



Executive Summary

The Marten Falls First Nation Community Access Road (Community Access Road) is a proposed, 184 kilometre, all-season road that will connect the Community to the Ontario provincial highway network. Planning for the road must meet both federal and provincial requirements before approval can be granted to proceed with construction activities.

One of the federal requirements is the preparation of an assessment summary of the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement that contains sufficient details for the reader to understand the Project. To meet this requirement, and provide readers with easy access to the information they value most, we have created a package of information that consists of the following components:

- Executive summary;
- Chiefs letter;
- Technical discipline plain language summaries); and
- Other supporting information.

The federal and provincial process use different terminology. The Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement has been prepared typically using the federal terminology, except for effects assessment, which is used interchangeably.

ES 1. Our Story

We, Marten Falls First Nation, are an Anishinaabe community located at the junction of the Albany and Ogoki Rivers in northern Ontario. The nearest major city to our Community is Thunder Bay, Ontario, approximately 430 kilometres to the southeast.

This land has provided generously for our people, who have lived for generations according to its rhythms and been governed by its natural laws. We call this Anishinaabe bimaadiziwin—Anishinaabe way of living. It describes the way in which we, as spiritual beings, are connected to the land and all other living beings. As Anishinaabe people, we follow a set of instructions and teachings—called mino-bimaadiziwin / living a good life—that were gifted to us by the Creator and detail how we must interact with all of Creation in ways that are good and healthy.

Our ancestors lived seasonally, following the natural cycles of hunting, fishing and gathering. Colonization; however, brought drastic changes. Newcomers unfamiliar with our ways overhunted animals and imposed policies like the *Indian Act* (Government of Canada, 2019a), which restricted our traditional practices and mobility. Our children were taken to residential schools, where many suffered abuses, leaving a legacy of intergenerational trauma.

The remote location of our Community poses significant hardship. Marten Falls is only accessible year-round by air transportation out of Thunder Bay and Nakina, Ontario. In addition to access by air, a winter access road is built on an annual basis, but climate change is making this temporary road increasingly less reliable. This limits access to essential goods and services, while also limiting



economic growth and opportunity. The possibility to visit family and keep our bonds strong is also limited, as is our access to the broader region, food, clean drinking water, fuel, building supplies and health care services.

To remedy these issues, we are proposing a multi-purpose all-season community access road which will connect us to the Ontario provincial highway network. It will open access to goods and services and will allow our community members to move towards a better future. An all-season community access road will allow us to assert our sovereignty and secure a better future for our members. The Community Access Road is also an act of economic reconciliation. We are proposing an approach to sustainable development that is framed by our worldview as Anishinaabe peoples and is steeped in our Community's values.

ES 2. Why We Need This Road

The Community Access Road will connect us to the main highways in Ontario. It will allow families to visit one another more easily and make travel safer. It will lower the cost of food, fuel and other supplies, and will improve community services like health, education and wellness. Our new road to the Community will also open new opportunities for the Community to grow and flourish.

A multi-purpose road can also increase economic opportunities for Indigenous communities and others. The Community Access Road is anticipated to create jobs during construction and through operations. It will improve Marten Falls First Nation's access to employment opportunities because our members will be able to reliably commute to work year-round.

While the main use of the Community Access Road will be for Marten Falls First Nation, the province also wants it to be used for potential future mineral exploration. Building the Community Access Road is part of the provincial government's promise to create jobs, provide long-term benefits and make life better for people in the far north.

The Community Access Road will not solve all our challenges, but it does represent a step in a positive direction. It opens the door to new opportunities to grow as a community and offers hope for a better future.

ES 3. Our Roles

We, Marten Falls First Nation, are the Proponent of the Community Access Road. We are also an Indigenous community who needs to be consulted with. We have one Chief and eight council members, who are elected every 2 years in accordance with the *Indian Act* electoral system. As both the Proponent and the governing body, our Chief and Council have the unique responsibility to further the Community Access Road while also ensuring that community members are consulted with and heard. They are also responsible for representing our members in a way that promotes the best interests of our Community. The power to make major decisions resides with the Community and Chief and Council. This includes, for example, the approval of the Preferred Route of our road and approval of the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement.



