It is a way to protect the waters in the bays and will be created in partnership with Parks Canada. There are other marine protected areas like this in Canada. The Haida on the west coast worked with Parks Canada to create Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and NMCA. Inuit in Nunavut worked with Parks Canada to create the Tallurutiup Imanga NMCA. These marine protected areas are co-managed by the Indigenous peoples and Parks Canada.

Mushkegowuk Council began the process of the creation of an NMCA with Parks Canada in 2021 by developing a Feasibility Study and collecting Omushkego knowledge of the marine and coastal area. The Mushkegowuk Council is now negotiating the establishment of the NMCA. A critical part of this negotiation is for Mushkegowuk Council to engage with and have the support of all the participating Nations. We will continue to engage with these Nations throughout the negotiation process to ensure that people understand what is being negotiated, and that Mushkegowuk Council takes direction from them.

## Conservation Planning on Land

NMCAs cover salt waters, but we are also looking for conservation measures to include the shorelines and estuaries, where the rivers connect with the waters of the bays. Mushkegowuk Council, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Ontario will need to work together to expand the protection provided by the NMCA by adjusting the boundaries inland beyond the high tide line.

Another tool that can help us cover conservation planning for the land is called *Project Finance for Permanence* (PFP). PFP is financial tool used world-

### Who Are The Project Nations?

The Project Nations are those whose leadership agreed to taking part in the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Project Finance for Permanence (PFP). It includes the seven Nations represented by the Mushkegowuk Council (Attawapiskat First Nation, Chapleau Cree First Nation, Fort Albany First Nation, Kashechewan First Nation, Missanabie Cree First Nation, Moose Cree First Nation, Taykwa Tagamou Nation) plus the two Nations that have agreed to be represented by the Mushkegowuk Council for the purpose of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP (Weenusk First Nation and Fort Severn First Nation).



## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review

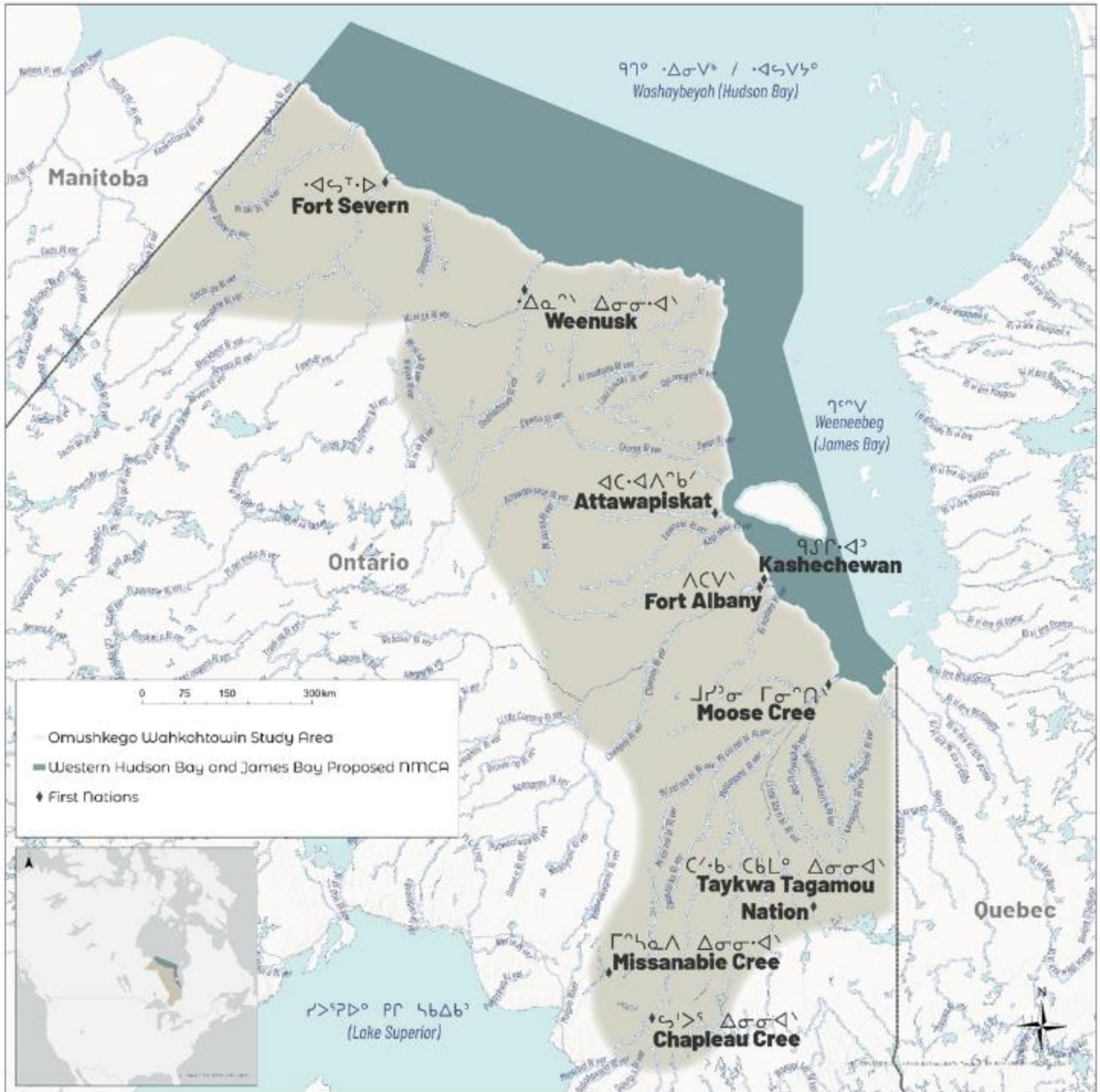


wide to bring together partners, such as governments, Indigenous peoples, local communities, and funders to secure long-term conservation, full and sustained funding, and community benefits. This tool can provide funding for Indigenous-led conservation. The Mushkegowuk Council has embarked on the process of creating the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP, a PFP that will allow Omushkego to fulfil our role as custodians and guardians of our lands (Figure 1). The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP was included in December 2022 as one of four Indigenous-led conservation projects that will receive part of the \$800 million in federal government funding announced for four PFPs in Canada. It is also a partnership with organizations that provide support for conservation. These organizations will add their funding to the government funding. The PFP will provide the time for a participatory planning process with all the Nations.

Having this funding in place is a beginning. One of the next steps is to identify how Omushkego Nations will identify lands for conservation (areas that will be protected from mining, forestry, and hydro development). This will involve land-use planning, a process where Project Nations gather and make decisions about the best uses for their Homelands. These may include wildlife and ecosystem values, cultural values, community well-being, and economic values. Some Nations have collected some of this information and some have developed draft plans. The conservation plan will support completion of land use planning and support participating Nations where needed. The deep knowledge of the communities about our lands and waters will inform and define what happens next.

Working with the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada, we will identify tools suitable to protect the lands identified. These tools will also respect and uphold Indigenous rights and titles. They could include but are not limited to: National Parks, Heritage Sites, Bird and Wildlife Sanctuaries, Provincial Parks, Wilderness Areas, Conservation or Biodiversity Reserves, and Wetland designations. The best mechanisms for protection will be determined by the Nations in collaboration with provincial and federal governments.





**Figure 1.** This map identifies the study area for the land portion of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP (grey), the Nations participating in the PFP and the boundaries for the proposed NMCA (dark blue) in western Weeneebeg and southwestern Washaybeyoh.





### Economic and Cultural Benefits

We know that Omushkego Nations need more than conservation plans – they also need investments. In addition to conservation of our lands and waters: economic and community development are also objectives of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP. The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP will contribute to community initiatives by securing considerable financial resources for creating new local jobs that support conservation work, grow local businesses, and building new structures.

We project that the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP will contribute to the development or creation of:

- More than 200 new jobs made up of about twenty-three full-time and seasonal conservation-related jobs in each participating Nation;
- Conservation staff accommodations in the form of five new housing units per Nation along with additional conservation related infrastructure (land-based monitoring stations, for example);
- A multi-use facility in each of the participating Nations;
- Funds to support new and existing harvester programs, land-based healing/detox programs, cultural knowledge transmission programs, food security initiatives (community gardens and greenhouses, for example), traditional harvesting ethics programs and mentorship programs;
- Boosting start-up funding and operational costs for new and existing small businesses linked to conservation (eco-tourism, for example); and
- Support for the developing a network of cultural and artistic practitioners called the Oshichikesiwuk Nanipek;
- Support for the Omushkego Institute which will contribute to developing Cree curriculum and materials, teacher training for Cree immersion programs, and support for Cree language teachers in Omushkego First Nations schools.

### Climate Benefits

One of the reasons our territories were chosen as a PFP Indigenous-led conservation initiative is that the land is extremely important for preventing and slowing climate change. The peatlands in the northern part of our homelands are the second largest in the world. They store an estimated 30 billion tonnes of carbon. The carbon storage capacity of the peatlands must be protected. Carbon is released when peatlands are disturbed, for example by road building or mining. Stewardship of these lands is our contribution to slowing global temperature increases, which will benefit us, as well as peoples around the world. The boreal forest in the south also contributes to slowing down climate change by storing carbon, purifying the air and water, and regulating the climate.



## Governance

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP envisions an Indigenous-led governance framework that enables Nations to manage the lands, waters, and ocean, and that ensures treaty and inherent rights are protected. We will support full community participation in planning, management, and operations. Omushkego knowledge will play a central role in all conservation planning, management, and operations.

The governance framework will be built based on Nation-to-Nation relationships established by our Treaty. We intend to create an ongoing discussion table to include representatives from participating Nations, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Ontario. At this table we will secure and renew the relationship between Omushkego and governments based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership to advance community development and conservation objectives.

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP will also see the development of a Guardian program in each participating Nation. On the ground, Omushkego Guardians will play an important role. Indigenous Guardians programs are used in Canada and globally as the eyes and ears of the Nations. They ensure ecosystems are protected, cultural and spiritual areas are respected, and rules and regulations are followed. They uphold and enforce traditional and contemporary Indigenous laws, as part of continuing the work of our ancestors in protecting and managing our territories. We will work with and learn from established Guardians programs as we build the future Omushkego Guardians Programs.

## The Work To Be Done

Participating Nations' understanding of this plan, and their continued agreement to participate in it is our first priority. Together, we are laying the building blocks for Omushkego readiness to take jurisdiction and sovereignty over land and water management in our territories. The Omushkego Wahkohtowin Conservation Plan is based on a ten-year implementation period associated with a long-term financing model.





## Background

Omushkego are the original inhabitants of the far north of what is now known as Ontario. The Omushkego (“the people of the land” or “strong people” in English) lived here long before Washaybeyoh and Weeneebeg were called Hudson Bay and James Bay, and we will continue to live here for countless generations to come. The Omushkego Homelands are located on lands to the west and the south of Washaybeyoh (Hudson Bay) and western Weeneebeg (James Bay) and cover almost a third of northern Ontario (see Figure 1). Omushkego Homelands in the south are a landscape of boreal forests, rivers, and lakes. The north has low-lying peatlands, coastline, islands, and marine water. Protecting our lands and waters is critical for the wellbeing of the Omushkego, Ontarians, Canadians, and the world.

