

# Social Cultural, Economic, Health, and Indigenous Peoples Baseline Studies

## Preliminary Report for Engagement

### Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – Ignace Area



**InterGroup**

C O N S U L T A N T S

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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*The Nuclear Waste Management Organization acknowledges that we have worked in many different Indigenous territories since the inception of the organization. The NWMO is grateful to the Indigenous and municipal communities they have worked with over the past 20 years.*

*We acknowledge that we are working in Northwestern Ontario in the traditional territory of Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation with the community of Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation and the Township of Ignace.*

*We further acknowledge that we have the privilege of working with other First Nations and organizations, with Métis communities and the Métis Nation of Ontario, and many municipal communities that have all expressed an interest in learning about our work.*

*As part of our commitment to reconciliation, we recognize both the historic and current injustices far too many Indigenous communities endure. We pledge to do our part to encourage well-being in communities with which we work.*

## GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Details
Baseline Studies	The Social Cultural, Economic, Health, and Indigenous Peoples Baseline Studies
CNSC	Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
IAAC	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
IAWG	Ignace Area Working Group
Indigenous identity	'Indigenous identity' includes persons who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis, or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who are Registered or Treaty Indians (that is registered under the Indian Act of Canada) and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the Constitution Act 1982 section 35(2) as including the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.
Local Study Area	<p>The Local Study Area refers to the communities/areas that are most likely to experience future direct, indirect, and induced impacts of the Project, both positive and negative. For the purposes of the Baseline Studies, the potential "host" community is considered central to the Local Study Area, while other communities are included on a topic-by-topic basis relative to potential future impacts and cumulative effects.</p> <p>The Local Study Area in some sections includes Indigenous peoples that reside in the communities of the Local Study Area, but is not representative of any specific Indigenous community or First Nation.</p>
NWMO	Nuclear Waste Management Organization
Project Site	Refers to the area withdrawn from other land uses, or the lands accessed by the NWMO for the purposes of potential siting for the deep geological repository.
Regional Study Area	<p>The Regional Study Area refers to the area used to provide context for each component and may also experience future impacts of the Project (both positive and negative). During the future impact assessment, cumulative effects will be considered within the Regional Study Area.</p> <p>The Regional Study Area includes people living in municipalities, unincorporated communities, and Indigenous reserves and settlements. This includes people living both on-and off- reserve.</p>
The Project	The Adaptive Phased Management Project
Tailored Guidelines template	<i>Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines Template for Designated Projects Subject to the Impact Assessment Act and the Nuclear Safety and Control Act</i>

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

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## 1.1 THE ADAPTIVE PHASED MANAGEMENT PROJECT AND SITE SELECTION PROCESS

The Adaptive Phased Management Project (the “Project”) refers to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization’s (“NWMO”) plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. It emerged from a three-year dialogue with specialists, the public, and Indigenous peoples. The Project is both a technical method and a management system. The technical method is the centralized containment and isolation of Canada’s used nuclear fuel in a deep geological repository in an area of suitable geology and with an informed and willing host. The management system involves realistic, manageable phases marked by explicit decision points, allowing for flexibility in how the process is implemented. In addition to a deep geologic repository, the Project will include a Centre of Expertise (NWMO 2020a, 2021).

The Project fosters the sustained engagement of people and communities throughout implementation. The site selection process has involved extensive learning and dialogue with communities. When initiated in 2010, 22 municipalities (including two Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan) expressed interest in learning more about the potential to become a host. Site evaluations and social engagement over the years narrowed the NWMO’s focus to two siting areas – one in Northwestern Ontario and one in Southwestern Ontario (NWMO 2020a, 2021). Continued engagement with the siting area communities and exploring a sustainable partnership that will foster community well-being are ongoing. Detailed site characterization studies, including environmental and socio-economic studies, were completed to confirm the siting area is suitable for hosting the Project.

In preparing for the next stages of the site selection process and the transition to a federal impact assessment and Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (“CNSC”) licensing process, the NWMO initiated baseline studies for the Social Cultural, Economic, Health, and Indigenous Peoples environment in Northwestern Ontario (the Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – Ignace area) and Southwestern Ontario (the Saugeen Ojibway Nation – South Bruce area). This is in addition to biodiversity studies (Zoetica 2020a, 2020b) and environmental media studies (CanNorth 2019, 2020) that are also underway.

This report presents the social cultural, economic and health baseline characteristics relevant to the Northwestern Ontario, with a focus on the municipal context. With respect for ongoing relationships with First Nations and Métis communities in Northwestern Ontario, the NWMO intends to work in the spirit and intent of its Reconciliation Policy (NWMO 2019) and Indigenous Knowledge Policy (NWMO 2020b). Baseline studies for Indigenous communities will be approached in a manner preferred by those communities. Indigenous populations are acknowledged and are described where information was available in the municipal context; however, the findings presented herein are not representative of any specific First Nation or Métis communities in Northwestern Ontario.

## 1.2 BASELINE STUDIES PURPOSE

The Social Cultural, Economic, Health, and Indigenous Peoples<sup>1</sup> Baseline Studies (hereafter “the Baseline Studies”) will feed into a future impact assessment to examine the potential effects of the Project. The Baseline Studies form part of the NWMO’s broader baseline programs, as depicted in **Figure 1.2-1**. It is acknowledged the Revell Site in Northwestern Ontario is in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and Métis people of Treaty 3.

The Baseline Studies for the Project were designed to satisfy the requirements of the *Impact Assessment Act* (2019a) and associated guidance materials. In particular, the template for the *Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines Template for Designated Projects Subject to the Impact Assessment Act and the Nuclear Safety and Control Act* (“Tailored Guidelines template”) (IAAC 2019b) developed by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the “IAAC”) was considered relevant. Numerous guidance documents offered as part of the Practitioners Guide to Federal Impact Assessments under the *Impact Assessment Act*, (considered as “evergreen” documents by the IAAC) were also consulted. Guidance materials were revisited throughout the Baseline Studies process, and the approach was tailored where appropriate, and relevant to the information available. The Tailored Guidelines template was revised in December 2022 and updates will be incorporated in a potential future impact assessment. Regulatory documents from the CNSC (e.g., REGDOC 1.2.1, Guidance on Deep Geological Repository Site Characterization [2021]) are also considered.

As the Project evolves, and the site selection process is completed, corresponding studies are expected to characterize the social cultural, economic, health, and Indigenous peoples context for Northwestern Ontario with a focus on:

1. Social Cultural, Economic, and Health Baseline Studies that described existing and future (without the Project) baseline conditions within a local and regional study area. This report presented the findings of the municipal context, which is inclusive of Indigenous peoples who reside within the communities and where data is available, but is not reflective of the socio-economic conditions within any specific First Nation or Métis community; and
2. The Indigenous Peoples Baseline Studies are part of the broader program characterizing the overall socio-economic and cultural conditions within a local and regional study area. Baseline information is required on existing social conditions regarding First Nation and Métis communities whose rights and interests may be impacted by the Project.