The Marten Falls First Nation Community Access Road Project Team (the Project Team) was formed to support us in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement, and in meeting consultation and engagement requirements. The Project Team includes two Senior Community Member Advisors, a Project Director and a Technical Lead. The Project Team acts with the guidance, direction and input from our Chief and Council, the Community Member Advisors and the community membership.

The Project Team is tasked with managing and guiding the consultants, dealing with financials, responding to inquiries and reviewing technical documents among other tasks. The Project Team is also tasked with providing the Community and Chief and Council with regular updates on progress, upcoming decisions needed and next steps. They work with the technical experts and engineers to find a way to share data and information with Marten Falls First Nation.

ES 4. How We Selected Our Road

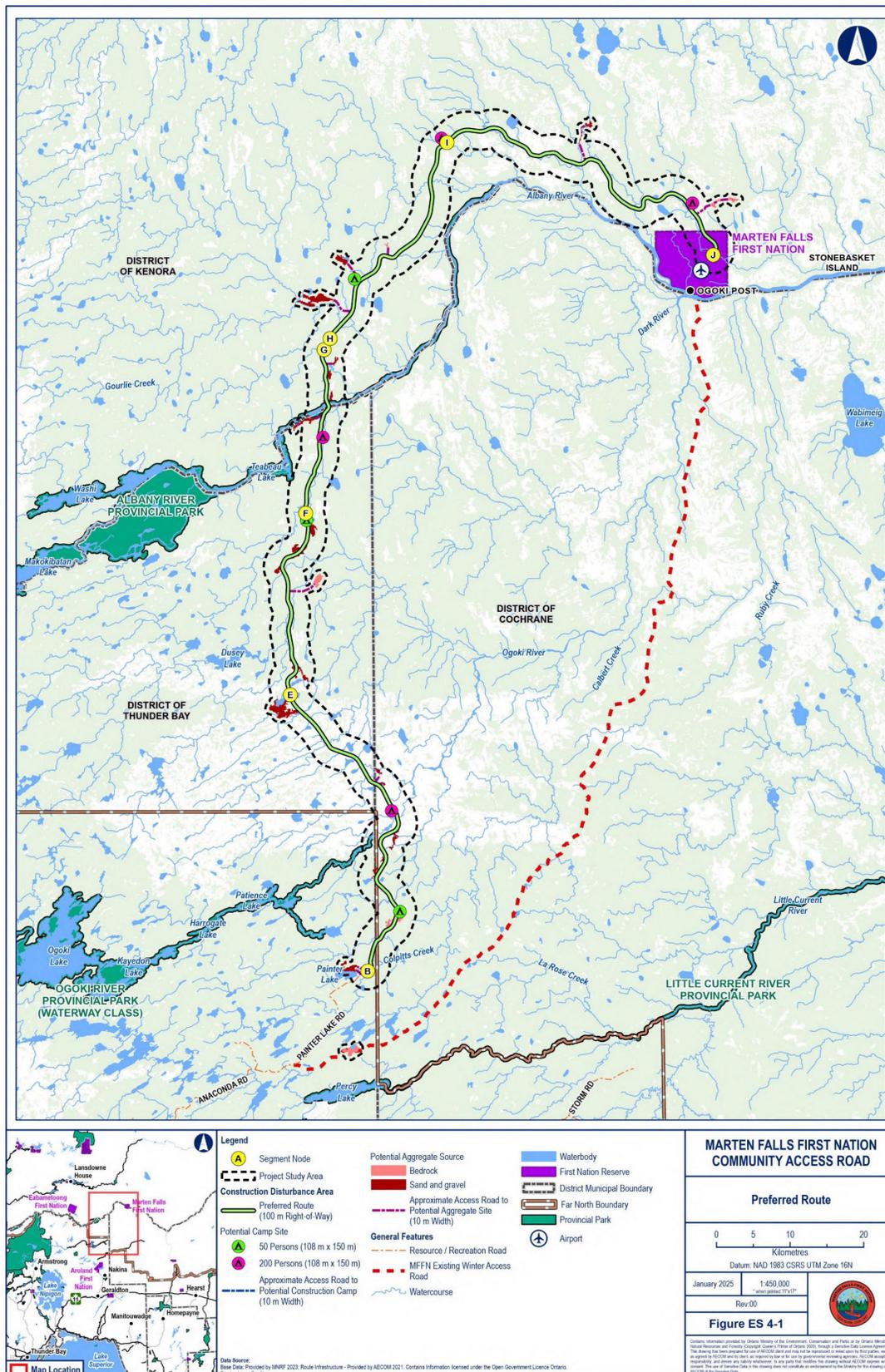
Since 2007, a lot of effort has been invested in identifying the preferred route for the Community Access Road. In 2019, the choice was narrowed down to two alternatives— Alternative 1 and Alternative 4. Both start at Painter Lake Road and run north approximately 130 kilometres before turning eastward towards our Community, roughly following the north side of the Albany River.