Within our homelands is the vast mushkeg of the James Bay-Hudson Bay Lowlands, an intact landscape of peatlands, wetlands, lakes, and rivers. These are the second-largest peatlands in the world and play a key role in stabilizing the global climate by storing an estimated 30 billion tonnes of carbon. The carbon storage capacity of the peatlands must be protected. Carbon is released when peatlands are disturbed, for example, by road building or mining. The southern portion of the Omushkego Homelands lie in the boreal forest of the Canadian Shield and clay belt. While the southern landscape has been changed by settlements, forestry, mining, hydroelectric dams, roads, and agriculture, there remains much to be protected and restored.

Omushkego Wahkohtowin is the Omushkego vision to protect our homelands. Protection will include ecological, economic, and cultural benefits to the Omushkego. By creating new protected and conserved areas, we will ensure that the rich biodiversity and ecological integrity of our homelands is maintained. By protecting the land, we will also be protecting our inherent rights, our treaty rights and establishing a foundation so that our spirituality, culture, and traditions can be passed onto future generations. Conservation of our lands and waters will also ensure that the ecosystems that we have long depended on will remain intact for future generations.

### Wahkohtowin

A term in the Cree language that describes the concept of kinship, or the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living things. It is often used to express the idea of living in harmony with the natural world and with one another, recognizing the importance of relationships and responsibilities in maintaining balance and well-being.

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin is not solely about conservation; economic and community development are also objectives. Following the Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) model, the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP is designed to contribute to the development of local economies and infrastructure by helping to foster sustainable economic activities that are based on community needs. Conservation and development can and should go together for the sake of the health and wellbeing of the land and the communities. The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP has identified funds that will contribute to both conservation *and* economic development.





## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP will contribute to community development by aiming to secure the considerable financial resources that are necessary for creating new local conservation jobs and fostering vital economic and infrastructure developments in the participating Nations.

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin is a building block. It is a step in a process of reclaiming our identity as custodians of the land. It is a step in the process of reclaiming power over how resources get developed on our land. It is a step in the process of creating frameworks for caring for the land that are built using traditional Omushkego values. The Omushkego Wahkohtowin will provide us with the tools and the resources we need to continue the process of building a better future for our children.

We are not alone in this process. There are non-Omushkego individuals and organizations who have stepped forward to help move this process forward. They have done so in a true spirit of reconciliation. They offer their help and expertise based on the belief that the Omushkego have been and will continue to be the custodians of our lands. They help because of the belief that the peoples of Ontario, Canada and of the world will benefit from the reclamation of our identity as caretakers of the Omushkego Aski (“the land of the Omushkego”). A PFP is a conservation and finance tool that brings together key partners around a conservation and development vision, leverages public and private funding, and ensures long-term sustainability.

This Conservation Plan was developed from the vision of our Elders and community members, with support from Mushkegowuk Council. In accordance with Resolutions passed by Mushkegowuk Council and Band Council Resolutions, the Nations partnering under the umbrella of Omushkego Wahkohtowin, include:



Attawapiskat  
First Nation



CHAPLEAU CREE  
FIRST NATION



FORT ALBANY  
FIRST NATION



KASHECHEWAN CREE  
FIRST NATION



Missanable Cree First Nation



Moose Cree  
First Nation



Taykwa Tagamou Nation

Weenusk First Nation



Fort Severn First Nation



Seven of these Nations are members of Mushkegowuk Council and an additional two have agreed to be represented by Mushkegowuk Council for the purpose of Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP.



## Vision

*Omushkego Wahkohtowin: Omushkego Gahgihgeh* (Omushkego Wahkohtowin) is a vision for today and for generations to come. It is a journey of revival, resilience, prosperity, and partnership based on Omushkego values and environmental conservation. The vision and plan will enhance Omushkego well-being, culture, spirituality, and heritage, and protect the lands and waters. We will build and strengthen collaborative partnerships between our Nations, the governments of Ontario and of Canada, as well as non-governmental and philanthropic organizations.

**The goal of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP is to protect the environment and well-being of Omushkego and partnering Nations’ territorial lands and waters, first and foremost for Omushkego Nations, as well as for Ontario, Canada, and the world.**

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP vision emphasizes the interconnections between land, forests, freshwater, marine environments, and economic opportunities. It recognizes our obligations to respect and protect the ecological integrity of *Na-Taski-Nano*: “Mother Earth” or “that which sustains the people.”

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP focuses on community well-being through the maintenance of ecological integrity along with restoration of ecosystems that have been impacted by human and industrial activities. Conservation activities will mitigate the effects of climate change, maintain the region’s rich biodiversity, and support Omushkego harvesting rights, spirituality, culture, and traditions.

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP is based on the belief that everything is connected. The best example of how everything is connected is our rivers. Our river systems serve a vital role as “arteries” that connect all parts of our Homelands, from the many lakes found in the boreal forests in the south to the James Bay and Hudson Bay watersheds and saltwater tidal flats in the north. Many Omushkego refer to themselves as the “people of the river.” From the southernmost Omushkego Nation to the Hudson and James Bay coastal Nations, the rivers connect not only the different landscapes of our Homelands, but the people of our homelands as well. Omushkego culture is like the rivers of our homelands. Our culture flows through all Omushkego and like our rivers, it connects all Omushkego to one another. Our ancestors used the rivers to travel vast distances, from the James Bay coast in the north to the height of land in the south, traversing many landscapes and revealing the interconnectedness of all living things. The rivers connect the land, they connect our culture, they connect the northern and southern Omushkego, they connect us to our ancestors, and they connect us to our traditions. Through our rivers we see how everything is connected.

### Gahgihgeh

Cree word meaning “forever”

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### Na-Taski-Nano

Mother-Earth – who takes care of her children and the homelands of Omushkego Cree.



## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



In many ways, the rivers embody the essential nature of the concept of *Wahkohtowin*. Omushkego *Wahkohtowin* is premised on the integrated wholeness between ecosystems, wildlife, and humans. The rivers reveal the connection between past and present, between north and south, and between mushkeg and forest. All ecosystems are equal and interdependent, and it is important to extend protection to each part of this vast interconnected system. The rivers are sacred and need to be protected. By protecting the rivers, we protect ourselves, we protect our culture, and we protect a better future for generations to come.

We view the protection and restoration of *Na-Taski-Nano* as the foundation for good relationships, for healthy Omushkego, healthy Ontarians, and a healthy Canada. We also see the protection, restoration, and conservation of *Na-Taski-Nano* as the foundation for a sustainable economy for generations to come. Preserving the ecosystems of our homelands will also allow us to work collaboratively with forestry and critical mineral projects through proper planning and sustainable development as our Nations desire.



Gerry McComb





## Framework For Omushkego Wahkohtowin

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP is an Omushkego initiative created and undertaken in partnership with participating Nations, the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, and philanthropic organizations. Through the process of land use and land management planning, we will identify areas for conservation/protection and areas that may be used for resource development. We are laying the building blocks for enhancing Omushkego readiness to reaffirm our jurisdiction and our sovereignty over the management of the lands and waters in our territories.

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin Conservation Plan is based on a ten-year implementation period, coupled with a permanent financing model. We have ten years to prepare to take control of the management of our lands and resources. This Plan serves as the framework for carrying out the vision for Omushkego Wahkohtowin. It is the first of many steps that need to be taken.

The following sections summarize how we will work toward achieving the vision of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP. The framework is centred around four streams that highlight the overarching desired outcomes and will help to guide us in turning the Omushkego vision into reality:

- Stream 1: Create protected and conserved areas to ensure ecological integrity for the preservation of inherent, treaty, and harvesting rights, and spirituality, culture, and traditions;
- Stream 2: Establish Omushkego Wahkohtowin governance and management;
- Stream 3: Care for ecosystem health;
- Stream 4: Economic and cultural development, sustainable livelihoods, and community wellbeing.

These Streams embrace an interconnected and holistic approach to conservation that includes economic community development, while keeping the full vision of Wahkohtowin in mind. The initial implementation period will last 10 years, and a permanent program will continue afterwards to serve future generations and ensure the durable protection of our homelands.





## Stream 1: Create Protected and Conserved Areas That Contribute To Ecological Integrity and Support Inherent, Treaty, and Harvesting Rights, As Well As Spirituality, Culture, and Traditions

Establishing new protected and conserved areas and revisiting the management frameworks of existing protected areas are essential for the long-term ecological integrity of, and the asserting of sovereignty over, the Omushkego homelands. Time is of the essence to ensure the establishment of a connected series of habitats that nourish a diverse range of species (e.g., moose, fish, and geese) that support the Omushkego. In addition, many species-at-risk inhabit the Omushkego Homelands such as caribou, lake sturgeon, wolverine, and red knot (see Appendix 1 for current full list) and face threats due to habitat loss and fragmentation.

This stream has several purposes:

- Create new protected and conserved areas;
- Preserve and restore habitats that are crucial for maintaining biodiversity and ecological integrity at the regional level;
- Safeguard biodiversity and the cultural landscape through an interconnected approach to conservation and protection of terrestrial, forest, freshwater and marine ecosystems;
- Protect our peatlands, as they are critical carbon sinks and serve as a national and global means to reduce and mitigate climate change.

Through the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP, protected and conserved areas will ensure that the cultural and ecological integrity of the Omushkego Homelands is maintained. These protected and conserved areas will be identified by project Nations, will include Indigenous-led governance, and will align with the standards recognized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN is the global authority promoting the conservation of nature and sustainable use of natural resources). This means that new protected and conserved areas will be counted towards Canada's conservation and protected areas targets and will come with continued government investments to ensure the sustainability of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin.

Appendix 2 outlines the strategies, milestones, and activities of Stream 1.





### Goal 1.1 – National Marine Conservation Area Establishment

The National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) is the starting point of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin protected areas vision. The negotiation and establishment of the NMCA in Omushkego Homelands is a pivotal milestone for the Omushkego and for Canada. The 86,000 km<sup>2</sup> area proposed for the first phase of the NMCA represents a significant contribution to Canada's ocean conservation targets and is central to our holistic conservation vision.

The creation of an NMCA also addresses the long-standing desire of Elders to conserve Washaybeyoh and Weeneebeg. For decades, Mushkegowuk Council has heard the calls from our Elders, leaders, and community members to protect these ecologically and culturally significant coasts and marine waters. Mushkegowuk Council began considering a potential NMCA in partnership with Parks Canada in 2021. The first phase, feasibility assessment, was completed in February 2024, following extensive community consultation. This kicks off the establishment phase and process by which the Omushkego will negotiate an establishment agreement with the federal government and continue community engagement.

Under Omushkego Wahkohtowin, Mushkegowuk Council, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Ontario will work together to enhance the protection provided by an NMCA to include the coastal waters from the low tide to high tide line, and the land to an agreed upon distance inland from the coast. This will complete the NMCA and will reflect the cultural and ecological interconnectedness of land, rivers, coastline, estuaries, and ocean.



