

PLAN 2014 EXPEDITED REVIEW

Planting a Relationship and Learning Towards Action with Indigenous Peoples



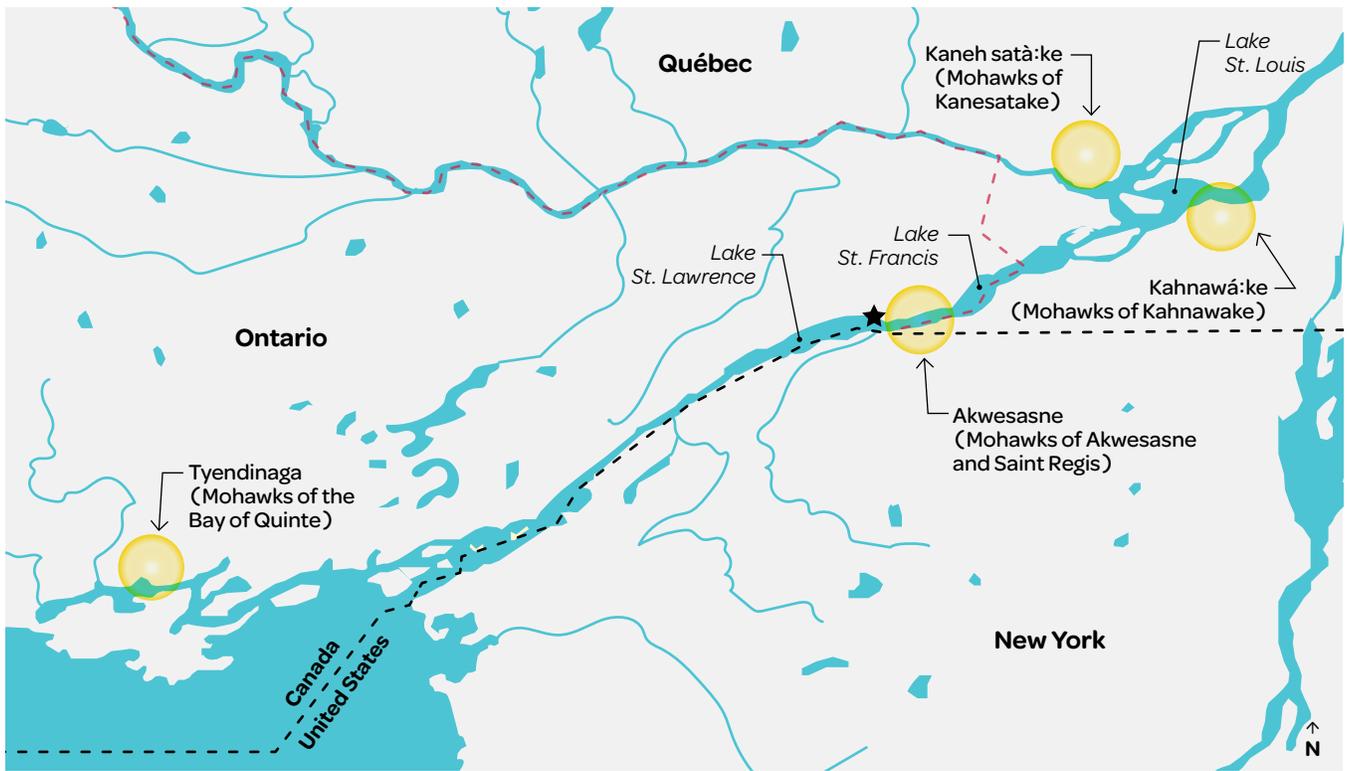
“Water is not a resource; it’s a life-source”

In February 2020, the International Joint Commission (IJC), the binational organization formed under the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty between Canada and the United States of America, ordered an expedited review of Plan 2014, the management plan for Lake Ontario outflows. The review is being done by the IJC’s Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Adaptive Management Committee, known as the GLAM Committee, which is directed to apply an adaptive management approach to the on-going review of the outflow regulation plans.