Alternative 1 and Alternative 4 run parallel, overlap and cross each other at multiple locations. There were three main route options from which to choose the preferred route. These included choosing an alternative to cross the Ogoki River, choosing one to cross the Albany River and finally choosing the alternative that turns eastward towards Marten Falls.

Between 2019 and 2024, technical experts had collected data for their areas of expertise to understand the existing conditions of the natural, socio-economic and cultural environments. In the summer of 2023, the technical experts and engineers were asked to consider the data available to them, including Indigenous Knowledge, to identify the criteria that would be used to compare Alternative 1 and Alternative 4 and ultimately identify the preferred route. Results of this comparison, along with the Community's recommendations, were shared with our community members, our Chief and Council, Indigenous communities, interested persons and government agencies. The initial recommendations evolved in consideration of the feedback received, and a preferred route recommendation was presented to our Chief and Council for consideration. A Band Council Resolution supporting the preferred route (the Preferred Route) was signed on August 26, 2024. Refer to Figure ES 4-1 for the Preferred Route



Figure ES 4-1: Preferred Route





ES 5. Roles of the Regulators

Before being able to build the Community Access Road, approvals need to be obtained for different project activities, like construction of the Community Access Road and the setting up aggregate sites to help with construction. In the case of the Community Access Road, there are both federal and provincial requirements that need to be met before obtaining those approvals.

A Draft Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement was released in 2025 to allow Indigenous communities, the public, and regulators an opportunity to provide their feedback. The Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement was prepared to meet the intent of both the federal Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines (Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, 2020a) and the provincial Terms of Reference. Feedback on the Draft Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement has been reviewed and incorporated, as appropriate, to prepare the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement.

The regulators will evaluate the information provided, along with feedback received from Indigenous communities and interested parties, to reach a decision on whether or not the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement meets their requirements.

ES 6. Our Approach

The methodology to complete an Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement is complicated and very technical. The Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement for the Community Access Road needs to meet both federal and provincial requirements. The following bullet points offer a summary of the steps completed as part of the effects assessment.

- **Indigenous Knowledge:** In 2019, the Project Team launched a program to collect Indigenous Knowledge. At the time of issuing the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement some Indigenous communities had shared their Indigenous Knowledge. This was woven with scientific approaches. Both Indigenous Knowledge and western science were considered in forming the foundation for existing conditions, predicting potential effects and determining appropriate mitigation and monitoring methods.
- **Gender-Based Analysis Plus:** This is an approach to help understand who is impacted by a project and assess how they may experience impacts differently. Examples of this could include how women might experience construction camps near their community or Indigenous workers experience joining a majority non-Indigenous work force. This analysis is important to Marten Falls First Nation as a member of a visible minority. This analysis was approached differently by each technical discipline, as some have less direct influence on Gender-Based Analysis Plus than others.
- **Technical Disciplines:** A total of 18 technical disciplines are considered in the Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement. These were grouped into water, land and people.
- **Valued Components:** The effects assessment started with identifying what is valuable to Indigenous peoples, the public, federal authorities and interested parties and could be impacted by the Community Access Road; these are referred to as valued components. An initial list was provided by government agencies. Throughout the development of the field studies, the valued



component list was expanded to consider Indigenous Knowledge and conversations with members of Marten Falls First Nation and other communities.