Maude Durand





## Goal 1.2 – Establishment Of Omushkego Protected and Conserved Areas Network

Core to the Omushkego Wahkohtowin vision is the creation of a network of protected and conserved areas. To achieve this goal, Omushkego Wahkohtowin is adopting a blended approach to conservation which recognizes the dynamic and interdependent nature of ecological, social, and cultural systems. This approach emphasizes the need for diverse protection and conservation measures to address the priorities of each Nation, species, and ecosystem across the Omushkego Homelands. It is an approach that emphasizes the need to protect our Indigenous and Treaty rights.

For biodiversity to thrive, multiple strategies (including habitat restoration, community engagement, and adaptive management) are needed. Omushkego Wahkohtowin will balance human needs with the preservation of natural habitats by creating varying levels of protection and differing land uses.

Mushkegowuk Council (see also Stream 2) will collaborate with the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada to identify legislative and governance tools, suitable for securing the lands identified for protection under the land use planning exercise that will also respect and uphold Indigenous rights and titles. These mechanisms could include, but are not limited to: National Parks, Heritage Sites, Bird and Wildlife Sanctuaries, Provincial Parks, Wilderness Areas, Conservation or Biodiversity Reserves, and Wetland designations. The best mechanism(s) for protection will be determined on a location-by-location basis by the Nation(s) in collaboration with provincial and federal governments.

Mushkegowuk Council and Nations will work with the federal and provincial governments to bring the purpose, management, and operations of existing protected and conserved areas in line with Omushkego values. These negotiations and any subsequent agreements will acknowledge Omushkego contributions to ecological integrity, will provide community benefits, will establish modern co-management practices between equals, and will result in a network that will ensure the health of the land for generations to come.

The process of establishing a network of protected and conserved areas will be transparent and inclusive, incorporating conservation goals identified during the land-use planning process and community input at all stages of the process. The establishment process for the chosen legislative frameworks will include community consultations and endorsement, which will foster a step towards reconciliation and Nation-to-Nation relationship building.





## Stream 2: Establish Omushkego Wahkohtowin Governance and Management

Omushkego Wahkohtowin envisions an Omushkego-led governance framework that enables co-management of the land, waters, and ocean, and ensures treaty and inherent rights are protected. Building an integrated and resilient governance framework will ensure the long-term sustainability of Omushkego Wahkohtowin and enhance the ability of the Omushkego and our partners to achieve conservation and socio-economic goals. The governance of Omushkego Wahkohtowin encompasses the reinforcement of organizational, institutional, and resource capacity that will support the implementation of effective and integrated financing, governance, and management practices. An Indigenous-led governance framework built on Nation-to-Nation relationships is key to ensuring the sustainability of our vision.

Achieving the goal of effective governance will be facilitated by growing Nations' Lands and Resources Department capacity and supporting developing new Lands and Resources Departments. Mushkegowuk Council's Lands and Resources Department's capacity will also be increased for the purpose of supporting Omushkego Nations and delivering region wide initiatives. An Elders Advisory Committee will be established to provide advice to the Mushkegowuk Council and will coordinate the implementation of the conservation plan and support each project Nation's implementation activities. (Goal 2.2)

The Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) is where the conservation finances are kept and managed. It is an independent organization with its own governance structure with representation from funders and Nations. A CTF is independent because it must be a permanent institution that operates independently of political processes and changes. The Omushkego Wahkohtowin CTF operations manual is in development and will describe its governance structure.

Appendix 3 outlines the strategies, milestones, and activities of Stream 2.

### Goal 2.1 – Omushkego Nations' and Mushkegowuk Council Lands and Resources Departments

Omushkego Wahkohtowin seeks to bolster Omushkego Nations' governance and operational capacity for land and water management and create new capacity for protected and conserved areas management. The mandate of Mushkegowuk Council Lands and Resources Department will expand to include regional support for protected and conserved areas, emphasizing the integrity and connectivity of ecosystems, and the alignment of regional and Nation's programs.

Lands and Resources Departments will be enhanced or established in each Nation through hiring and training. These organizations will oversee ecosystem monitoring, restoration, research programs, and will manage protected areas in their traditional territories. A Guardian program will also be developed and/or expanded in each community to support conservation management and monitoring (additional information can be found in Goal 3.1). In addition to enhancing stewardship at the community level,



## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



this approach will provide conservation jobs, bolster capacity, and will be built in a way that ensures sustainability over time.

To ensure full involvement of participating Nations that are not Mushkegowuk Council members, a Wahkohtowin Board of Directors and a Special Forum on Conservation at Mushkegowuk Council's Annual General Assembly will be established. The Wahkohtowin Board of Directors will have the following structure, functions, and decision-making powers:

- Directors from the Nations' Lands and Resources Departments or equivalent from each participating Nations will form the basis of the Board to ensure representation of all participating Nations, along with the Mushkegowuk Council's Director of Lands & Resources, who will provide a regional perspective;
- Responsibility for providing overall direction to Mushkegowuk Council Lands and Resources Department;
- Approve recommendations that are brought to the Council of Chiefs concerning annual conservation plan implementation budgets, strategic planning considerations, and annual conservation work plans;
- Would be positioned above the Director of the Mushkegowuk Council's Lands and Resources Department and would report to the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs at the Special Forum on Conservation (see Figure 2);
- The Board's mandate includes regular reporting to the Mushkegowuk Council's Chief Executive Officer and submission of Annual Reports at the Mushkegowuk Council's Annual General Assembly;
- The Wahkohtowin Board of Directors' powers would be granted by a Resolution of the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs.

The Annual General Assembly's Special Forum on Conservation will be established and granted certain powers by virtue of a Resolution of the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs, which would grant non-Mushkegowuk Chiefs the right to sit in session as voting members of the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs on matters pertaining to the Omushkego Wahkohtowin.



Tessa Pizzale





# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



**Figure 2 A** diagram representing the Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP's management and governance structure, with representation from each participating Nation on the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Board of Directors.



## Goal 2.2 – Community-based Land Use Planning

Recognizing the deep knowledge that the Omushkego have about their lands and waters and the important role of land-use planning in conservation, the completion of land use plans early in the 10-year implementation period is a top priority.

The process of land use planning will balance ecological integrity, cultural integrity, community well-being, and economic values, and build off of prior work done by each Nation. The project Nations will express their unique visions for their lands and waters. Areas will be identified for protection and conservation of ecological and cultural values, and legal or Nation designation will be sought as appropriate. Land use planning will include landscape-level considerations, such as, connectivity, long-term resiliency, downstream effects, and cumulative impacts. An Omushkego-led approach to land-use planning will be used that will meet the requirements of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and further the implementation of Indigenous titles and rights. While this process is underway, the Mushkegowuk Council will seek interim protection for our homelands in order to maintain ecological integrity as well as to ensure Omushkego rights to self-determination over our homelands.

The participating Nations will lead and develop the process for land-use planning in collaboration with the Mushkegowuk Council and Ontario. In a “planning together” approach, the Mushkegowuk Council will provide technical support, facilitate the sharing of knowledge between the Nations and support the harmonization of land use plans for shared territories. Currently, Nations have varying levels of knowledge collection and baseline land-use planning information. Some Nations have developed draft land use plans that need review and updating. By planning together, this conservation plan will support starting new land-use planning processes and expedite completing of existing land use plans.





## Goal 2.3 – Partnerships With Governments For Conservation

The specific nature of the relationship between Omushkego Wahkohtowin and the federal and provincial governments will ultimately depend upon the mechanisms that are used to conserve and protect our lands and waters. This will emerge as a result of negotiation processes with the governments of Canada and Ontario. The primary principle that will guide partnerships with governments is “Indigenous-led” conservation. This means that the Nations are fully involved in all executive, administrative, and operational aspects of conservation decision-making processes as they pertain to the Omushkego Wahkohtowin and management of our natural resources.

The success of Omushkego Wahkohtowin depends upon a whole-of-government approach. We require that the relevant participating departments and agencies in the federal and provincial governments commit to providing technical expertise and funding in support of the protection of lands identified by the Omushkego. In turn, the Omushkego will engage in establishing negotiations aimed at creating new protected and conserved areas as well as the establishment of new protected and conserved areas that will contribute to Canada’s conservation targets. In addition, new protected and conserved areas that are established using federal or provincial mechanisms will be managed collaboratively by the Nations. This includes, but is not limited to, engaging in co-management practices, and developing shared decision-making processes, or, where these are not possible, authority for making decisions will be the responsibility of the Omushkego.

We will work with governments to review and update the purpose and objectives of existing protected areas so that they reflect Omushkego values and interests. The aim is to establish a co-management regime or to devolve responsibility for the management of existing protected areas or groupings of protected areas to the Nations. Where and when the “devolution” of responsibility occurs, it will require the continuation of appropriate conservation program funding.



David Flood





## Stream 3: Care For Ecosystem Health

To ensure conservation objectives are met, it is necessary to strengthen or build activities, programs, and capacities to care for ecosystem health that is Omushkego-led and that incorporates both Omushkego knowledge and Western ways of knowing.

Stream 3 research activities also support Stream 1 by providing information about the lands and waters necessary for identifying potential protected and conserved areas. To ensure the long-term sustainability of our programs, the Omushkego will lead and be full participants in caring for and restoring ecosystem health through stewardship, technical, and scientific capacity-building activities and by building a community-based approach to research and monitoring. We anticipate the Omushkego will become renowned for our contributions and leadership in research and monitoring.

Omushkego culture, traditions, rights, and health are inextricably linked with ecosystem health. The *Ininiwi Pimatisiwin* or Omushkego Cycle of Life will inform our work as part of Stream 3, which aims to weave together ways of knowing (see Figure 3).

Appendix 4 outlines the goals and activities to accomplish Stream 3.

### Ininiwi Pimatisiwin

Omushkego Cycle of Life – it describes six seasons based on the state of land and water, and life cycles of animals and plants that underpin people’s hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering activities and spiritual practices.

The new year begins in sikwan/seegwin (spring) and ends with pipon/pipoon (winter).



Clare Wark, WWF





Figure 3. Ininiwi Pimatisiwin or Omushkego Cycle of Life (see also insert poster)



### Goal 3.1 – Guardians Programs

Caring for ecosystem health requires boots-on-the-ground filled with Omushkego feet in the role of Guardians. Indigenous Guardians programs are used in Canada and globally as the eyes and ears of the Nations. They play a critical role in all aspects of stewardship, ensuring ecosystems and cultural and spiritual resources are protected and that rules and regulations are followed. They uphold and enforce traditional and contemporary Indigenous laws as part of continuing the work of their ancestors in protecting and managing their territories. No two Guardians programs are the same but there are commonalities: patrolling, monitoring and being a presence on the homelands, maintaining and promoting cultural continuity, collecting, and analyzing data, conducting ecosystem restoration operations, implementing resource management plans, ensuring public safety, and upholding Indigenous authority and rights through compliance and enforcement. We will work with and learn from established Guardians programs as we build the future Omushkego Guardians Programs.