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<sup>1</sup> There are three groups of Indigenous Peoples recognized in the Canadian constitution: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. These three distinct groups of Indigenous people have unique histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs (Government of Canada 2021). In Northwestern Ontario, Indigenous peoples refers largely to First Nations and Métis people.



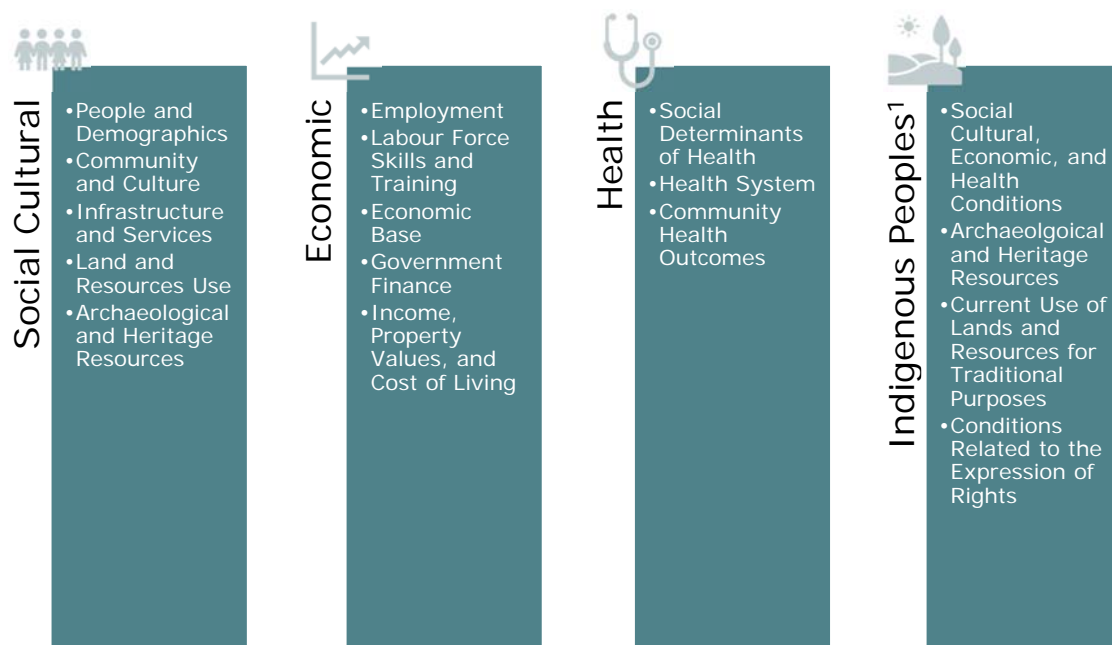
Figure 1.2-1: NWMO Baseline Programs



### 1.3 BASELINE STUDIES ORGANIZATION

The Baseline Studies are organized under four pillars: Social Cultural, Economic, Health, and Indigenous Peoples. Under each pillar, a series of components were studied to understand existing and potential future (without the Project) baseline conditions within the study areas (with the exception of the Indigenous Peoples pillar, to be completed at a future date). A summary of the baseline components for each pillar of the assessment is provided in **Figure 1.3-1**.

Figure 1.3-1: Summary of Components for Social Cultural, Economic, Health, and Indigenous Peoples Pillars



**Note:**

1. The NWMO's approach to Indigenous Baseline Studies will be non-prescriptive and may be Indigenous community-led. It is anticipated this will include processes in which the NWMO shares its understanding of the regulatory requirements, along with sharing any other pertinent information with communities to support them in defining their own processes and studies.

This report is organized into the following sections and presents the results for the municipal context:

- Section 1.0: Introduction and Approach;
- Section 2.0: Social Cultural Components;
- Section 3.0: Economic Components; and
- Section 4.0: Health Components.

Each section includes a description of the approach taken to baseline characterization, details on methods specific to the baseline components, the results of the studies to date, and supporting methods and data appendices where applicable.

## 1.4 BASELINE DESIGN

In 2021, a *Baseline Studies Preliminary Design Report for Engagement* was drafted to guide the baseline study process. The overall approach to designing the Baseline Studies was intended to be interactive and adaptive, allowing for the research design to respond to the complexity and dynamic character of the region (Nelson 1991), inclusive of the interests of communities through the process. It is expected the baseline conditions will continue to evolve as the Project progresses through its next phases. A copy of the *Baseline Studies Preliminary Design Report for Engagement* is provided in **Appendix 1A**. The preliminary design report was built on engagement, information gathering, and learning and dialogue with communities, area leaders, and residents at multiple levels since 2010, which are summarized in **Appendix 1A**. This included the completion of numerous studies, engagement processes, consideration of best practices, and most recently a series of community studies between 2021 and 2022 that helped to consider the potential Project changes to communities in the area. The community studies were considered as a central source of information and are described in more detail below. Other previous studies are identified in **Appendix 1A**.

### 1.4.1 Community Studies

The community studies were important contributors to the Baseline Studies, but were also designed more specifically to inform a hosting agreement between the Township of Ignace and the NWMO. The community studies were carried out collaboratively between the NWMO and the Township of Ignace. The community studies also provided pertinent information for other future agreements with communities within the region which may be contemplated at later stages in the siting process. Data collection for the community studies and the Baseline Studies often occurred concurrently. The community studies considered the changes from the Project that would drive potential effects in Ignace, other communities in the area, and the broader region. The community studies:

- Explored topics of interest for each of the “vision pillars” (People, Community and Culture, Economics and Finance, and Infrastructure) as expressed by Ignace residents through the Township of Ignace’s 2020 project visioning process;
- Identified Project changes driving potential impacts associated with each study topic;
- Described the characteristics of the existing environment with the potential to be affected by the Project;
- Identified and assessed possible programs and opportunities to leverage potential benefits and mitigate potential impacts;
- Advanced learning and understanding on topics of interest to communities in the Ignace area and region; and
- Provided information to the Township of Ignace that continues to inform dialogue prior to the conclusion of the site selection process in 2024.

The list of community studies completed is provided in **Table 1.4-1**.

**Table 1.4-1: List of Socio-economic Community Studies**

<b>Community Study Name</b>	<b>Community Study Objectives</b>
Growing the population and options study	Looked at the opportunities and challenges with anticipated population growth and identified options to leverage possible benefits and mitigate potential negative impacts in the Ignace area.
Ignace and area health services study	Assessed the potential impact of the Project on community health services and options to mitigate Project-related consequences. This included identification of options for both the incremental expansion of community health services and infrastructure if required, and the mitigation of potential changes of concern to communities.
Community and culture study	Described the cultural, social, and recreational services in the Ignace area, outlined the communities' aspirations relative to these services, and developed scenarios and ideas in response to projected population and residency changes and impacts associated with the Project.
Labour baseline study	Assessed the labour supply and demand in the area including trends and issues. This information supports a better understanding of the workforce related to the Project.
Workforce development study	Characterized the workforce within the Ignace area and provided options to meet direct employment needs of the Project.
Housing study	Evaluated housing in terms of the supply and demand, the potential for development, and possible impacts of the Project in the Ignace area. It also looked at options to enhance benefits and address possible negative impacts.
Economic development study	Described and characterized the individuals, businesses, and educational institutions that form part of the economy and supply chain network within the Ignace area that might support the Project.
Ignace municipal infrastructure study	Evaluated the required expansion or enhancement of municipal infrastructure to support population growth in the Township of Ignace. Municipal infrastructure consists of the Township of Ignace's water treatment and distribution system, wastewater treatment and conveyance system, stormwater management network, solid waste management systems, roads, and power/telecommunications network.

