



The Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective

Participation Handbook

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I. Background

Over the past four decades Lake Winnipeg has been in decline as a result of nutrient loading, climate change, resource extraction, hydropower development, agriculture, and more recently, aquatic invasive species. These effects have had an impact on all those who live, work and play on the lake. The First Nations who are connected to Lake Winnipeg have a great deal of knowledge of the lake and have seen significant impact on their cultural, social and economic well-being as a direct result of this environmental challenge. It is widely recognized that Indigenous voices are notably under-represented from the conversations, decisions and actions on Lake Winnipeg. In 2014, 14 Indigenous nations from around Lake Winnipeg came together to discuss challenges and opportunities for First Nations living near the shores of Lake Winnipeg. The Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective (LWIC) was formed.

II. Who We Are

The Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective represents the Indigenous voice for Lake Winnipeg. With administrative support from the Lake Winnipeg Foundation and through a collective governance model, we are embracing our responsibility to protect and preserve the lands and waters of our Nations and are working collaboratively towards restoring the health of our sacred lake and protecting it for future generations.

Our **vision** is that our sacred waters are healthy, traditional livelihoods are restored and Indigenous perspectives are influential in leading the protection and sustainability of Lake Winnipeg as a source of life for all future generations.

Our **mission** is to seek healthy and equitable solutions for our waters and our people from the diverse communities who have a relationship with Manitoba's sacred great lake.



Photo Credit: Honeymoon Lake Camp by Ron Cook

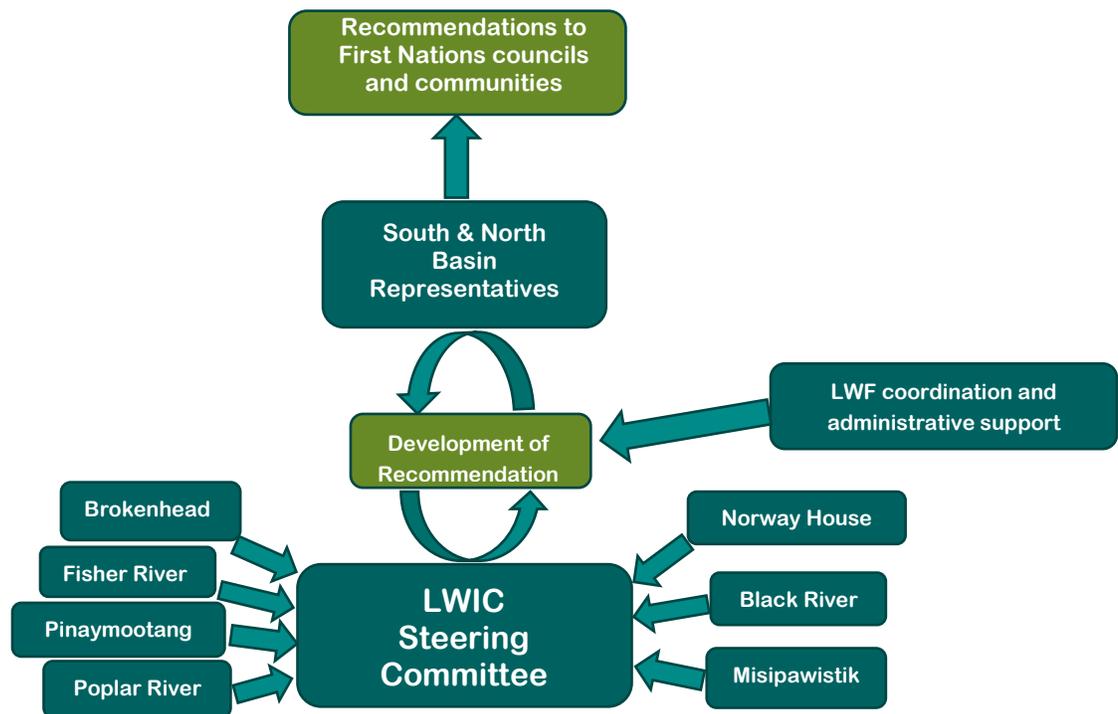
III. Support from the Lake Winnipeg Foundation

LWIC is supported through a strategic partnership with the Lake Winnipeg Foundation (LWF) which currently provides administrative resources and coordination. LWF is an environmental, non-governmental organization working collaboratively with non-profit, academic, industry and government sectors, First Nations and the public to restore and protect Lake Winnipeg and its watershed. LWF advances collaborative efforts in research, public education, policy and stewardship. LWF aims to support, and learn from, diverse voices speaking on behalf of a healthy Lake Winnipeg.

LWIC and LWF share the common goal of restoring the health of Lake Winnipeg. LWF currently provides LWIC with staff support, administrative and project management, grant writing, facilitation of partnerships and scientific and regulatory expertise. LWF does not speak on LWIC's behalf; LWIC's positions, projects and direction are decided by the LWIC steering committee. The partnership between LWIC and LWF is unique and evolving over time, with the ultimate goal that LWIC is established as a strong, independent organization representing First Nations perspectives through collective governance.