We envision that each Nation will have its own functioning Guardians program that is part of its Lands and Resources Department. The work begins at the regional level with completing the Omushkego Guardians Program Strategic Plan, Training Standards Manual, and Junior Guardians Initiative. The planning documents will then help to guide each Omushkego Nation to develop their community-specific Guardians Program Implementation Plan (includes hiring, training, standard operating procedures, standards, and equipment), operational protocols for field work, and a plan for field equipment, storage facilities, and field stations. To provide basic support for community Guardians, a plan for site development and building Guardian accommodations will be developed and accommodations built by Year 10. Each year, community-specific and regional training will occur, and the Guardians will implement their patrol, monitoring, and research operational plans. The Omushkego Guardians will meet annually at the regional level to share information and take part in collective training, and every 2-3 years participate in the National Guardians Meeting. Omushkego conservation laws and codes of ethics, that are based on Omushkego Elders' knowledge and teachings, as well as known Omushkego values, will guide and provide authority for the Guardians' conservation compliance and enforcement programs. In addition, agreements and applicable training will be developed with federal and provincial organizations for designating Guardians under their respective conservation and protected areas legislations.







### Goal 3.2 – Research and Monitoring

The Homelands of the Omushkego look north, following the direction of the river's flow; they are part of the Arctic Watershed. Water dominates the landscape in summer and ice and snow in winter. The land is saturated with countless wetlands, peatlands, lakes, streams, and rivers, all draining northward to Hudson and James Bays. The headwaters are in the Boreal Shield at the height of land just north of Lake Superior and form six major watersheds flowing into the Hudson Bay–James Bay Lowlands: Severn, Winisk, Ekwan, Attawapiskat, Albany, and Moose. All but the Albany and Moose are free-flowing, wilderness rivers with high levels of ecological integrity that are threatened by potential development activities and climate change.

Knowledge, information, and understanding of ecosystems are needed to care for ecosystem health. There are four main area types that will be used to frame research and monitoring within the Omushkego Wahkohtowin: boreal forest; watersheds (fresh water); lowlands (peatlands); and coastal. Each area is affected by three physical forces: permafrost (continuous in the north to no permafrost in the south); climate (temperature, moisture, wind) from coastal to inland; and topography (inland hills to the flat lowlands and coast). This marvelous mix of conditions was created in large part by the region's glacial history. The Laurentide Ice Sheet covered the land with ice 2-3 kilometres thick and, in its melt and retreat, created Hudson Bay, James Bay and the adjacent low-lying peatlands. The coastline continues to rise at a rate of 0.7-1.3 m/century. The landscapes, wetlands, waterbodies, and rivers support a high level of biodiversity and provide critical habitat for millions of migratory shorebirds, ducks, geese, and songbirds, and at least 39 species-at-risk (Appendix 1). The region's diversity and abundance of mammals, birds, fish, and plants has supported the Omushkego since time immemorial and must be protected.

Research and monitoring are needed to maintain ecological integrity that is central to the Omushkego Wahkohtowin vision. The approach includes regional ecosystems assessments, studying climate change impacts, setting community and regional research priorities, and developing a regional ecosystem monitoring framework. These activities and outputs will contribute to developing community ecosystem monitoring programs, which will be a significant part of the Guardians' work. Guardian-led research and monitoring will contribute to tracking the progress of this plan, Omushkego technical and science capacity will be developed so that community members will be the technicians and scientists leading research and monitoring. Collaborations with government, academia, and NGO research scientists will be important to achieving this goal.





## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



A major impact to lands and waters in the region is commercial forestry in the boreal upland ecosystem. Commercial forestry has occurred for more than a century and has significantly affected the forests, lakes, and rivers, as well as displacing Omushkego from our lands. Commercial forestry has also drastically changed forests by using herbicides, road building and clear-cutting. The need to develop ecologically informed forestry and reforestation methods that are in keeping with Omushkego values, resource (e.g., food security) requirements, and access to the land are part of this plan.

Diversion and damming of the tributaries and the main stem of the Moose River and Albany River to facilitate the production of hydroelectric power have long impacted the timing and volume of water flow, fish habitat, and Omushkego communities' travel routes and use of the rivers. Actions for river restoration and mitigation of future dams and diversions will be initiated. Cleanup and remediation of debris and contaminated sites will also take place as part of the overall ecosystem restoration efforts.

Research, monitoring, and protection of the carbon storage capacity of Omushkego Homelands is essential as the consequences of reducing storage capacity are far reaching. Stewardship of this ecosystem benefit is the Omushkego contribution to mitigating global temperature increase.







### Goal 3.3 – Community-based Research and Knowledge Sharing

Community-based research is an approach where projects are driven by community priorities and the community is involved in the entire research process from the questions, proposal writing, analyzing the information, interpreting the results, and taking action based on the research outcomes. Community-based research can be led by a researcher from outside the community or from within the community. Important principles of this approach are:

- It is a cooperative, co-learning and capacity building approach;
- Participants are empowered;
- Ecological and cultural beliefs and values are included;
- The relationship between researcher and community is built on respect, trust, and commitment.

Research and monitoring activities in Omushkego homelands will use this approach and these principles.

Knowledge sharing occurs through community-based research processes and other activities and means (e.g. CreeGeo Hub the Mushkegowuk Geographic information System sharing platform). Knowledge sharing is fundamental to and strengthens Omushkego language and culture. Throughout the implementation of Omushkego Wahkohtowin, knowledge sharing will occur and be based on the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP). Researchers will be required to provide updates and share their results with communities.

To facilitate community-based research and knowledge sharing, infrastructure, and programs will be developed. Community-based multi-purpose conservation centres are envisioned that will include space for gatherings of Elders, youth, hunters, guardians, and researchers, as well as training and teaching. Nations will take control of research by establishing a research review and permitting system that requires community engagement, reporting, and involvement of community members.

Research priorities and the regional monitoring strategy will be developed using a community-based approach. Programs for Elder-youth camps, mentorship, training, and knowledge sharing summits are part of this approach.







## Stream 4: Economic and Cultural Development, Sustainable Livelihoods, and Community Wellbeing

Approximately 15,000 people live within the scope of Omushkego Wahkohtowin. We have a rich culture with deep spiritual connections to the land and waters, and our traditional values and teachings are passed down by Elders.

The relationship between culture and the land is vital for our identity and existence. For thousands of years, we have lived in harmony with the natural world, observing and participating in the ecosystem's balance. This connection is expressed through a history of rich and diverse traditional cultural practices like storytelling, dance, traditional music, clothing, and spiritual ceremonies. Contemporary indigenous artists are also inspired by these values, playing a crucial role in understanding, and articulating our heritage, rights, and the pressing issues of cultural, land, and water conservation. Our artists and cultural practitioners (Oshichikesiwuk) are stewards of our lands. We recognize that our thriving culture is inherently linked to thriving ecosystems. Our goals to strengthen knowledge transmission, invest in mentorship, and land-based healing ensure that this relationship and our identity continues to thrive for generations to come.

Our communities rely on traditional foods and market foods. Traditional harvesting practices strengthen familial and social cohesiveness within communities and provide a source of nutrient-rich food. Our households are over seven times more likely to be food insecure than other Canadian households. Contaminated drinking water impacts six of the nine communities, and we have a housing crisis. While the needs in our communities are significant, through this plan we aim to improve the lives of our people.

Omushkego Wahkohtowin recognizes the interconnection between community, cultural, and ecological health. This stream addresses community needs and priorities that will contribute to achieving conservation objectives. Our goals are to strengthen organizational, institutional and resource capacity for effective and adaptive management and governance at the community and regional levels.

Through Omushkego Wahkohtowin, we will revitalize and strengthen Omushkego land-based and cultural knowledge by ensuring full community participation in planning, management, and operations. We will ensure that traditional knowledge plays a central role in all conservation planning, management, and operations, as well as develop approaches to the interweaving of Indigenous and scientific knowledge and working to improve the well-being of our communities (see Figure 4).

The goals and activities to be accomplished under Stream 4 are outlined in Appendix 5.



**Figure 4.** Community benefits expected through Omushkego Wahkohtowin

### Goal 4.1 – Food Security

The Mushkegowuk Council's Nation Re-Building Initiative's (NRI) Food Security Strategy (FSS) will address the issue of food security as part of Omushkego Wahkohtowin. The NRI FSS is currently focused on some of the following key areas:

- Developing and implementing a Regional Food Strategy;
- Creating a Regional Food Advisory Circle;
- Creating Community Food Coordinator positions in each Nation.

The Omushkego Wahkohtowin will work with the NRI FSS to determine the most efficient and effective use of available funds and capacities. In addition, the following food security programs have been identified by the communities:

- Responsible harvesting by monitoring catch by the community
  - e.g., Elders' gatherings for development of Traditional Harvesting Ethics Program;



- Supplement food security with agriculture
  - e.g., Community gardens, greenhouses, or storage facilities;
- Expand the existing harvester program
  - e.g., Harvester program incremental operations;
- Connect harvesters and artistic/cultural practitioners to ensure sustainable supply of materials and initiate new local economies.



### Goal 4.2 – Community Wellness and Healing Programs

The Mushkegowuk Council's Okimawiwin Minopimatiskiwini Atoshkawikamik Department (OMA) will complete an inventory of land-based healing and land-based detox programs that are in the planning and operational stages of development. This will be followed by a regional, yet Nations-focused, land-based healing and land-based detox needs assessment, which will also explore the potential inclusion of cultural-artistic practices in land-based healing. An analysis and comparison between existing land-based healing and land-based detox programs (including projects that are at both the planning and operational stages of development) and the needs assessment will be used to inform the most efficient and effective distribution of available conservation resources and capacities in support of promoting land-based healing and land-based detox programs in participating Nations.