Table 1.4-1 Continued: List of Socio-economic Community Studies

Community Study Name	Community Study Objectives
Transportation and emergency response study	Described the existing conditions such as travel patterns, capacity demands, safety issues, and the spatial and call characteristics for historical emergency response; summarized potential changes related to transportation and emergency service requirements as a result of the Project; and described existing constraints and capacity with current operations to identify any gaps in existing operations and historical issues that could have an influence on future development.
Social services facilities study	Described the current state of existing and planned social service facilities, determined gaps, identified how residents and vulnerable sub-groups are using facilities, and identified options to leverage positive Project opportunities on social service facilities.
Community recreation facilities study	Described the current state of existing and planned community recreation facilities and determined any gaps that exist, identified how residents and visitors are using facilities, as well as existing capacity and demand, and identified options to leverage positive Project opportunities on recreational facilities.
Ignace area tourism study	Described key characteristics of the tourism industry and tourism trends characterizing the industry, developed profiles of visitors and cultural centres from other projects of similar impact to provide ideas and options for the Centre of Expertise, and identified and described future tourism growth potential and new opportunities in the Ignace area that could be supported by or result from the Project.

## 1.5 GENERAL METHODOLOGY

### 1.5.1 Identification of Baseline Components

Components of the Baseline Studies were intended to broadly characterize the existing environment. The baseline components are intended to support the future identification of valued components, which are standard tools in an impact assessment used to focus the analyses on what matters most. Valued components are elements of the natural and human environment that may be impacted by a project and include aspects of the health, social, cultural, and economic environment, or the biophysical environment. The Tailored Guidelines template (IAAC 2020a) identified the following factors considered in selecting valued components which informed the baseline component selection:

- Presence of components in the study area;
- The extent to which the effects of the designated project and related activities have the potential to interact with the component;
- The extent to which the component may be under stress from other past, existing, or future undertakings in combination with other human activities and natural processes;

- The extent to which the component is linked to Indigenous interests or rights of Indigenous peoples and whether an Indigenous rights-holder has requested the component;
- The extent to which the component is linked to federal, provincial, territorial, or municipal government priorities;
- Information from any ongoing or completed regional assessment processes;
- The possibility that an adverse or positive effect on the component would be of particular concern to Indigenous rights-holders, the public, or federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, or Indigenous governments; and
- Whether the potential effects of the project on the component can be measured and/or monitored or would be better ascertained through the analysis of a proxy component.

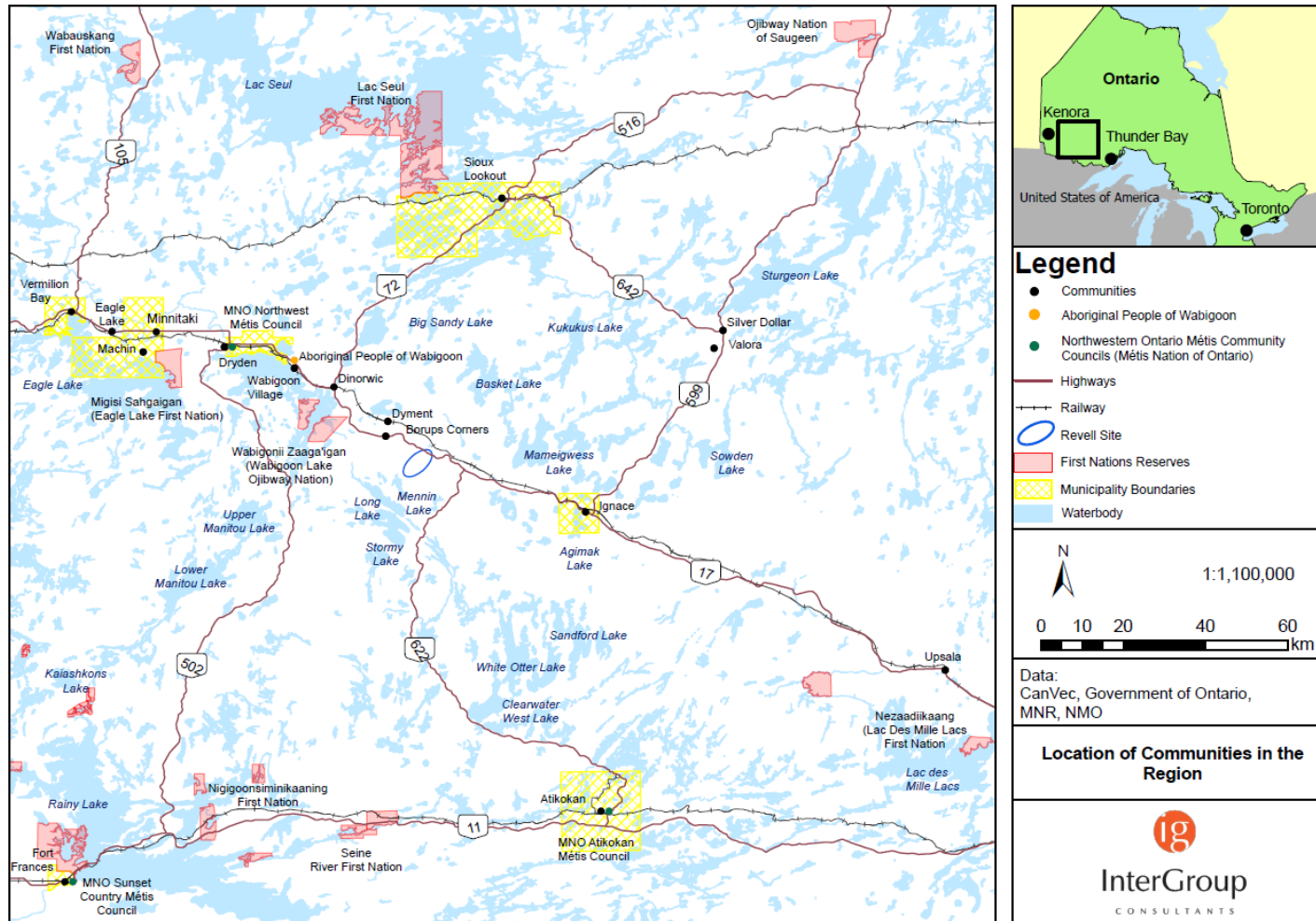
The IAAC (2020a) notes the list of valued components for assessment should be finalized in the planning phases of a project, and should be informed by engagement with the public, Indigenous rights-holders, lifecycle regulators, jurisdictions, federal authorities, and other interested parties.