- **Indicators:** The next step was to find a way to measure potential effects or changes to each valued component resulting from the Community Access Road. These are called indicators. They represent the resource, feature or issue related to a valued component that, if changed, may demonstrate an effect on water, land or people.
- **Project Activities:** Understanding how project activities interact with water, land, and people during both construction and operation / maintenance phases is crucial for assessing potential effects. Not all construction and operations activities are relevant to every valued component.
- **Physical Boundaries:** These need to be defined to inform the areas which each valued component will study.
- **Temporal Boundaries:** These establish how long to consider the effects assessment. Specifically for the Community Access Road, construction, operations and maintenance were considered. Construction is anticipated to last between 3 and 10 years, while operations and maintenance are anticipated to be permanent activities.
- **Existing Conditions:** Data on land, water and people were gathered to understand the current conditions of the area in and around the Community Access Road.
- **Residual Effects:** The existing conditions, along side the description of anticipated construction, operations, and maintenance activities, were used to determine the potential interactions between the Community Access Road and land, water and people. After the potential interactions were determined, potential effects to the valued components were identified, and strategies to avoid or mitigate the effect were examined. Residual effects are the effects remaining after the application of mitigation measures. Residual effects assessments identified positive and negative effects to the existing conditions as a result of the Community Access Road. With this information, the technical disciplines drafted a description of the anticipated effects to each valued component.
- **Cumulative Effects:** The *Impact Assessment Act* (Government of Canada, 2019b) requires that each Environmental Assessment of a project consider any cumulative environmental effects that are likely to result from the project in combination with the environmental effects of other physical activities that have been or will be carried out. An inclusions list was prepared, which considered relevant existing and planned projects. The list was then updated with feedback from Indigenous communities, stakeholders and regulators. Each technical discipline reviewed the inclusions list to assess potential effects from other projects and added these to the effects to land, water and people from the Community Access Road. The cumulative effects assessment builds on the results of the effects assessment and will consider the incremental changes that are predicted to have a likely residual adverse effect on a valued component.

ES 7. The Engineering of our Road

The proposed Community Access Road will consist of a new all-season multi-purpose road from Painter Lake Road to Marten Falls. Options for road ownership, operation and maintenance activities, and liability are being considered in discussion with the province.



The Community Access Road will consist of the road itself, associated access roads, rest areas / pull outs, bridges, culverts, pits and quarries:

- Approximately 184 kilometres of all-season gravel road;
- Bridge and / or culvert installations for river and stream crossings;
- Right-of-way, approximately 100 metres wide, cleared to a width of 60 metres;
- Two-lane roadway, approximately 12 to 13 metres wide;
- Posted speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour;
- Culverts to maintain water flow connectivity and balance water levels;
- Borrow areas, aggregate and borrow source areas, and aggregate sites;
- Temporary access roads and construction of temporary crossings;
- Temporary work areas and camps, and
- Road maintenance facilities, rest stops, and pull-out areas.

The Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Assessment has completed a preliminary design of the roadway, meaning that the details of how the Community Access Road will be built are still conceptual and presented at a high level only.