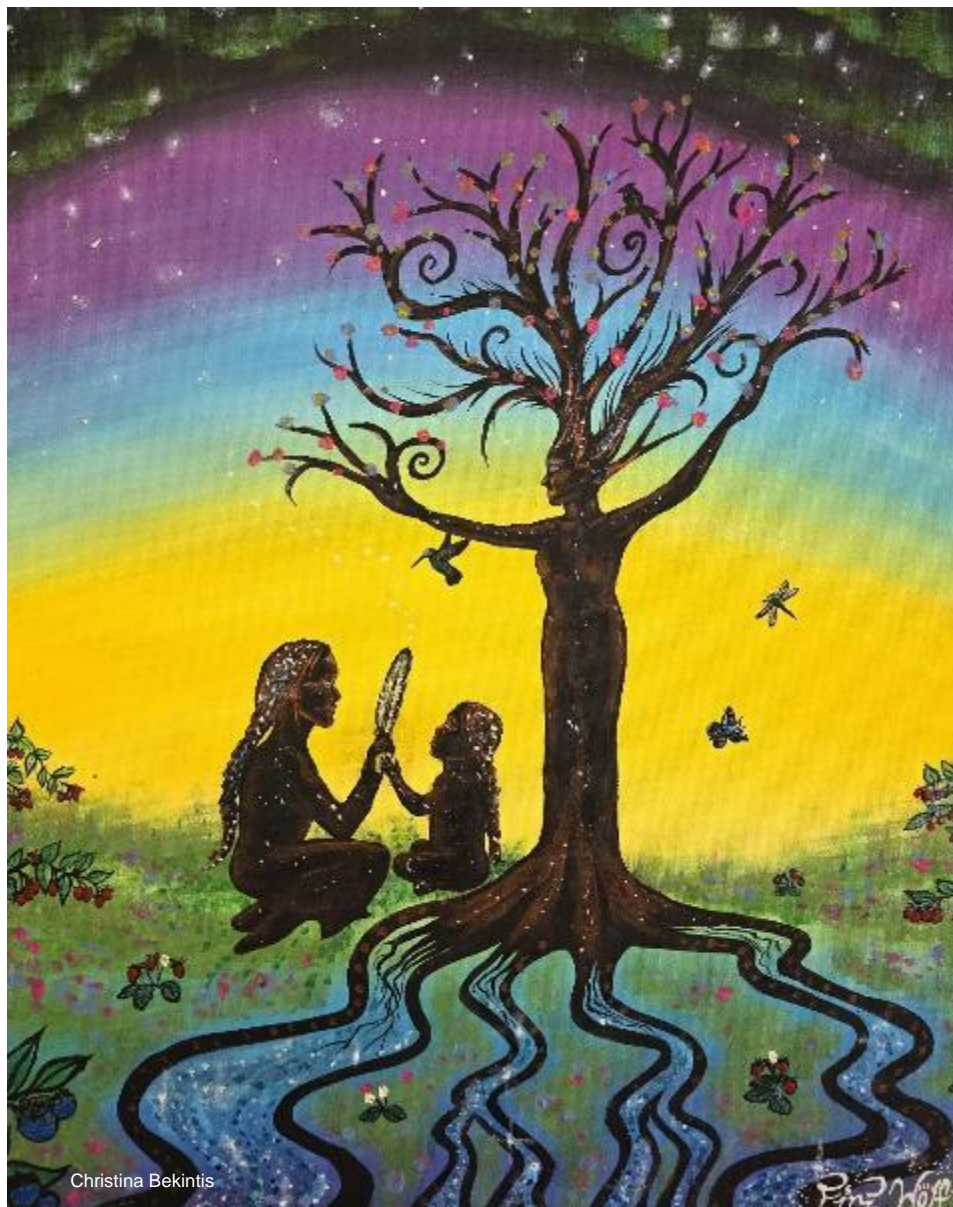




### Goal 4.3 – Transmission of Culture and Knowledge

The concept of an Omushkego Institute has been discussed for more than thirty years. The Institute is envisioned as providing relevant post-secondary education in the Omushkego communities, based on our culture and language. Learning and cultural transmission programs to support this Conservation Plan will be developed by the Omushkego Institute. The Omushkego Institute will be founded through a partnership between the Omushkego Wahkohtowin and the Mushkegowuk Council's Education Department, who will work together to develop culture and knowledge transmission programs.

The development of cultural transmission programs will also make use of existing cultural initiatives, including Oshichikesiwuk Nanipek, a regional network of artistic and cultural practitioners. Funds will be allocated to support the strengthening of this network.





### Goal 4.4 – Develop A Conservation Economy

We envision an integrated conservation, cultural, and sustainable development landscape. Our regional conservation vision includes healthy communities and ecosystems. As outlined in this plan, we aim to demonstrate that conservation and development can work together. Therefore, our Nations need to be included as key decision-makers and participants in the economic development within our homelands. To do so, Omushkego Wahkohtowin aims to develop a conservation economy both at the Nation and regional scales.

Omushkego Wahkohtowin will establish an entrepreneurship incubator program that will provide loan and grant finance to support local businesses. Access to funding will be provided through an application program and capacity will be developed to support business development and financial literacy. The exact structure of the application and funding process will be developed in year one with clear criteria, assurances of equitable distribution, clear monitoring and reporting requirements, and an independent evaluation committee.

Our homelands provide key ecosystem benefits, such as storing carbon, high levels of biodiversity, unique species and habitats, and pristine freshwater and marine waters. Omushkego Wahkohtowin will continue to explore tools such as carbon credits, biodiversity credits, and payment for ecosystem benefits to generate funding to support the effective management and stewardship of our protected and conserved areas and surrounding lands and waters.

The protection of our natural resources is one of the key enabling conditions for the establishment of a tourism market that we aim to explore and develop through Omushkego Wahkohtowin. Adventure and nature-based tourism is the fastest-growing industry in the tourism sector.

We will develop a tourism strategy around our world class network of marine and terrestrial protected and conserved areas, wilderness rivers, unique biodiversity, and rich cultural landscape. This will be developed with each of the Nations and focus on culturally appropriate tourism that drives revenue to the communities, contributes to conservation, and creates local jobs.

The protection of our lands in tandem with the development of cultural initiatives will support the creation of new cultural and artistic products. Sourcing sustainable materials in collaboration with the harvester support program, Omushkego Wahkohtowin will look for opportunities to support creative economies around conservation-related cultural products.



## Glossary and Abbreviations

**Conserved areas** Environmental management strategies that encompass a broad range of conservation initiatives and management approaches that may include legal protection to maintain and enhance biodiversity, ecosystem services, and cultural values while incorporating sustainable land use practices and community involvement.

**Conservation Trust Fund (CTF)** is an independent organization that gathers in its governance structure the main partner groups involved in the funding and implementation of a conservation project.

**Ecological integrity** The ability of an ecosystem to support and maintain its components (e.g. species and biological communities) and its ecological processes and ecological functions.

**Gahgihgeh** Cree term for the concept of “forever.”

**Ininiwi Pimatisiwin** Omushkego Cycle of Life: it describes six seasons based on the state of land and water, and life cycles of animals and plants that underpin people’s hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering activities and spiritual practices

**Na-Taski-Nano** Mother-Earth: who takes care of her children and the homelands of Omushkego Cree.

**National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA)** Federal designation under part of Parks Canada’s system of protected areas to protect and conserve representative examples of Canada’s natural and cultural marine heritage for the benefit, education, and enjoyment of the people of Canada and the world.

**Project Finance for Permanence (PFP)** A conservation model used to support the Omushkego Wahkohtowin. A PFP is a financial tool that brings together partners, such as governments, Indigenous peoples and local communities, and funders, to secure long-term conservation, full and sustained funding, and community benefits. Through this approach, protected places stay protected because they are collaboratively designed, locally-led, nationally supported, sustainably funded, and highly accountable.

**Protected areas** Environmental management strategies that typically involve areas legally designated by governments or other entities to safeguard natural and cultural resources with strict regulations and management plans

**Wahkohtowin** A term in the Cree language that describes the concept of kinship, or the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living things. It is often used to express the idea of living in harmony with the natural world and with one another, recognizing the importance of relationships and responsibilities in maintaining balance and well-being.





## APPENDIX 1. Species-At-Risk In The Omushkego Homelands

**Table 1. Mushkegowuk Territory Species At Risk**

Species Name	Scientific Name	Status
<b>Endangered</b>		
Little Brown Myotis	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Northern Myotis	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Mountain Lion (Cougar)	<i>Puma concolor</i>	Provincially Listed Only
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Provincially Listed Only
Red Knot rufa subspecies, Tierra del Fuego / Patagonia wintering population	<i>Calidris canutus rufa</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Federally Listed Lower Provincial Rank Listing
Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus bohemicus</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Federally Listed Lower Provincial Rank Listing
Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus suckleyi</i>	Provincially Listed Only <sup>2</sup>
Transverse Lady Beetle	<i>Coccinella transversoguttata</i>	Provincially Listed Lower Federal Rank Listing
Black Ash	<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>	Provincially Listed Only <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 species</b>	
<b>Threatened</b>		
Eastern Wolf	<i>Canis lupus lycaon</i>	Provincially Listed Lower Federal Rank Listing <sup>1</sup>
Polar Bear	<i>Ursus maritimus</i>	Provincially Listed Different Federal Listing
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	Provincially Listed Lower Federal Rank Listing
Woodland caribou, Boreal Population	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Federally <sup>1</sup> and Provincially Listed
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Federally Listed Lower Provincial Rank Listing
Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Federally <sup>1</sup> and Provincially Listed
Canada Warbler	<i>Cardellina canadensis</i>	Federally <sup>1</sup> Listed Lower Provincial Rank Listing
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	Provincially Listed Only <sup>2</sup>
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Provincially Listed Only <sup>2</sup>
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Provincially Listed Lower Federal Rank Listing <sup>1</sup>
Wood Thrush	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	Federally Listed Lower Provincial Rank Listing
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 species</b>	



**Table 1. Mushkegowuk Territory Species At Risk continued**

Special Concern		
Migratory Caribou, Eastern Migratory Population	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	Provincially Listed Only <sup>2</sup>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Provincially Listed Only
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Provincially Listed Only
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Evening Grosbeak	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Provincially Listed Only
Red Knot rufa subspecies, Northeastern South America wintering population	<i>Calidris canutus rufa</i>	Provincially Listed Only <sup>2</sup>
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalarope lobatus</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Yellow Rail	<i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Snapping Turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Lake Sturgeon, Southern Hudson Bay-James Bay populations	<i>Acipenser fulvescens</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Northern Brook Lamprey	<i>Ichthyomyzon fossor</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Yellow-banded Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus terricola</i>	Federally and Provincially Listed
Flooded Jellyskin	<i>Leptogium rivulare</i>	Federally Listed Only
<b>Total</b>	<b>17 species</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>40 Species at Risk</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Species under consideration for SARA Schedule 1 status change, pending on the Governor in Council (GIC) decision.

<sup>2</sup> Species under consideration for SARA Schedule 1 addition, pending on the Governor in Council (GIC) decision.

UPDATED MARCH 8, 2024

**Table 2. The Committee on The Status of Endangered Wildlife In Canada (COSEWIC) Assessed Species At Risk With Pending Designation In Mushkegowuk Territory**

Scientific Name	Scientific Name	Pending Status
Pending designation		
Eastern Migratory Caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	Endangered
Eastern Red Bat	<i>Lasiurus borealis</i>	Endangered
Hoary Bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	Endangered
Silver-haired Bat	<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>	Endangered
Ringed Seal	<i>Pusa hispida</i>	Special concern
Atlantic Walrus, Central-Low Arctic population	<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>	Special concern
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 species</b>	

COSEWIC Status; Pending on the Governor in Council (GIC) decision, species maybe listed on SARA Schedule 1.



## APPENDIX 2. Stream 1: Strategies, Milestones and Activities

STREAM 1. Create Protected and Conserved Areas To Ensure Ecological Integrity For The Preservation Of Inherent, Treaty, and Harvesting Rights, As Well As Spirituality, Culture, and Traditions		
Goal 1.1 NMCA Establishment or Interim Protection		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Formalized protection of the marine portion of the Omushkego Homelands.	By Year 5, the marine portion of the Omushkego Homelands is formally protected under the NMCA Act and added to CPCAD.	1.1.1 The NMCA feasibility assessment report is endorsed by Parks Canada.
		1.1.2 The NMCA obtains interim protection status or effective interim protection.
		1.1.3 The terms and conditions under which the NMCA will be established and managed have been finalized and agreed upon by the Government of Canada, the province of Ontario, Mushkegowuk Council and participating Nations - the negotiation for the establishment of the NMCA is completed.
		1.1.4 The name and legal description of the boundary of the site have been added to the schedule of the Canadian National Marine Conservation Areas Act (CNMCAA) and required amendments have been made to enable the establishment of the area under the Act.
		1.1.5 Mushkegowuk Council, Government of Canada and Government of Ontario have identified mechanisms enabling the protection of the coastal area adjacent to the NMCA boundary.





# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



Goal 1.2 Establishment of a Network of Omushkego Protected and Conserved Areas		
Strategies	Activities	
Design a network for Omushkego terrestrial and freshwater protected and conserved areas in Omushkego Homelands.	<p><b>Milestones</b></p> <p>By Year 5, a plan for a network of protected areas has been completed.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Design and implement a strategy for the participation and involvement of communities to provide input on the conservation objectives (e.g. cultural keystone species, transport routes, traditional activities, etc.) and provide feedback on the draft network design.</p> <p>1.2.2 Based on existing scientific and Cree knowledge, on social, cultural, and economic data, information, and maps, and on the results of the Nation land use plans, identify conservation objectives and related conservation priorities for the Omushkego Wahkoitowin network of protected areas (PA).</p> <p>1.2.3 Work with governments to identify clear and recognized legal designation for protected and conservation areas and other spatial conservation measures that support the vision of Omushkego Wahkoitowin.</p> <p>1.2.4 Develop and complete a network action plan to guide the designation of areas in the network design.</p>
	<p>By 2030, the areas proposed for protection under the network have been formally designated under conservation frameworks or protected under interim protection allowing them to count towards CPCAD.</p>	<p>1.2.5 Follow the action plan to designate areas in the network using appropriate processes, such as feasibility assessments, consultation and development of the policy and regulatory approach. Steps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial support: Develop financial mechanisms that guarantee economic resources for the conservation and management of the PAs in collaboration with the different levels of government.</li> <li>Regulations: Draft individual PAs regulations and associated regulatory documents (e.g. protection measures for SARA species).</li> </ul> <p>1.2.6 PAs are designated on a site-by-site basis or following the Action Plan.</p>
Improve representation of Omushkego terrestrial and freshwater protected and conserved areas in Omushkego Homelands and in CPCAD.	<p>By Year X, key high-biodiversity and cultural value habitats (and areas that connect them) in Omushkego Homelands are under improved and Omushkego-led management and co-governance.</p>	<p>1.2.7 Develop a plan to create monitoring and management plans and control mechanisms for the network of PAs that conform to the objectives of the Wahkoitowin network of PAs to track the conservation status of natural and cultural systems and to assess the effectiveness of the conservation measures that are implemented.</p> <p>1.2.8 Implement the monitoring and management plan (see Stream 2, Goal 2.1).</p> <p>1.2.9 Adapt management of individual PAs or network as required by the monitoring and management plan.</p> <p>1.2.10 Report on the progress and the status of the network as stipulated and required in the monitoring and management plan.</p> <p>1.2.11 Develop and implement a surveillance and enforcement approach for individual PAs and for the network conforming to community needs and wishes.</p>



### APPENDIX 3. Stream 2: Strategies, Milestones and Activities

STREAM 2. Establish Omushkego Wahkohtowin Governance and Management		
Goal 2.1 Omushkego Wahkohtowin Organizations		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Build organizational, institutional and resource capacity that is collaborative, mutually supportive, respectful, and trust-based frameworks with participating Nations that promote self-determination, ensure full and effective participation, and enable coordination of conservation efforts at the regional and local scales.	By Year 3, the Mushkegowuk Lands and Resources Department is fully staffed to support regional conservation initiatives. By Year 5, Lands and Resources Departments in each participating Nation are strengthened or established. By Year 3, a Special Forum on Conservation is established at Mushkegowuk Council's Annual General Assembly. By Year X, a Wahkohtowin Board of Directors is created and is operational.	2.1.1 Develop a work plan to hire team members to facilitate and coordinate the regional conservation activities.
		2.1.2 Following each Nation's work plan, hire and train leadership and team members for the operation and coordination of the activities for each participating Nations' Lands and Resources department.
		2.1.3 Develop, manage, implement, and report on results of monitoring and research programs at the local scale (see Stream 3, Goal 3.2).
		2.1.4 ToR for a Special Forum on Conservation at Mushkegowuk Council's Annual General Assembly are developed and adopted by the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Advisory Board.
		2.1.5 The Council of Chiefs passes a resolution to approve the ToR for a Special Forum on Conservation at Mushkegowuk Council's Annual General Assembly.
		2.1.6 Every year, a Special Forum on Conservation is convened at Mushkegowuk Council's Annual General Assembly where community members from all Nations participating to Omushkego Wahkohtowin can have voting powers in decision-making for Omushkego Wahkohtowin.
		2.1.7 Through consultation and collaboration with the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs, develop and finalize ToR and an establishment framework for the creation of a Board of Directors within the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department. The Board of Directors is composed of the Directors of each Nations' Lands and Resources departments (representing all participating Nations) and the Associate Director of the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department. The Wahkohtowin Board of Directors brings governance and reporting knowledge and authority to provide higher level and strategic advice as well as having the power to make changes to the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department and the Lands and Resources departments in each of the participating Nations.
		2.1.8 In line with the ToR and through a resolution from the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs, the Wahkohtowin Board of Directors is constituted and operational.



# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



<p>2.1.9</p>	<p>Wahkohtowin Board of Directors reports on activities and performance of the Omushkego network of protected areas, research and monitoring programs, and community development programs to the Special Forum on Conservation at Mushkegowuk Council's Annual General Assembly.</p>
<p>2.1.10</p>	<p>The Board of Directors approves and submits to the CTF Board the annual budgets for the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department and the participating Nations' Lands and Resources departments.</p>
<p>2.1.11</p>	<p>Conduct and institute human resources needs and training needs assessments for the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department and the participating Nations' Lands and Resources departments on an annual basis starting in Year 3.</p>
<p>2.1.12</p>	<p>Carry out training and capacity development programs based on the training needs assessment on an annual basis for the duration of the Implementation Phase.</p>
<p>2.1.13</p>	<p>Develop, coordinate, manage and report on monitoring and research programs at the regional scale (see Stream 3, Goal 3.2).</p>

By Year X, mechanisms are in place to support, maintain and develop the activities of the Mushkegowuk Council and the participating Nations' Lands and Resources departments implementation of Omushkego Wahkohtowin.

Ensure the transparency and effectiveness of governance and management structures.





Goal 2.2 Community-based Land Use Planning		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Empower Nations to exercise their rights to self-determination by shaping the development and management of their lands according to their own ecological, cultural, social, and economic priorities.	By Year 3, each Nation has completed a land-use plan for their homelands, which identifies areas of importance that are a priority for conservation and areas where development can potentially take place.	2.2.1 Hire a regional planner to support community-based efforts for the development and completion of the land-use planning exercises. The regional planner will work in the Mushkegowuk Lands and Resources Department and in collaboration with the Lands and Resources Departments in each of the participating Nations.
		2.2.2 Each Nation develops their community-based land use planning process with a terms of reference that sets out objectives, information needs, engagement, identifies the roles and responsibilities of their planning team, and milestones.
		2.2.3 Each Nation completes a land use plan that identifies key priority areas for conservation and potential development areas within their Homelands, and provides direction matters such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cultural and heritage values.</li> <li>- protected areas.</li> <li>- ecological values biological diversity, including cultural and ecological keystone species.</li> <li>- areas of natural resource value for potential economic development.</li> <li>- infrastructure: electricity transmission lines, dams, roads.</li> <li>- tourism.</li> <li>- all other criteria identified by Nations as criteria for the planning.</li> </ul>
Development of a regional land-use and conservation planning strategy that balances biodiversity conservation and cultural vitalization with sustainable infrastructure development.	By Year 7, a regional land use plan is completed for Omushkego Wahkoitowin.	2.2.4 Nations' land use plans are integrated at the Omushkego Wahkoitowin scale to produce a Wahkoitowin regional land use plan. The Wahkoitowin land use plan assesses functional connectivity and ecological integrity between and among the areas identified by Nations to provide recommendations on ecological networks and corridors, and biological and cultural hotspots. It also identifies and maps the key priority areas for conservation and potential development areas at the regional scale.



Goal 2.3 Partnerships with Governments		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Renew the relationship between Omushkego and governments based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership to advance community development and conservation objectives.	By Year X, a tripartite Wahkohtowin Table is established and operational.	2.2.1 Through consultation and collaboration with the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs, develop and finalize ToR and a work plan to establish a tripartite Wahkohtowin Table between the participating Nations, the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario, which will be rooted in section 35 of the <i>Constitution Act, 1982</i> , and guided by the Principles of the <i>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i> and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s Calls to Action.
		2.2.2 Establish the tripartite Wahkohtowin Table, aligning and contributing to the fulfillment of commitments towards the implementation of UNDRIP and providing a framework for a whole-of-government approach towards the recognition and implementation of Omushkego right to self-determination over their Homelands and for addressing key community priorities to support conservation objectives.
		2.2.3 Develop framework and mechanisms to ensure appropriate reporting of the activities of the tripartite Wahkohtowin Table to participating Nations, community members, Ontarians, and Canadians.



**APPENDIX 4. Stream 3: Strategies, Milestones and Activities**

STREAM 3. Care for Ecosystem Health		
Goal 3.1 Guardians Program		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Develop, build, and implement a framework for locally-led Guardians Programs in each participating community with a regional coordination and management structure.	By Year X, Regional and Nations' Guardians Programs are developed, and regular reviews occur.	3.1.1 In collaboration with Nations and existing programs and the Omushkego Waiikotowin Department and Lands and Resources departments in each of the participating Nations, a needs assessment for Guardians is completed and an Omushkego Guardians Program Framework (including a staffing schedule) is developed.
		3.1.2 Following the schedule developed as part of the Omushkego Guardians Program Framework, staff is hired.
		3.1.3 The Omushkego Guardians Training Standards Manual and Plan is completed and is reviewed and updated every two years.
		3.1.4 A framework for Omushkego Junior Guardians Program is completed and is reviewed and is updated every two years.
		3.1.5 Each Nation completes Guardian and Junior Guardian program implementation plans that will be reviewed and updated annually.
		3.1.6 Each Nation completes Guardians Operational Protocols to ensure workplace health and safety standards are in place. Protocols will be reviewed and updated annually.
		3.1.7 Develop Nation specific Guardians patrol, monitoring, and research assistance operational plan and at the end of each operational season complete an evaluation in preparation for the following year. Repeat the process every year.
	By Year X, each Nation has staffed and operational Guardians and Junior Guardians programs.	3.1.8 Following the Omushkego Guardians Program Framework, the Omushkego Junior Guardians Program and the Omushkego Guardians Training Standards Manual and Plan, staff is hired, trained and operational, including management, full-time and seasonal staff.
		3.1.9 Yearly following implementation, train and mobilize youth from each Nation as part of the Junior Guardians program.
		3.1.10 Yearly following implementation, provide entry level, intermediate, and advanced training for full-time and seasonal guardians specific to each Nation's Guardians program.
		3.1.11 Yearly following implementation, provide health and safety training to all guardians and junior guardians.
		3.1.12 Yearly following implementation, organize and hold two regional Guardians meetings to facilitate information exchange, training, and annual work planning, one of which is replaced biennially by the National Guardians Meeting.





# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



<p>Each Nation completes a plan for acquiring Guardians' field equipment and building storage facilities and field stations. Purchase field equipment and build storage and field stations. Every year, complete field equipment assessment and purchase new or replacement as needed.</p>	<p>3.1.13</p>	<p>By Year X, all Guardians Programs are equipped with adequate and essential equipment and infrastructure.</p>
<p>Each Nation completes its plan for site development and building Guardians accommodations.</p>	<p>3.1.14</p>	
<p>Guardian accommodations are built in each community incrementally, and by the end of the implementation period, all communities have built Guardian accommodations.</p>	<p>3.1.15</p>	
<p>Develop written, codified Omushkego or Nation-specific conservation laws/code of ethics.</p>	<p>3.1.16</p>	<p>By Year X, Omushkego Guardians use Omushkego, provincial, and federal conservation laws in their compliance and enforcement operations.</p>
<p>Develop and implement an Omushkego Guardian compliance and enforcement program, which is to be reviewed every 2 years.</p>	<p>3.1.17</p>	
<p>In collaboration with the provincial and/or federal organization, reach an agreement for designating Guardians under provincial and/or federal conservation and protected areas legislation. By the end of the implementation period, full-time Guardians have been designated under this agreement.</p>	<p>3.1.18</p>	



# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



Goal 3.2 Monitoring and Research		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Strengthen capacity of Nations to lead and collaborate on research and monitoring in their homelands.	By Year X, Nation-based and regional ecosystem integrity monitoring framework have been developed and implemented.	3.2.1 In collaboration with Guardians Programs and the Omushkego Wanikotwin Department and the Lands and Resources departments in each of the participating Nations, complete a report of the state of the regional ecosystem for the boreal, watersheds (aquatic), peatlands, and coast, and gaps in baseline information are identified.
		3.2.2 Modelling of climate change scenarios with predictions of the effects on biodiversity, peatlands, rivers, permafrost, and coastal sea ice. The scenarios will contribute to the regional ecosystem monitoring strategy development.
Influence forestry practices and restoration in keeping with Omushkego values and ecosystem approach to increase biodiversity and Nations' access to forest ecosystem services benefits.	By Year X, forest restoration monitoring programs reflect and enable Nations' access to forest ecosystem services benefits.	3.2.3 A regional research priorities plan is developed based on community research priorities and the plan will be updated every two years following the regional knowledge exchange summit.
		3.2.4 Complete a regional ecosystem integrity monitoring framework that incorporates climate change considerations to develop a monitoring plan for each community. The strategy will consider different intensities of monitoring to capture landscape heterogeneity within the Boreal Forest and Hudson Bay Lowlands. The monitoring framework and the community monitoring plans will be evaluated according to the terms identified in the strategy.
		3.2.5 Host a regional knowledge exchange summit and update the research priorities plan with inputs gathered during the summit.
		3.2.6 Complete a boreal forest restoration plan for new protected areas and important/critical habitat areas, which includes objectives for enhancing the medicine chest, wildlife habitat, food security species, and biodiversity.
		3.2.7 Using the climate model for the boreal forest, risk management practices for forest insect outbreaks and forest fires are incorporated into commercial forest practices.
		3.2.8 Local or regional regulations are developed and implemented so spraying of the herbicide glyphosate is no longer allowed as a reforestation treatment in Omushkego homelands.
		3.2.9 Species at risk (especially boreal caribou), food security species (especially moose), and trapped species (e.g., marten) are prioritized in Forest Management Plans and annual operational plans.
		3.2.10 The Ontario Landscape Guide (biodiversity) is being applied in all Forest Management Areas and effectiveness monitoring is being reported on.
		3.2.11 All forest companies have operationalized the Herbicides Alternative Programs.
		3.2.12 All forest companies are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified and have agreements with Nations whose territories they operate.



# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



<p>Develop partnership to ensure free-flowing rivers remain free-flowing and maintain the ecological integrity of dammed and diverted rivers.</p>	<p>By Year X, develop and implement collaborative partnerships with governments and industry to update environmental guidelines and procedures on water management in Omushkego Homelands.</p>	<p>3.2.13 Conduct hydrological, biological, sociocultural, and economic assessments to describe the impacts of dams and diversions on the Moose and Albany River watersheds on biodiversity and communities.</p> <p>3.2.14 In partnership with Nations, develop options for protecting free-flowing rivers.</p> <p>3.2.15 Free-flowing rivers (Atlawapskat, Winkisk, Ekwan, Severn, North French, Missanabie, and others) are designated for protection and managed for ecological integrity, contribute to ecosystem services, and support climate resilience of communities.</p> <p>3.2.16 A moratorium on installing new hydro dams and dams for other purposes in Omushkego homelands is put in place.</p> <p>3.2.17 In collaboration with the Government of Ontario, update environmental guidelines and requirements for building roads in the North based on research that includes requirements for water crossings and bridges in areas of mushkeg and permafrost (continuous and discontinuous).</p> <p>3.2.18 Ontario Hydro manages water flow on dammed and diverted rivers taking into consideration ecological integrity and community factors.</p> <p>3.2.19 Water flow and quality monitoring programs are operational in each watershed.</p>
<p>Protect peatland carbon storage ecosystem services and increase boreal forest carbon storage capacity.</p>	<p>By Year X, carbon storage ecosystem services are stable, and the carbon storage capacity of the boreal forest is increased.</p>	<p>3.2.20 Update the estimates of amount of carbon storage, flux, and flow through in the peatlands, including an estimate of the amount of carbon stored in the boreal forest portion of Omushkego homelands.</p> <p>3.2.21 Develop communications strategy to increase public understanding of the global importance of Omushkego peatlands carbon storage, to translate this knowledge into support for protecting this habitat.</p>
<p>Improve baseline knowledge on contaminants in food species and people.</p>	<p>By Year X, platforms have been developed to increase monitoring and educational capacity with regards to contaminants in food species and people.</p>	<p>3.2.22 Baseline contaminant loads are described for all food fish species and sources are identified (anthropogenic or natural) and strategies for mitigating impacts to human health are in place.</p> <p>3.2.23 Each community samples food fish species, fish prey, sediments, and water to monitor contaminants.</p> <p>3.2.24 Baseline contaminant loads are described for all food mammals, birds, and plants and sources are identified (anthropogenic or natural) and strategies for mitigating impacts to human health are in place.</p> <p>3.2.25 Each year, each community samples food mammals, birds, plants, and soil to monitor contaminants.</p> <p>3.2.26 Communities have determined what human contaminants monitoring is required and monitoring programs initiated.</p> <p>3.2.27 Anthropogenic sources of contaminants are identified and by Year 8 are eliminated.</p> <p>3.2.28 Natural sources of contaminants are identified, and a long-term monitoring strategy is in place.</p>





Contribute to the protection of Species-at-Risk (SAR) and recovery actions.	By Year X, baseline information, status, and distribution of Species-at-Risk (SAR) within Omushkego homelands is better understood and critical habitats have been identified.	3.2.29	Distribution maps of all SAR within Omushkego homelands are mapped and gaps in knowledge are identified.
		3.2.30	Gaps in knowledge are filled for selected SAR species and by Year 10 for all SAR species.
		3.2.31	Critical habitat (e.g., nesting, denning, staging) within Omushkego homelands for selected SAR species is identified and mapped, and protections recommended.
		3.2.32	Develop framework to enable or strengthen leadership or co-leadership of Nations in SAR plans and monitoring.
		3.2.33	In collaboration with governments, develop framework so that future federal - provincial agreements for SAR species planning and recovery are trilateral agreements.
		3.2.34	The bilateral agreement for Boreal caribou recovery has become a trilateral agreement, that includes Omushkego.
		3.2.35	Complete preliminary analyses and mapping of high biodiversity areas.
Increase knowledge and protection of biodiversity.	By Year X, biodiversity data is available to identify areas of high biodiversity and surveys to fill knowledge gaps are occurring.	3.2.36	Analyse biodiversity data sets to identify gaps in knowledge for major taxa and create a plan to fill the gaps.
		3.2.37	Each year, conduct surveys to fill biodiversity knowledge gaps.



Goal 3.3 Community-based Research and Knowledge Sharing		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Provide support to each Nation to increase in-community capacity to engage with researchers. Increase access to mammals, birds, fish, and plant species for cultural uses and food security.	By Year X, Nations have processes to manage research activities in their territories	3.3.1 In collaboration with each participating Nation, develop a policy and procedure for research engagement that includes co-developing proposals, review of proposals, data sharing, and research permit issuance.
	By Year X, populations and distribution of mammals, birds, fish, and plants species that Omushkego rely on for cultural uses and food security are better understood and those species are under improved and Omushkego co-management.	3.3.2 In collaboration with each participating Nation, develop and complete research and monitoring plan for culturally important species. 3.3.3 Yearly, communities monitor selected culturally important species using Cree metrics as part of the Community Based Monitoring program. 3.3.4 Develop and implement partnerships between Omushkego and government organizations that manage caribou and moose population surveys, and ensure that every year, population surveys are completed in at least one caribou range and moose management unit.
Manage human-bear conflict.	By Year X, Nation-based human-bear conflict management plans have been developed and implemented.	3.3.5 Develop and implement Nation-based human-bear conflict management plans, with annual training and review of plans.