The baseline components presented in this report have been refined through engagement throughout the implementation of the Baseline Studies. **Figure 1.3-1** provides the list of baseline components relative to each pillar in the Baseline Studies.

### 1.5.2 Spatial Boundaries

The Project's proposed location in Northwestern Ontario is approximately 40 km west of Ignace, Ontario, was identified as a potential site through earlier technical studies and engagement with local and Indigenous communities (NWMO n.d.). Local communities in the area include municipalities (towns, cities), unincorporated settlements, First Nations, and Métis communities. **Figure 1.5-1** provides an overview of where communities are situated relative to the Project and is not intended to describe the geographic boundaries used in the Baseline Studies. The figure is a starting point to understand the physical location of communities and associated infrastructure/services, but does not describe the linkages between communities, or the distinct relationships that people and communities may have with the land.

Figure 1.5-1: Location of Communities in the Region<sup>1,2</sup>



**Note:**

1. Local Services Board of Wabigoon is a designated place according to Statistics Canada, but residents refer to the community as Wabigoon or Wabigoon Village.
2. The unincorporated communities Dymont and Borups Corners are part of the Local Services Board of Melgund.



Spatial boundaries varied by component and were refined during engagement for the Baseline Studies. Three general spatial study areas were considered:

- **The Revell Site:** refers to the area withdrawn from other land uses, or the lands accessed by the NWMO for the purposes of potential siting for the deep geological repository.
- **The Local Study Area:** refers to the communities/areas most likely to experience future direct, indirect, and induced impacts of the Project, both positive and negative. For the purposes of the Baseline Studies, the potential “host” community was considered central to the Local Study Area, while other communities were included on a topic-by-topic basis relative to potential future Project impacts and cumulative impacts.
- **The Regional Study Area:** refers to the area used to provide context for each component and may also experience future impacts of the Project (both positive and negative).

Additional criteria considered in determining spatial boundaries for the municipal Baseline Studies included:

- **Administrative boundaries:** which are based on political, economic, or social considerations. For example, this included consideration of the parameters for data sets that are collected on the basis of regional or provincial boundaries, or other administrative boundaries such as census geography, local health integration networks, service board areas, and conservation authorities.
- **Technical boundaries:** refer to the constraints associated with the ability to accurately predict future outcomes (e.g., the accuracy of baseline modelling may decrease as it moves further into the future).

Spatial boundaries for each component are described in the overview and approach section of each pillar.

### 1.5.3 Temporal Boundaries

Temporal boundaries for the Baseline Studies were defined to support future impact assessment processes. The Tailored Guidelines template (IAAC 2020a) indicates all phases of a designated project (e.g., site preparation, construction, operation, decommissioning, post-decommissioning, abandonment) should be considered.

Understanding history and past experiences of potentially affected communities helped to elucidate a community’s current context and vision for the future (InterGroup 2020). To identify historical trends, information considered different timeframes relative to each baseline component. In some instances, such as for population, data went back to 1991 to provide an indication of overall population trends. For most Statistics Canada data outside of population, most data went back to 2006, which represents the last Census year prior to Ignace’s participation in the NWMO’s site selection process, which was initiated in 2010. For health data, the extent to which past data can be presented was determined in part based on how data was aggregated by the relevant sources, and use of confidentiality practices employed to protect individual data from being released.



Three future time frames (where applicable to the Baseline Studies) were proposed for projection purposes:

- Near-term (2024 to 2032): Aligns with end of site preparation phase in 2032 and design and construction start in 2033.
- Mid-term (2033 to 2042): Aligns with construction phase ending in 2042 and operations start 2043.
- Long-term (2043 and beyond): Aligns with operations, monitoring, and decommissioning.

Baseline projections focused on the near- and mid-term time horizons, as predictions beyond 2043 were difficult to make with accuracy. The analysis for future timeframes used both quantitative and qualitative approaches depending on the topic. Quantitative modelling was used where appropriate for topics such as population (**Section 2.2.6**) and labor force (**Section 3.2.4**).

For other components a more qualitative approach was used to identify trends and key influencing factors. For many components, the analysis of potential long-term trends is limited by the data availability.

Temporal boundaries for each component are described in the overview and approach section of each pillar.

#### 1.5.4 Engagement

Effective engagement plays a critical role in obtaining information related to the future impact assessment process and identifying important community issues and concerns about the Project. Further, it lays the foundation for building trusting relationships while providing important information needed for community members to be informed and involved in the process. Further, not only is this activity a desirable best practice, but it is a requirement of the legislation for proponents to describe their ongoing and proposed public engagement activities (IAAC 2019b).

One means of engaging with communities was to establish a “working group” to support the baseline and community studies processes. The terms of reference for the Ignace Area, Working Group (“IAWG”) included members and observers from the Township of Ignace other municipalities, First Nations, Métis organizations, service providers, businesses, civil society, and other interests – both local and regional. First Nations and Métis were not present to represent or act on behalf of their communities and no Indigenous engagement took place through the IAWG. The IAWG provided input to and advised on the baseline and community studies and related engagement during various phases of the work. Efforts were made by the NWMO to continuously expand the list of participants throughout the IAWG process, and it is expected these terms may evolve if the group remains in place through future Project phases. The original Terms of Reference for the Ignace Area Working Group are provided in **Appendix 1B** and evolved over the course of its implementation. The purpose of the IAWG was:

- To ensure local and regional perspectives are considered through the social cultural, economic, health, and environment studies at key points;
- To support the inclusion of community knowledge;

- To contribute to the design of engagement activities; and
- To verify and validate findings.

The inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and engagement with Indigenous communities near the Project is in the early phases at this time. Details on Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous participation are provided in **Section 1.5.6.4** and **Section 1.5.7**.

Between 2021 and 2023 the IAWG met on 17 occasions to inform baseline and community studies processes. The meetings were adjusted in format based on COVID-19 health precautions as applicable, and with consideration of the preference of participants. Some meetings occurred remotely, while others adopted a hybrid model allowing for a combination of in-person and remote participation.

**Table 1.5-1** provides a summary of the IAWG meetings throughout 2021 and 2023, including the date and number of participants.