ES 8. Life on Our Land

An important step of the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement is to understand the current state of the natural environment, socio-economic environment and cultural environment, referred to as existing conditions. Environmental studies, both desktop and field, were completed by the technical disciplines to document and assess the existing conditions for both Alternative 1 and Alternative 4. As with the selection of the Preferred Route, the technical disciplines were grouped into water, land and people. The reason for this grouping is included below:

- **Water:** Water is life; it gives to the land and all the species that dwell here.
- **Land:** Marten Falls First Nation has a deep and enduring connection to the land. Land is central to their identity, culture and way of life. They view the land and its living creatures as integral to the circle of life, essential for maintaining balance and harmony in the environment. Traditional activities, such as moose hunting, allow them to sustain their connection to the land and each other. While open to development, Marten Falls First Nation members emphasize the importance of conserving the land and resources to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy and benefit from them.
- **People:** Trapping, fishing and hunting are important activities to maintain the Community's food security and cultural heritage. Once common practices for Marten Falls First Nation are being challenged because of economic changes and environmental impacts. Marten Falls First Nation values sustainable ecosystem management. Overall, community members are committed to preserving their way of life and ensuring the health of their environment for future generations.



Given the volume and complexity of the information gathered through these studies, plain language summaries have been developed for each technical discipline to help the reader better understand the study findings. To avoid duplicating the information here, within the main body of the executive summary, the plain language summaries for technical discipline information are available under separate covers. These documents combined make up the assessment summary as required by the federal Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines. This information is also available on the Project site (Marten Falls First Nation, 2026).

Each technical discipline's plain language summary includes a description of the following:

- Introduction;
- Existing conditions;
- Potential effects and mitigations;
- Residual effects; and
- Cumulative effects.

We have combined some of the technical discipline plain language summaries where it makes sense to do so, for example, where they are interconnected and where the amount of information allows for combining. The plain language summaries are grouped as follows:

- Fish and fish habitat;
- Groundwater and surface water;
- Peatlands;
- Soils and vegetation;
- Wildlife and birds;
- Ungulates;
- Acoustic, atmospheric environment and green house gases;
- Archaeology and cultural heritage;
- Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests;
- Climate change;
- Community well-being (economic, human health and community safety, and social); and
- Visual environment and land and resource use.

ES 9. How Our Road will Change Our Land

As noted above, information was collected for both Alternative 1 and Alternative 4 to understand existing conditions of the natural, socio-economic and cultural environments. The information was also used to support Marten Falls First Nation in choosing the Preferred Route. Each technical discipline completed an effects assessment. This consisted of potential effects (positive, negative, and neutral) as well as mitigation and enhancement measures, and an assessment of residual



effects.

Each technical discipline used existing conditions information along side the description of anticipated construction, operations and maintenance activities. This was used to determine the potential interactions between the Community Access Road and the environment. After the potential interactions were determined, potential effects were identified, and strategies to avoid or mitigate the effects were examined. Mitigations are strategies to reduce the potential negative effects on the environment.

After implementing mitigation measures, a residual effects assessment is conducted to determine if any left-over effects remain. This ensures that all potential effects are thoroughly evaluated and managed. A description of residual effects is included in the plain language summaries for each of the technical disciplines.

It is important to highlight some of the positive effects the Community Access Road could have in addition to those listed in ES 2. The Community Access Road will improve access to currently remote areas and may benefit Indigenous communities already connected to the provincial road network by making it easier to exercise traditional land use rights. Shorter and safer travel to hunting, trapping, and fishing grounds can extend seasons, lower costs, and strengthen traditional harvesting.

By improving access to traditional lands and teaching sites, the Community Access Road could also deliver positive outcomes. Elders and Knowledge Holders could more readily teach hunting, fishing, trapping, and food processing, strengthening intergenerational knowledge transfer. More time on the land reinforces life skills and cultural values alongside technical harvesting and could support everyday use of Indigenous languages. Community members would become engaged in preparing and sharing country foods, strengthening social bonds, and enhancing food security. Easier access could encourage participation in cultural activities and deepen connections to language and culture.

ES 10. Cumulative Effects

There are three key concepts relating to cumulative effects that need to be understood. These include:

- **Temporal Overlap:** When one activity happens at the same time as another activity;
- **Spatial Overlap:** When one activity happens in the same area as another activity; and
- **Reasonably Foreseeable Projects:** The last concept relates to projects that you can reasonably anticipate for consideration in the cumulative effects assessment.