The International Joint Commission (IJC) and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Adaptive Management (GLAM) Committee respects Indigenous rights, recognizes Indigenous diversity, and aims to ensure Indigenous Nations are fully engaged and their knowledge and perspectives included in the adaptive management process moving forward, in a spirit of reconciliation. The GLAM Committee wants to Plant a Relationship and Learn Towards Action with Indigenous Communities through listening sessions with First Nations, Métis and Tribal Nations, in order to develop an inclusive, engaged and transparent adaptive management planning process. With Indigenous communities, the goal is to co-create decision support tools that link management of fluctuating water levels to cultural values and rights through two-eyed seeing collaborations.



The GLAM Committee seeks to create an open, thoughtful and sustained engagement process with Indigenous communities so that culture, context and rights are meaningfully a part of the adaptive management process.



Federally-recognized Indigenous lands directly adjacent to the shoreline Lake Ontario or the St. Lawrence River

● Federally-recognized Indigenous Lands ★ Moses-Saunders Power Dam - - - Provincial border - - - International border

Our Approach

Following a leading Indigenous Engagement model RESPECT®, the GLAM Committee outreached to 23 First Nations, Tribal Nations, Métis Nations, Indigenous Collectives and an Indigenous Organization that both reside along the shoreline or maintain Treaty or Aboriginal rights along the shoreline including: 13 First Nations, 5 Tribal Nations, 2 Indigenous collectives, 2 Métis Nations and 1 Indigenous Organization, the Water Walkers.

The Planting a Relationship and Learning Towards Action sessions were open in approach, with land acknowledgements, a GLAM presentation and facilitated listening based on five core themes:

1. Impacts to Land and Territory;
2. Maintaining Cultural Practices and Traditions;
3. Capacity and Resources from Fluctuating Water Levels;
4. Building and Sustaining Relations; and
5. Exploring Data Sharing.



Relationship Development in 2021

Starting in August 2021, 83% of Indigenous communities responded to request for engagement, and 48% participated in listening sessions. 13 Listening Sessions were hosted in total between August 2021 and March 2022. There was equal representation between Indigenous communities experiencing direct impacts from fluctuating water levels and those that maintain Treaty Rights/Inherent Rights along the shoreline.



Taking Action Moving Forward: Initial Feedback

1 **Greater relationship development, capacity and funding are needed**
Indigenous Nations want their ideas heard, action, meaningful change and someone at the table to represent them. They want ethical space created by building up capacity for both the IJC/GLAM and Indigenous communities.

2 **Braiding Indigenous knowledge with Western science to protect shoreline and water**
Indigenous Nations recommend a medicine wheel and watershed approach to support greater balance across the system including the creation of buffer zones to protect the shoreline and sensitive areas as well as the development of cultural indicators to guide decision-making in adaptive management.

3 **Communications and Data Sharing**
Indigenous Nations are interested in keeping up to date through quarterly emails, online questionnaires, webinars, virtual meetings, and newsletters. They are also interested in sharing data in accordance with OCAP® principles, exploring the development of a platform for sharing through collaborative efforts and having a larger role in data collection and sharing.

More will be coming ...

Please see the Phase 1 Report, and look for a more detailed summary of the Indigenous Listening Sessions later in 2022

Impacts from Indigenous communities on fluctuating water levels and the outflows from the Moses Saunders Dam are summarized below. A forthcoming report will offer more detail on these key messages.

- **Water is medicine** and has spirit; our relationship with water is not separate, it is us, and science-based decisions are impacting traditional activities, leading to a loss of land, culture, history and species.
- **The dam is** considered a form of environmental violence
- **There are impacts** to rights from fluctuating water levels through damage to Indigenous communities' homes, infrastructure, environment and burial sites with flooding, in some cases, lasting months before receding; and, in other cases, annual land loss through erosion and commercial navigation each year with no support.
- **Fluctuating water levels** causing erosion with floating bogs, pollution, habitat loss, temperature changes and invasive species, leading to multiple impacts to land, plants and animals which in turn impact exercising of traditional rights, i.e. wetland loss leads to loss of medicinal harvesting
- **There are generational** impacts during high water events, with Indigenous communities in a prolonged state of emergency from flooding while in others, limited access to the water's edge makes transfer of traditional knowledge difficult as teachings cannot be shared leading to a loss of generational knowledge and lack of ability to live off the land
- **Serious risk to** public health from contaminating drinking water with flooding over wells and septic beds as well as from pollution and agricultural runoff and spills during high water from commercial ships, i.e. some community members do not want to collect medicinal plants nor consume the fish due to pollution concerns.