Table 1.5-1: Summary of IAWG Meetings

IAWG Meeting	Date	Number of Participants	Topics Discussed
IAWG Meeting #1	June 29, 2021	IAWG Members: 6 Township of Ignace: 2 NWMO: 6 NWMO consultants: 3	Introductions; Membership; Selection of co-chairs
IAWG Meeting #2	July 22, 2021	IAWG Members: 7 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 2 NWMO consultants: 7	Membership and additional organizations to invite; An introduction to community studies and Baseline Studies
IAWG Meeting #3	August 19, 2021	IAWG Members: 6 Township of Ignace: 2 NWMO: 1 NWMO consultants: 3	Next steps for membership outreach; Member feedback on knowledge holders for baseline topic areas; Scope of work for community studies; Review and inputs to Baseline Studies design
IAWG Meeting #4	October 6, 2021	IAWG Members: 8 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 5 NWMO consultants: 3	IAWG processes to date; Overview of the economic workshop and social cultural workshop
IAWG Meeting #5	December 2, 2021	IAWG Members: 7 Indigenous participants/observers: 2 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 3 NWMO consultants: 3	Update on the community studies; Discussion on IAWG schedule; NWMO introduction to reconciliation; Update on the Baseline Studies
IAWG Meeting #6	February 24, 2022	IAWG Members: 8 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 2 NWMO consultants: 7	Community studies updates; Community studies six-month schedule
IAWG Meeting #7	March 3, 2022	IAWG Members: 11 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 2 NWMO consultants: 6	The Project in the Township of Ignace and area; Community studies (baseline) update on employment and workforce development
IAWG Meeting #8	March 31, 2022	IAWG Members: 8 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 2 NWMO consultants: 10	Community studies (baseline) update on community health protection (health services), recreation and social infrastructure and services, and economic development

Table 1.5-1 Continued: Summary of IAWG Meetings

<b>IAWG Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Topics Discussed</b>
IAWG Meeting #9	April 7, 2022	IAWG Members: 9 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 1 NWMO consultants: 5	Community studies (baseline and change analysis) update on population projections, workforce development and youth economic development, and housing
IAWG Meeting #10	April 21, 2022	IAWG Members: 10 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 1 NWMO consultants: 8	Community studies (baseline) update on transportation and emergency services, municipal infrastructure, and tourism
IAWG Meeting #11	May 5, 2022	IAWG Members: 9 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 4 NWMO consultants: 8	Community studies (change analysis) update on community health protection and recreation and social infrastructure and services
IAWG Meeting #12	May 19, 2022	IAWG Members: 13 Township of Ignace: 2 NWMO: 3 NWMO consultants: 4	Community studies (baseline and change analysis) update on economic development and municipal infrastructure
IAWG Meeting #13	June 28, 2022	IAWG Members: 13 Township of Ignace: 2 NWMO: 3 NWMO consultants: 4	Community studies (baseline and change analysis) update on tourism and transportation and emergency response
IAWG Meeting #14	September 15, 2022	IAWG Members: 7 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 4 NWMO consultants: 3	Celebration of IAWG accomplishments over the first year and reflections on process; Workplan roadmap for 2022/early 2023; Baseline Studies update
IAWG Meeting #15	October 26, 2022	IAWG Members: 8 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 3 NWMO consultants: 4	Community studies integration discussion; Update on the Baseline Studies (archaeological assessments and land and resource use)
IAWG Meeting #16	March 22, 2023	IAWG Members: 3 Township of Ignace: 3 NWMO: 3 NWMO consultants: 4	IAWG administration; Community studies integration discussion; 2023 Baseline Studies report update
IAWG Meeting #17	September 13, 2023	IAWG Members: 10 Township of Ignace: 1 NWMO: 7 NWMO consultants: 2	IAWG administration; 2023 Baseline Studies report update (key findings); Environmental baseline studies update

The IAWG supported the identification of relevant participants for topic-specific workshops that further refined the baseline and community studies, in addition to identifying relevant participants for data collection processes (**Section 1.5.5**).

The IAWG process also supported the inclusion of community knowledge, which the IAAC (2019a) explains as “[the] common, shared, or specialized knowledge gathered by a community through direct use of, or experience with, an environment or resource.” This knowledge was used in scoping the spatial and temporal boundaries for each baseline component, along with confirming preliminary baseline findings. This included providing detailed feedback on trends demonstrated in the data collected, and information to support the description and analysis of existing conditions. Where information was drawn from IAWG the meeting number is cited specifically to the date on which the information was collected (e.g., IAWG # 5 is referenced as IAWG December 2, 2021).

### 1.5.5 Data Collection

The characterization of the baseline environment relied on both primary and secondary data sources. A detailed methodology appendix is included for each pillar where relevant.

#### 1.5.5.1 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data collection involved a review relevant reports and other literature, websites, and databases. A summary of the key sources and limitations of secondary data, including those associated with any modelling is provided in the introduction and approach section of each pillar.

Key sources used included:

- Statistics Canada Census of Population along with other Statistics Canada survey results and reports.
- Federal and provincial government reports and data (e.g., Government of Ontario and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing).
- Municipal reports including community profiles, community safety and well-being reports, community capacity studies, strategic plans, official plans, and business gap analysis studies.
- Ignace and area community studies (see **Section 1.4.1**).
- Ontario Archaeological Sites Database.
- Transportation data sources, for example, Ontario Ministry of Transportation Online Technical Publications.
- Geographic Information System supporting data (e.g., relevant policy documents, emergency response data, background reports).
- Publicly available reports and profiles from other organizations.
- Interactive databases from public websites, including Cancer Care Ontario, Canadian Institute for Health Information, First Nations Information Governance Centre, Public Health Ontario, IntelliHealth Ontario, and Public Health Agency of Canada.
- Online sources (e.g., websites).

All sources used are cited and included in a reference list at the end of each section.

### 1.5.5.2 Primary Data Collection

Primary data were used to support the inclusion of community knowledge and local perspectives, confirm the reasonableness and relevance of secondary information, and qualitatively fill gaps in secondary data collection, including information on GBA+ and sustainability. Primary data collection was undertaken through IAWG meetings, topic specific workshops, focus groups, and a key person interview program to characterize factors related each component.

For all primary data collection, an informed consent process was used (see **Appendix 1A** for protocols) so participants understood how the information they shared would be collected and presented, consistent with ethical research practices. Participants were offered the opportunity to review notes from all discussions and had the ability to adjust or retract any of the information they provided.

#### 1.5.5.2.1 Topic Specific Workshops

Workshops are a forum at which participants work together on a prescribed topic or assignment to provide specific inputs to the process (IAP2 2006). In all the workshops conducted for the Baseline Studies, presentations were made by the NWMO or its consultants to share Project and study-related information to support fulsome dialogue and discussion. The workshops were typically one to three hours in length, and included a series of specific research questions or prompts to enable participation. Workshops in 2021 and 2022 were held remotely, while workshops held in 2023 were completed in person.

Based on guidance from the IAWG and from participants in the baseline processes, a series of topic-specific workshops to support baseline characterization were undertaken. A total of five workshops were held between 2021 and 2023 to support both the community studies and Baseline Studies. Participants for these workshops were identified with support from the IAWG along with other baseline studies participants and were considered as knowledge holders relative to the topic discussed. A summary of these workshops is provided in **Table 1.5-2**.

Table 1.5-2: Summary of Topic Specific Workshops

Topic	Date	Number of Participants	As Referenced in this Report
Local Economy Workshop	September 9, 2021	Workshop participants: 8 NWMO: 2 NWMO consultants: 3	Local Economy Workshop. 2021. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Local Economy Workshop, September 09, 2021.
Local Social Cultural and Health Workshop	September 15, 2021	Workshop participants: 10 Indigenous participants: 1 NWMO: 4 NWMO consultants: 4	Local Social Cultural and Health Workshop. 2021. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Local Social Cultural and Health Workshop, September 15, 2021.
Community Health Workshop	January 25, 2022	Workshop participants: 11 NWMO: 4 NWMO consultants: 5	Community Health Workshop. 2022. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Community Health Workshop, January 25, 2022.
Health Community Workshop	April 5, 2023	Workshop participants: 11 NWMO: 1 NWMO consultants: 1	Healthy Community Workshop. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Community Health Workshop, April 5, 2023.
GBA+ Workshop	May 12, 2023	Workshop participants: 13 NWMO: 5 NWMO consultants: 4	GBA+ Workshop. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies GBA+ Workshop, May 12, 2023.