To understand the cumulative effects on noise levels, you would need to:

- Understand existing conditions;
- Understand your **effects**;
- Consider mitigation measures;
- Assess **residual effects**, or the left-over effects after applying mitigation measures; and



- Add **potential effects from other activities**. Once you know the residual effects of your project, you would add the potential effects of other reasonably foreseeable projects that are happening at the same time, and in the same area.

Following the steps above helps identify the cumulative effects.

As indicated above, the plain language summaries include a description of cumulative effects for each technical discipline.

ES 11. We Listened

Marten Falls First Nation has been consulting and engaging on the Community Access Road with Indigenous communities, interested persons, and government agencies since 2019. As part of the Environmental Assessment Process (Assessment Process), Marten Falls First Nation was required to consult and engage with Indigenous communities, Tribal Councils and Political Treaty Organizations / Provincial Territorial Organizations.

Since the beginning of the Assessment Process, there have been significant achievements. A highlight of this process has been the ongoing communication and relationship building with Indigenous communities, government agencies, and interested persons, culminating in:

- Sharing early findings of the existing conditions reports, and results and recommendations, to support the selection of the Preferred Route;
- Obtaining a Band Council Resolution from Marten Falls First Nation for the Preferred Route in August 2024;
- Receiving and incorporating feedback on community-specific Milestone Progress Reports #1, 2, 3, and 4;
- Receiving and incorporating feedback (as appropriate) on the Draft Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement;
- Obtaining a Band Council Resolution from Marten Falls First Nation for the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement in February 2026; and
- Submitting the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement in February 2026 for further review and feedback.

Relationship building has been at the core of consultation and engagement efforts. Over the years, progress has been made to establish lines of communication, increase active participation, and satisfy / resolve concerns and issues. Progress has also been made to host Council-to-Council meetings between Marten Falls First Nation and other Indigenous communities (for example, Eabametoong First Nation and Aroland First Nation) to discuss relationship protocols, approaches for meaningful consultation and engagement, and to provide updates related to the Community Access Road.

As the Proponent for the Community Access Road, Marten Falls First Nation members had additional consultation and engagement opportunities, including meetings and the review of documents in



advance of other Indigenous communities, government agencies, and interested persons. Material shared with Marten Falls First Nation during meetings was edited based on community feedback to make sure the Project approach was based on direct input and feedback from the Community. This early involvement has allowed the Community to provide valuable insights and feedback on various aspects of the Community Access Road, including the Environmental Assessment / Impact Assessment process, Indigenous Knowledge Program, and route selection.

There have been various consultation and engagement activities up to the submission of the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement. Some highlights include, but are not limited to:

- Five Public Information Centres since the start of the Environmental Assessment milestone in October 2021;
- Four provincially-supported forums, including two Aboriginal and / or Treaty Rights and Interests Forums and two Three-Road Project Gathering and Expo, jointly held between the Community Access Road, Webequie Supply Road, and Northern Road Link with Indigenous communities;
- Over 50 virtual and / or in-person meetings with Indigenous communities, government agencies, and interested persons;
- Development and participation in the Indigenous Knowledge Program, Community Co-ordinator Program, and the Community Capacity Funding Program for Indigenous communities;
- Distribution and follow-up of consultation and engagement Progress Reports for Indigenous communities;
- Webinars and videos related to valued components, cumulative effects, climate change adaptation, route selection and route updates, and the Draft Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement; and
- Distribution of monthly E-Blasts (newsletters), field notices and discussion guides, and seeking feedback and input monthly by Indigenous Community Leads.

All of these activities culminate to help with the review of the Final Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement. Details on the consultation and engagement program are found in Section 11 and Appendix X, the Final Record of Consultation and Engagement, including the Cumulative Effects Consultation Report.