### APPENDIX 5. Stream 4: Strategies, Milestones and Activities

STREAM 4. Support Sustainable Livelihood and Wellbeing		
Goal 4.1 Food Security		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Revitalize and strengthen traditional ethical harvesting principles.	By Year X, a Traditional Harvesting Ethics Committee is established.	4.1.1 In collaboration with the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs, develop ToR and a work plan for the establishment of a Traditional Harvesting Ethics Committee, with representation from the Nation Re-building Initiative (NRI) Department, the communities, and any other relevant parties, which will have the role and responsibilities to develop and implement a framework for the gathering and management of data on traditional harvesting practices and for a harvester's programs.
		4.1.2 The Council of Chiefs passes a resolution to approve the ToR for the Traditional Harvesting Ethics Committee and the Traditional Harvesting Ethics Committee is formally established.
		4.1.3 Following the ToR and the work plan, hire and train leadership and team to operate and coordinate the activities of the Traditional Harvesting Ethics Committee.
	By Year X, a Traditional Harvesting Ethics study is completed and a curriculum on Traditional Harvesting Ethics practices is completed.	4.1.4 The Traditional Harvesting Ethics Committee develops a work plan and a framework for a Traditional Harvesting Ethics study on traditional harvesting practices. The framework includes provisions respecting the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and of First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP®) for the data collection, management, and governance. The framework will include the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct interviews with Elders and land-based harvesting experts in the communities</li> <li>- Analysis of results of interviews for the purpose of developing a curriculum consisting of a teachable set of core ethical harvesting principles</li> <li>- Distribution of curriculum/template to communities, community feedback, further refinement and development of curriculum</li> <li>- Ongoing monitoring and refinement of regional and local traditional harvesting ethics curriculum/program.</li> <li>- Opportunity and economic analysis in connecting artists and traditional crafters to sustainable cultural materials (hides, antlers, furs, etc.)</li> </ul>





# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



<p>Preserve and advance Cree harvesting culture, heritage, and traditional ways of life by promoting access to country food and cultural materials providing financial support for traditional hunting and harvesting.</p>	<p>By Year X, a Harvester's Education Program is implemented and operational, and progress is shared with participating Nations.</p>	4.1.5	Implementation of the Traditional Harvesting Ethics study and development of a curriculum on Traditional Harvesting Ethics for a Harvester's Education Program.	
		4.1.6	A work plan and monitoring and reporting plan for the implementation of the Harvester's Education Program are developed.	
	4.1.7	The Harvester's Education Program is implemented in participating Nations according to the work plan.		
	4.1.8	Progress for the Harvester's Education Program is reported on according to the monitoring plan.		
	4.1.9	Review and adapt the Harvester's Education Program based on community input and needs, and on results from the monitoring plan.		
	4.1.10	<p>By Year X, a Wahkohtowin Harvester's Support Program is implemented.</p>	<p>The Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department and the Lands and Resources departments in each of the participating Nations conduct community-led needs assessment of community-based harvester's programs, identify gaps in programs and identify the programs most in need of support through a comparative analysis of the community-led needs assessment.</p>	
			4.1.11	<p>Prioritize gaps in harvester's support programs that can be addressed through Omushkego Wahkohtowin and develop a framework for a Wahkohtowin Harvester's Support Program to provide financial support to those community-based programs.</p>
	4.1.12	<p>By Year X, a Wahkohtowin Harvester's Support Program is implemented.</p>	<p>Implement disbursement structure to fund community-based harvester's support programs in need, tied with reporting conditions to the Wahkohtowin Harvester's Support Program.</p>	
	4.1.13		<p>Reassess yearly the needs and priorities for the Wahkohtowin Harvester's Support Program.</p>	



## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



<p>Improve conditions for food sovereignty and advance food security initiatives, programs, and projects.</p>	<p>By Year X, internal capacity for management and coordination of local food security programs is in place.</p> <p>By Year X, X community greenhouses have been built and community gardens have been created in XX community.</p>	4.1.14	<p>Establish a planning team within the Omushkego Wahkoitowin Department and Lands and Resources departments in each of the participating Nations to help coordinate the construction of greenhouses and establish community gardens.</p>
		4.1.15	<p>Conduct a cost analysis and capacity analysis focusing on materials, labour, and transport costs as well as capacity development needs for community greenhouses and gardens.</p>
		4.1.16	<p>In collaboration with the Nations and the communities, the sites and locations of the greenhouses and community gardens are identified.</p>
	4.1.17		<p>In collaboration with the Nations and the communities, develop a work plan for building the greenhouses, including design, procurement, contracting provisions, construction and building, commissioning, closing, and reporting framework and provisions.</p>
	4.1.18		<p>In collaboration with the Nations and the communities, implement and provide ongoing support for the process agreed upon in the work plan, including seeking out additional funding sources if necessary.</p>
	<p>By Year X, gaps within the existing Nation Re-building Initiative's Regional Food Security Strategy (NRI FSS) at Mushkegowuk Council have been filled.</p>	4.1.19	<p>In collaboration with the NRI Food Security personnel, conduct a needs assessment of the Regional Food Security Strategy (FSS).</p>
		4.1.20	<p>In collaboration with the NRI, develop framework and work plan for NRI FSS Support Program to bridge gaps and address needs through financial and capacity support, and to monitor and report on financial support received.</p>
		4.1.21	<p>The NRI FSS Support Program framework and work plan is approved by the Wahkoitowin Board of Directors.</p>
		4.1.22	<p>The NRI FSS Support Program is implemented and reports on activities according to the work plan.</p>
		4.1.23	<p>Every X year needs assessments are reviewed and the work plan is adjusted with approval from the Wahkoitowin Board of Directors if needed.</p>
		4.1.24	<p>Support the NRI FSS by working collaboratively with Agriculture Canada in the pursuit of funds and capacity to support regional food security and food sovereignty.</p>
		4.1.25	<p>Create and hold a Food symposium to foster transmission of Cree knowledge and food security (e.g. canning workshops, hide work, etc.), and hold biennial Food symposium.</p>
	<p>By Year X, a resolution Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs has passed a resolution to provide food security support to participating non-Mushkegowuk communities</p>	4.1.26	<p>Draft a resolution to provide food security support based on the needs assessment and available budget and technical support to participating non-Mushkegowuk communities.</p>
4.1.27		<p>The resolution is passed by the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs at an Annual General Assembly.</p>	



Goal 4.2 Community Wellness and Healing Programs			
Strategies	Milestones	Activities	
Strengthen land-based healing and land-based detox programs.	By Year X, complete an inventory of land-based healing programs.	4.2.1	Initiate and conduct a regional inventory of land-based healing and land-based detox programs that exist at both the planning and operational phases.
		4.2.2	Conduct a needs assessment of existing land-based healing and land-based detox programs.
		4.2.3	Based on the needs assessment and in collaboration with Mushkegowuk Health and local health staff, determine the best application of available funds to strengthen land-based healing and land-based detox programs.
		4.2.4	Develop disbursement and reporting structure and proposals to support land-based healing and land-based detox programs in need and submit for review to the Wahkohtowin Board of Directors.
		4.2.5	With the Wahkohtowin Board of Directors' approval, implement the disbursement and reporting framework and provide financial support to land-based healing and land-based detox programs in need.
		4.2.6	Review and provide ongoing support to land-based healing and land-based detox programs in need.





Goal 4.3 Learning and Cultural Transmission Programs		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Strengthen capacity to store, systematize and disseminate cultural knowledge through learning programs administered by establishing the Omushkego Institute.	By Year X, the Omushkego Institute is created and operational.	4.3.1 In collaboration with the Mushkegowuk Education Department, develop and finalize ToR to establish the Omushkego Institute Planning Team with staff from the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department, the Mushkegowuk Education Department, and partner organisations.
		4.3.2 Develop and finalize a work plan to create and operationalize the Omushkego Institute, which should include the following components: - Conducting community consultations and complete a needs assessment - Develop an implementation plan with focus on completing cultural transmission and learning program/curriculum and the construction of the Omushkego Institute.
Identify, engage with, and empower cultural knowledge holders connecting them to regional cultural hub, Oshichikesiwuk Nanipek	By year X, Oshichikesiwuk Nanipek has completed a community inventory of cultural knowledge holders.	4.3.3 Following the work plan, establish the Omushkego Institute and begin implementation of learning and cultural transmission programs.
		4.3.4 Hold cultural engagement sessions in each community to identify key cultural leaders and knowledge holders
		4.3.5 Connect participants to digital networking hub, facilitating connections to Wahkohtowin objectives such as harvesters' programs, Omushkego Institute, and conservation economy initiatives
		4.3.6 Conduct regional needs assessment for cultural transmission and revitalization, evaluating existing efforts, gaps, and opportunities for development



# Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



Goal 4.4 Development Of A Conservation Economy		
Strategies	Milestones	Activities
Develop a conservation economy around protected areas to drive revenue, generate jobs, and support conservation efforts.	By Year X, an Entrepreneurship Incubator Program has been implemented.	4.4.1 Development and implementation of a draw down economic development fund for sustainable businesses and industries supporting conservation objectives (e.g. tourism, sustainable energy, arts and culture, and wellness, etc.). Activities will include: - Develop an independent committee to oversee the granting / loan program. - Determine criteria for grants and loans, including reporting requirements. - Develop application process, ensuring equitable access. - Promote the fund to the nations with clear deadlines and application process. - Launch and manage program.
		4.4.2 An Ecosystem Services valuation is completed in the region.
		4.4.3 A market valuation is completed, including an analysis of the rights over Ecosystem Services.
	By Year X, a mentorship program is established and implemented at the Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department in partnership with the [NRI] Department.	4.4.4 Working with governments and industries, rights over Ecosystem Services are obtained by Nations, and mechanisms to finance Omushkego Wahkohtowin on-going costs through payment for Ecosystem Services by the private sector partners and/or government are developed.
		4.4.5 Development and implementation of mentorship programs within the conservation economy sector (jobs, knowledge, data collection) in collaboration with [NRI].
	By Year X, conservation multi-use facilities have been developed and built in each of the nations.	4.4.6 To support conservation and community development efforts, multi-use centres will be expanded or built in each of the participating Nations. Project development will include similar steps in each community, including: - Determine the appropriate location within each community. - Contract architect to design facility. - Provide budget for on-going costs for maintenance and operations. - Contract builders and acquire material and equipment. - Construction or expansion of facility. - Operationalisation of the facility. - Reporting on activities.



## Draft Conservation Plan (March 2024) For Omushkego Nations Review



	<p>By Year X, each Nation participates and benefits from ecotourism enterprises and has developed an ecotourism plan.</p>	<p>4.4.7</p>	<p>The Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department and Lands and Resources departments in each of the participating Nations provide support to each Nation to complete a local eco-tourism assessment.</p>
		<p>4.4.8</p>	<p>The Omushkego Wahkohtowin Department and Lands and Resources departments in each of the participating Nations collaborate to integrate local eco-tourism assessments and to produce a regional eco-tourism assessment.</p>
		<p>4.4.9</p>	<p>The regional eco-tourism assessment is reviewed and endorsed by communities.</p>
		<p>4.4.10</p>	<p>Nation level and regional level tourism plans are developed and endorsed by communities.</p>
		<p>4.4.11</p>	<p>The Nation level and regional level tourism plans are implemented.</p>
<p>By Year X, the recognition of the wild free-flowing rivers of Omushkego Homelands has improved.</p>		<p>4.4.12</p>	<p>Provide support to Nations to develop information, in print and on the web to bring recognition to the wild free-flowing rivers of the Omushkego Homelands and the links to Cree culture and history.</p>
		<p>4.4.13</p>	<p>Provide support to Nations to develop a corps of trained river guides.</p>
		<p>4.4.14</p>	<p>Provide support to Nations to ensure emergency shelters and caches at key locations along the rivers.</p>
		<p>4.4.15</p>	<p>Provide support to Nations to develop and implement a registration system for all people paddling/floating/boating on rivers within the Omushkego Homelands.</p>





**Sassa Linklater won the 2023 Mushkegowuk Council logo design contest for the Omushkego Wahkowitzin project. Sassa is an omeskēko iskwew from Moose Cree First Nation and Peawanuck.**

***“My design showcases the beauty of our territories: the swamp, people, plants, and animals. I wanted to show that our people still have a connection to the land within our bodies and spirits.”***

**Sassa Linklater**