#### 1.5.5.2.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a type of group interview where participants are guided through a discussion on a particular topic for a clearly defined purpose (IAP2 2006). A total of nine focus groups were held between 2022 and 2023 to support baseline characterization of the Baseline Studies. A summary of these focus groups is provided in **Table 1.5-3**.

Table 1.5-3: Summary of Focus Groups

Topic	Date	Number of Participants	As Referenced in this Report
Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub staff focus group	March 3, 2022	Focus group participants: 10 NWMO consultants: 1	Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub (MBCHCH) Staff Focus Group. 2022. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub Staff Focus Group, March 3, 2022.
Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub board focus group	March 29, 2023	Focus group participants: 5 NWMO consultants: 1	Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub (MBCHCH) Board Focus Group. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub Board Focus Group, March 29, 2023.
Ignace EarlyOn Child and Family Centre focus group with parents	April 4, 2023	Focus group participants: 4 NWMO consultants: 1	Ignace EarlyOn Child and Family Centre Parent Focus Group. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Ignace EarlyOn Child and Family Centre Parent Focus Group, April 4, 2023.
Youth focus group	April 4, 2023	Focus group participants: 3 NWMO consultants: 1	Youth Focus Group. 2023, Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Youth Focus Group, April 4, 2023.
Ignace EarlyON Child and Family Centre focus group with staff and parents	April 4, 2023	Focus group participants: 5 NWMO consultants: 1	Ignace EarlyOn Child and Family Centre Staff and Parent Focus Group. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Ignace EarlyOn Child and Family Centre Staff and Parent Focus Group, April 4, 2023.



Table 1.5-3: Summary of Focus Groups Continued

Topic	Date	Number of Participants	Referenced Herein
Healthy Community Working Group at the Ignace Learn More Centre	April 5, 2023	Focus group participants: 1 NWMO consultants: 1	Ignace Healthy Community Working Group. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO). Ignace Healthy Community Working Group at the Ignace Learn More Centre, April 5, 2023.
Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub staff focus group	April 5, 2023	Focus group participants: 1 NWMO consultants: 1	Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub (MBCHCH) Staff Focus Group. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub Staff Focus Group, April 5, 2023.
Ignace Silver Tops focus group	April 6, 2023	Focus group participants: 11 NWMO consultants: 1	Silver Tops Focus Group. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Ignace Silver Tops Focus Group, April 06, 2023.
Ignace Food Bank focus group	April 6, 2023	Focus group participants: 2 NWMO consultants: 1	Ignace Food Bank Focus Group. 2023. Northwest Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Ignace Food Bank Focus Group, April 06, 2023.

### 1.5.5.2.3 Key Person Interviews

Key person interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people with specific knowledge on a topic of interest (Global Evaluation Initiative 2022). Key person interviews were used to support baseline characterization through data collection and validating and clarifying findings of the secondary research. Between 2022 and 2023 two distinct key person interview programs were implemented to support the baseline and community studies, referenced herein as:

- Northwestern Ontario (NWO) Community and Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program. 2022; and
- Northwestern Ontario (NWO) Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program. 2022-2023.

Interviews were conducted with knowledge holders who had information and insight relative to the pillars and components included in the Baseline Studies. Knowledge holders were selected through an iterative process involving the Township of Ignace, the NWMO, the IAWG, and the consulting teams working on the baseline and community studies. This included the identification of knowledge gaps from secondary and desktop research. Generally, interviews were scheduled by NWMO staff who were also responsible for taking notes to ensure consistency across

interviews. An NWMO staff member participated in the interviews to answer questions about the Project and go through the consent protocol. In a few instances, where the confidential nature of discussions warranted (particularly related to land use and health), only members of the consulting team participated in interviews with knowledge holders. Overall, members of the consulting team developed questions to guide the interviews based on the objectives of their studies and overall information needs.

For efficiency, in some instances more than one individual participated in an interview. There were a total of 89 interviews involving 112 individuals across baseline and community studies:

- 44 interviews involving 62 individuals were completed for the Northwestern Ontario Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program (2022-2023), including land and resource use interviews;
- 45 interviews involving 50 individuals were completed for the Northwestern Ontario Community and Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program (2022).

A summary of the organizations interviewed for the Baseline Studies is provided in **Table 1.5-4** and for the Community and Baseline Studies is provided in **Table 1.5-5**.

**Table 1.5-4: Summary of the Northwestern Ontario Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program, 2022-2023**

<b>Interview ID Number</b>	<b>Source Organization</b>	<b>Date</b>
NWBL01	Local Services Board of Melgund	March 6, 2023
NWBL02	Local Services Board of Wabigoon	March 6, 2023
NWBL03	Machin Revitalization Committee	March 7, 2023
NWBL04	Machin Community Development	March 8, 2023
NWBL05	Silver Dollar Inn and Campground	March 9, 2023
NWBL06	Dinorwic representative	March 8, 2023
NWBL07	Ignace Trappers Council	April 4, 2023
NWBL08	Regional Food Distribution Association	April 6, 2023
NWBL09	Ignace Otters Snowmobile Club	April 14, 2023
NWBL10	Regional Fisheries Specialist	May 2, 2023
NWBL11	Northwest Employment Works	May 2, 2023
NWBL12	Ignace Local Citizens Advisory Committee	May 5, 2023
NWBL13	Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters	May 8, 2023
NWBL14	Dryden and District Museum	May 18, 2023
NWBL15	City of Dryden, Community Services	May 8, 2023
NWBL16	City of Dryden, Planning and Housing	May 10, 2023
NWBL17	Dryden Food Bank	May 23, 2023
NWBL18	Kenora District Services Board	June 8, 2023
NWBL19	Dryden Fire Service	May 9, 2023
NWBL20	Sioux Lookout, Recreation and Culture	May 9, 2023
NWBL21	Sioux Lookout, Development Services	May 18, 2023
NWBL22	Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub	January 5, 2022
NWBL23	Dryden Regional Health Centre	January 24, 2022
NWBL24	Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub	February 8, 2022
NWBL25	Dryden Regional Health Centre	March 14, 2022
NWBL26	Dryden Regional Health Centre	March 16, 2022
NWBL27	Northwestern Health Unit	March 25, 2022
NWBL28	Dryden Regional Health Centre	April 11, 2022
NWBL29	Crossroads Employment Services	April 20, 2023
NWBL30	Ignace New Life Church	April 25, 2023
NWBL31	Local Services Board of Upsala	August 23, 2023

Table 1.5-4 Continued: Summary of the Northwestern Ontario Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program, 2022-2023