ES 12. Our Changing Climate

Climate change presents many challenges in remote areas like Marten Falls. During the 2023 / 2024 winter season, most winter access roads to northern communities including Marten Falls were not opened or only opened for light traffic (Stimpson, 2024). Climate events such as increased rainfall, flooding, wildfire risks, extreme heat, and ecosystem shifts have the potential to affect both the construction and long-term use of the Community Access Road. If climate events result in the closure of the Community Access Road, it will also affect us and potentially other communities that depend on it.

The Community Access Road incorporates mitigation strategies to lower emissions from construction



and maintenance activities. Adaptation measures are also incorporated by designing infrastructure that can withstand expected climate conditions. The goal is to build a road that is resilient and minimizes risks to surrounding communities in a changing climate. While these strategies will greatly enhance the Community Access Road's resilience, they will not eliminate all risks.

ES 13. Other Regulatory Requirements

One of the federal requirements is an assessment of potential accidents and malfunctions of the Community Access Road. Based on its design and intended use, professional judgement, and experience with other remote road projects, potential accidents or malfunctions were identified, such as spills, transportation accidents, and extreme weather events, among others.

Accidents can be prevented through good planning and design. In addition, safety measures can be implemented to reduce the likelihood of an accident happening and, if one does occur, to manage it effectively. A requirement that the contractor selected for construction of the Community Access Road will have to fulfill is the preparation and implementation of plans to prevent accidents and malfunctions. These could include but not limited to a Spill Contingency Plan, Waste Management Plan, Emergency Response Plan, and Wildlife Management Plan.

The Community Access Road will be designed in accordance with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation Roadside Design Manual (Ontario Ministry of Transportation, 2023). In addition, the geometric design criteria used for the design and construction of the Community Access Road will be based on the latest and best practices from the Transportation Association of Canada and Ministry of Transportation of Ontario Design Supplement.

The lack of an appropriate plan to support Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous workers in their interactions could also be considered a potential accident and malfunction to the Anishinaabeg culture. During construction, the contractor, with guidance and support from Marten Falls First Nation, will be required to provide mandatory, ongoing cultural awareness and sensitivity training to protect the Anishinaabeg. The training should be developed with Indigenous communities to avoid further damage due to the opening of roads to the north. It can also be a means to building trust and understanding, and to protect the Anishinaabeg culture.

The federal Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines require information on how the Community Access Road may contribute to Canada's ability to meet its environmental obligations and commitments. During the route selection process, the Project Team prioritized environmental sustainability when analyzing data collected by technical experts in the water, land, and people categories. This analysis ensured that the Preferred Route for each of the three segments were those that had the least impact on the environment when compared to other options. Environmental sustainability was a consideration throughout, influencing the Preferred Route selection and the development of mitigation measures and monitoring activities.



ES 14. Monitoring Programs and Future Commitments

Monitoring programs serve to verify the accuracy of the effects assessment and evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation and enhancement measures. Monitoring programs also include future commitments related to mitigating residual effects. A project-specific environmental monitoring program will be developed and implemented that includes the monitoring commitments related to valued components presented in the Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement.

The Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement considers pre-construction and construction monitoring programs, as well as operation and maintenance monitoring programs and future commitments for the various technical disciplines.

ES 15. Summary and Recommendations

The Community Access Road will connect Marten Falls to Ontario's main highways, making travel safer and allowing families to visit one another more easily. It will help lower the cost of food, fuel, and other supplies while improving community services such as health care, education, and wellness. The Community Access Road will also create new opportunities for the Community to grow and flourish.

As a multi-purpose road, it can also increase economic opportunities for Indigenous communities and others. The Community Access Road is anticipated to create jobs during construction and through operations.

The Community Access Road will not solve all the Community's challenges, but it does represent a step in a positive direction. It opens the door to new opportunities to grow as a community and offers hope for a better future. As Chief Bruce puts it, "It is not just a path to progress; it is a testament to our resilience, our vision for the future, and our commitment to the well-being of our people." From a community point of view, the Marten Falls First Nation supports the Community Access Road.

Marten Falls First Nation looks forward to continuing the conversation on next steps throughout the Assessment Process.