IV. Collective Governance

The Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective operates with a collective governance model, based on an understanding that water is the life-blood of Mother Earth, and that we all have a collective responsibility in ensuring the health of Lake Winnipeg for future generations. LWIC is led by the steering committee that functions as a collective governing body, with the leadership and guidance of the South and North Basin Representatives.



LWIC Governance structure

The Steering Committee

The role of the steering committee is to be the decision-making body of LWIC. The steering committee establishes structures, policies, procedures, action plans, and recommendations for the collective. The Steering Committee currently has representation from seven First Nations surrounding Lake Winnipeg including Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, Norway House Cree Nation, Black River First Nation, Pinaymootang First Nation, Misipawistik Cree Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation, and Poplar River First Nation.

Communities who express a strong interest and commitment to LWIC are invited to participate on the LWIC steering committee. The steering committee operates through consensus-based decision making, where all Nations are involved in decisions and resolution of issues emerges piece-by-piece through discussion. The steering committee is represented by individuals who are appointed by their First Nation council who accept the guiding principles of LWIC and embrace their roles and responsibilities to provide expertise and experiences from their Nation to help guide decision-making.

The South and North Basin Representatives

The LWIC steering committee advises the south and north basin representatives, who have the responsibility of upholding the views of the collective in decision-making. The south and north basin representatives are members of the steering committee who have embraced an active participatory role and have gained the trust and support of the entire collective in their position as leaders and advisors. The individual spokespeople hold no personal decision making authority for LWIC, but are appointed to finalize decisions in the best interest of the collective.

For urgent matters requiring approval, the south and north basin representatives will provide a response which represents the best interest of the collective, however; they will seek the counsel of the steering committee for most matters. The **LWIC Accord** (attached) is used as the principle guiding document for LWIC in decision-making.

The approval of both the south and north basin representatives is required for:

1. Submissions to Chief and Council of the LWIC Nations including letters, information briefs, reports, and presentations
2. Documents or presentations intended for submission to other governing bodies
3. Finalizing projects to move forward (including project-specific funding proposals)
4. Submissions to the public, including press-releases



LWIC South and North Basin Representatives: Gord Bluesky (BON) and Loretta Mowatt (NHCN)



Guiding Principles from the LWIC Accord

V. Participating in LWIC

First Nations surrounding Lake Winnipeg who are committed to participating in the decision-making process are invited to join the LWIC steering committee. LWIC acts as a watchdog for Lake Winnipeg and provides First Nations with many resources.

Some of the benefits to joining LWIC:

- Receiving plain-language information and updates on emerging issues and legislation changes which could impact Lake Winnipeg or the resources it provides
- Accessing resources from the LWIC Coordinator (help with funding proposals, providing information briefs, drafting submissions to parliament)
- Developing and participating in projects to restore the health of the lake and to build awareness for the impacts it faces
- Participating in steering committee meetings to learn from other First Nations, share success stories and expertise
- Hosting on-the-ground restoration projects in your community to help restore impacted areas
- Hosting outreach activities in your community to help increase capacity, awareness and share knowledge
- Accessing presentations and information packages developed by the LWIC Coordinator
- Accessing training opportunities, conferences, and learning webinars (scheduled as needed)
- Receiving advocacy from the collective to influence policy decisions around Lake Winnipeg
- Profiling your community on the LWIC website to share success stories or environmental challenges

First Nations who wish to join LWIC agree to:

1. Attend the annual steering committee meeting
2. Provide an in-kind donation (services, meeting space, volunteer hours) as required
3. Provide a signed BCR stating support for the collective (Template available)
4. Appoint 1-2 people from their community as contact people who are responsible for standing on the steering committee, participating in decision-making, and who embrace their responsibility to protect Lake Winnipeg.



LWIC Community Gathering in Misipawistik Cree Nation (September 2016)

VI. Travel Bursaries

Travel bursaries are available for steering committee representatives, community members, and elders for LWIC meetings, gatherings, seminars, workshops, and conferences. If a steering committee member is not available to travel, a replacement may attend on their behalf. Travel bursaries are dependent on funding and in general, provide a subsidy for up to two people for of all meals, accommodations, and 40% of travel (flights or mileage).

All First Nations people who have a relationship with Lake Winnipeg are invited to join us at our annual LWIC community gathering to share their knowledge and experiences about the lake and the challenges it faces.



LWIC community tour of impacted areas (Misipawistik Cree Nation, September 2016)

VII. Upcoming Projects

January-February 2017

March-May 2017

May-July 2017

August 1-3 2017

August-September 2017

November 2017

LWIC video project and website development

Participation in the *State of the Lake Report* working group

Traditional Spawning Habitat study- Phase 1: Consultation and Mapping

Yukon River Inter-tribal Watershed Summit

LWIC Youth Gathering

Environmental Laws and Aboriginal Rights seminar



LWIC steering committee tour of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Interpretive Trail

VIII. Contact Us

We are calling out to all First Nations connected to Lake Winnipeg to participate on the steering committee! Please feel free to contact us if you would like any additional information, or to request a BCR template of support. We look forward to hearing from you.

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