Interview ID Number	Source Organization <sup>1</sup>	Date
NWBL-LRU01	Land and Resource Use interview	August 24, 2022
NWBL-LRU02	Land and Resource Use interview	August 25, 2022
NWBL-LRU04	Land and Resource Use interview	August 25, 2022
NWBL-LRU05	Land and Resource Use interview	August 26, 2022
NWBL-LRU06	Land and Resource Use interview	August 26, 2022
NWBL-LRU07	Land and Resource Use interview	August 26, 2022
NWBL-LRU08	Land and Resource Use interview	August 26, 2022
NWBL-LRU09	Land and Resource Use interview	April 3, 2023
NWBL-LRU10	Land and Resource Use interview	April 3, 2023
NWBL-LRU11	Land and Resource Use interview	April 3, 2023
NWBL-LRU13	Land and Resource Use interview	April 6, 2023
NWBL-LRU14	Land and Resource Use interview	April 21, 2023
NWBL-LRU15	Land and Resource Use interview	April 28, 2023

**Note:**

1. Due to the nature of the topics discussed, Land and Resource Use information is considered confidential and personal information is redacted.

**Table 1.5-5: Summary of the Northwestern Ontario Community and Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program, 2022**

<b>Interview ID Number</b>	<b>Source Organization</b>	<b>Date</b>
NWCS01	Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario	January 24, 2022
NWCS02	Northwest Business Centre	January 28, 2022
NWCS03	Thunder Bay Home Builders' Association	January 28, 2022
NWCS04	Municipality of Machin	January 31, 2022
NWCS05	Sunset Carpentry	January 31, 2022
NWCS06	Northwest Training and Adjustment Board	February 4, 2022
NWCS07	Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation	January 28, 2022
NWCS08	Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord	January 28, 2022
NWCS09	Crossroads Employment and Training Resource Centre	February 11, 2022
NWCS10	Ignace Public School	February 4, 2022
NWCS11	Dryden Native Friendship Centre	February 4, 2022
NWCS12	Treasury Metals	February 7, 2022
NWCS13	Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce	February 14, 2022
NWCS14	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	February 11, 2022
NWCS15	Township of Ignace	February 28, 2022
NWCS16	Kenora District Municipal Association	February 11, 2022
NWCS17	City of Dryden	February 14, 2022
NWCS18	Domtar Corporation	March 7, 2022
NWCS19	Keewatin Patricia District School Board	March 4, 2022
NWCS20	Ricci's Trucking	February 7, 2022
NWCS21	Municipality of Sioux Lookout	February 18, 2022
NWCS22	Town of Atikokan	February 18, 2022
NWCS23	Resolute Forest Products	February 11, 2022
NWCS24	Township of Ignace	February 28, 2022
NWCS25	Ignace Area Business Association	February 25, 2022
NWCS26	Patricia Area Community Endeavours	February 18, 2022
NWCS27	Alterna Credit Union	February 25, 2022
NWCS28	Dryden Regional Airport and the Loomex Group	March 4, 2022
NWCS29	City of Kenora	February 18, 2022
NWCS30	Confederation College	February 25, 2022

**Table 1.5-5 Continued: Summary of the Northwestern Ontario Community and Baseline Studies Key Person Interview Program, 2022**

<b>Interview ID Number</b>	<b>Source Organization<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Date</b>
NWCS31	Community Living Dryden-Sioux Lookout	February 25, 2022
NWCS32	Kenora District Services Board	March 7, 2022
NWCS33	Hoshizaki House, Dryden District Crisis Centre	March 2, 2022
NWCS34	The Ignace Recreation Committee	February 23, 2022
NWCS35	Dryden Regional Health Centre	March 2, 2022
NWCS36	Ignace Public Library	March 2, 2022
NWCS37	Township of Ignace	March 18, 2022
NWCS38	Kenora District Services Board	April 6, 2022
NWCS39	Ignace Healthy Communities Working Group	April 11, 2022
NWCS40	Anonymous organization <sup>2</sup>	May 13, 2022
NWCS41	Sunset Country	May 19, 2022
NWCS42	Ministry of Transportation	June 15, 2022
NWCS43	Ontario Provincial Police, Ignace and Dryden	March 21, 2022
NWCS44	Ignace Fire Department	April 22, 2022
NWCS45	EarlyON Child and Family Centre, Ignace	October 14, 2022

#### 1.5.5.2.4 Survey

Surveys are a method used to collect information from a random sample of the population (IAP2 2006). A community Health and Wellness Survey, based on the Canadian Community Health Survey<sup>3</sup> and adjusted with inputs from the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub (MBCHCH), was conducted to understand the health and well-being of residents in Ignace or those accessing services at the MBCHCH. The survey was comprised of 51 questions and took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Invitations to participate in the survey were distributed to all mailing addresses in Ignace, in addition to being advertised through posters placed throughout Ignace. Incentives in the form of a prize draw were offered to individuals to participate. A total of 114 people participated in the survey. The survey results should be interpreted with caution as the sample size was small and did not have sufficient participation across gender and age groups to be considered a statistically representative sample..

<sup>2</sup> Source organization labelled as anonymous to protect the confidentiality of the organization.

<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Community Health Survey is an annual survey used by Statistics Canada to gather health-related data at the sub-provincial levels of geography (health region, or combined health region) (Statistics Canada 2023).

### 1.5.5.3 Data Limitations

Each pillar describes discipline-specific limitations to primary and secondary data. Two additional global data limitations are noted, including those related to the evolving baseline conditions and the worldview from which this report was written.

#### 1.5.5.3.1 Evolving Baseline Conditions

Evolving baseline conditions refer to the fact that the human environment is constantly evolving and will continue to change throughout all phases of the Project. To enable the writing of this report, May 2023 was generally used as the cut-off for data collection, recognizing that new data sources and changes to existing conditions would persist. As such, the report is considered current to the time of drafting and finalizing sections. Future updates to the description of baseline conditions may be warranted on certain topics and are anticipated to be planned and implemented in a similarly collaborative manner after a siting decision is made.

#### 1.5.5.3.2 Worldview

Worldview can be defined as “a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint” (Meriam Webster 2023).” Overall, worldview can be considered as “a set of beliefs and values honoured and withheld by a number of people” (Leroy Little Bear, as quoted in Indigenous Corporate Training Inc 2016). It is acknowledged that this report was written from a western scientific worldview, as distinguished from an Indigenous worldview.

**Section 1.5.6.4** describes the NWMO’s overall understanding of Indigenous Knowledge and approach to collecting this information in collaboration with Indigenous communities. The NWMO has been and will continue to engage with Indigenous communities and that information will be collected and shared in the future at the discretion of the communities involved. As such, it is acknowledged that this report does not include information that could be characterized as Indigenous Knowledge.

### 1.5.6 Cross Discipline Considerations

Several cross-discipline considerations are identified in IAAC guidance material and were relevant to the overall approach and implementation of the Baseline Studies, including:

- GBA+;
- Sustainability;
- Indigenous Knowledge; and
- Community knowledge.

### 1.5.6.1 Gender-based Analysis Plus

GBA+ is an analytical lens for documenting how impacts affect diverse segments of the population differently (such as gender,<sup>4</sup> race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and individuals who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+,<sup>5</sup> and mental and physical disability). The IAAC's (2020b) *Guidance: Gender-based Analysis Plus in Impact Assessment* notes the following:

*“Baseline information for the community should include qualitative and quantitative data that describes a detailed socioeconomic profile including data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, and any other community-relevant identity factors. Where possible, information from government statistics, non-governmental organization reports, academic sources or community consultations can be used to describe community context (including history) and existing gender issues in the community (e.g., gender-based violence, gender division of labour, gender roles, responsibilities, who makes decisions/controls resources). Establishing an accurate baseline community profile will mean recognizing and valuing diverse forms of data and knowledge including Indigenous and community knowledge.”*

The approach to the consideration of GBA+ in the Baseline Studies reflects this guidance and preliminary GBA+ principles developed by the NWMO are summarized in **Table 1.5-6**.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2021 Statistics Canada began to report on gender identity in the Census of Population, as opposed to sex-assigned at birth in previous censuses. Gender identity is an individual's personal and social identity as a man, woman, or non-binary person (Statistics Canada 2022). Gender identity is reported as men+ (i.e., cisgender men, transgender men, and some non-binary persons) and women+ (i.e., cisgender women, transgender women, and some non-binary persons). A cisgender person is somebody whose gender identity is the same as their sex-assigned at birth and a transgender person is somebody whose gender does not correspond to their sex assigned at birth. A non-binary person is an individual who is not exclusively a man or woman (e.g., fluid, Two-Spirit). Data limitations associated with gender (2021 Census) and sex (previous censuses) are described in detail in **Section 2.1.2.1.1** and **Section 3.1.2.1.1**.

<sup>5</sup> 2SLGBTQIA+ refers to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual.



**Table 1.5-6: NWMO Preliminary GBA+ Guiding Principles**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Description of Principle</b>
Intersectionality	The needs and experiences of different groups of people are influenced by intersecting parts of their identity. An intersectional approach requires consideration for how multiple identity factors can influence the legal, social, and economic opportunities and outcomes.
Community-led/ collaborative/ participatory	Engagement and input from the community is essential in developing a strong understanding of the community, which would support data collection, engagement strategies, and future impact assessment work.
Meaningfully consider and include diverse perspectives and knowledge systems	Recognize that individuals' lived experiences, knowledge, and their input should all be held with equal value.
Critical analysis of systemic root cause	GBA+ also considers the context within which people live, including systems and structures of power. The various factors that make a person's identity can't be considered in isolation. An intersectional approach combined with critical analysis can highlight structural or systemic conditions that may create barriers for some and opportunities for others.
Indigenous world views	Indigenous Knowledge is a systematic way of thinking applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural, and spiritual systems. It is recognized that Indigenous Knowledge enhances the understanding of potential Project impacts and plays an important role in the Project outcomes.

GBA+ was built into data collection and engagement processes systematically. Baseline Studies gathered disaggregated data from publicly available sources (e.g., Statistics Canada) to look for key trends relative to identity factors such as sex, age, and Indigenous identity, recognizing that in some instances there were not always sufficient data available to collect or analyze (e.g., availability of data over relevant temporal scale, limitations to data due to data suppression techniques to ensure confidentiality). Limitations of key data sets are described in each section relative to the pillar and components.

Initial collection of disaggregated data from the Census of Population included information on age, sex or gender, and Indigenous identity in communities in the Local Study Area and Regional Study Area and formed the basis of discussion with the IAWG. A selection of these data was presented for discussion to the IAWG (IAWG October 6, 2021), with the concept of GBA+ introduced to the group at that time. An IAWG meeting in December 2021 (IAWG December 2, 2021) included discussions on vulnerable populations and sought feedback from all participants on how parts of these population might be defined relative to the local context. From these

discussions, the identification of potential vulnerable populations went through an iterative process, as detailed in **Appendix 2A**, and which eventually identified four key populations to include in discussions throughout the Baseline Studies:

- People experiencing low socio-economic status;
- People experiencing homelessness or who are precariously housed;
- People experiencing barriers to employment; and
- People experiencing mental health challenges and/or substance dependency.

These vulnerabilities, in addition to questions regarding differences among the populations experiencing them, were built into key person interviews, and explored in greater detail in focus groups and workshops, including the GBA+ Workshop that was implemented in collaboration between the NWMO and City of Dryden. The results of these efforts have been integrated throughout the Baseline Studies and will be supportive of a future impact assessment.

#### 1.5.6.2 Sustainability

The Baseline Studies collected information relevant to the sustainability principles identified for the implementation of the *Impact Assessment Act*:

- Consider the interconnectedness and interdependence of human-ecological systems;
- Consider the well-being of present and future generations;
- Consider positive effects and reduce adverse effects of a designated project; and
- Apply the precautionary principle and consider uncertainty and risk of irreversible harm.

Each pillar considered sustainability for relevant components and where applicable interactions among components (multiple interdependencies not only within pillars but among disciplines). For example, changes in baseline population have the potential to affect the need for community infrastructure and demand for services. Past trends were described to help understand resiliency and adaptability. Participatory processes such as the IAWG reflected communities differing needs and aspirations, while the community studies process supported a better understanding of potential Project interactions with the communities existing and near-to-mid-term future conditions.

#### 1.5.6.3 Community Knowledge

According to the IAAC (2020c) community knowledge is the “knowledge held by individuals or shared by a community which is built up over time through direct use of, or interaction with, a resource or environment (natural or social).” Information provided by communities regarding both the human and biophysical natural environment must be taken into account as per the *Impact Assessment Act*.

The collection of community knowledge was supported through the establishment of the IAWG (**Section 1.5.4**), who acted as an advisory body throughout the community studies and Baseline

Studies and ensured local perspectives are considered throughout the process. Ways in which the IAWG contributed community knowledge to the process included:

- Confirming study design parameters such as spatial and temporal boundaries which resulted in adjustments to each;
- Contributing to data collection and identification of knowledge holders to include in topic-specific workshops and key person interview processes; and
- Reviewing preliminary findings.

Examples on how community knowledge improved data collection and analysis and are consistent with IAAC guidance (IAAC 2020c) included:

- Adjustments to spatial and temporal boundaries for the baseline studies;
- Refinement of modelling parameters and assumptions related to baseline population projections;
- Identification of potentially vulnerable populations and their characterization;
- Providing more certainty where there may be gaps in other knowledge sets; and
- Validating key findings of the baseline studies.

#### 1.5.6.4 Indigenous Knowledge

The NWMO's Indigenous Knowledge policy was developed with "the ongoing advice and education from the NWMO's Council of Knowledge Holders and its predecessor, the Elders Forum, and through the building of relationships with (Indigenous) organizations at the national, provincial and regional levels" (NWMO 2020b). The NWMO's Indigenous Knowledge Policy (NWMO 2020b) notes that Indigenous Knowledge:

*"is a complex and sophisticated system of knowledge drawing on millennia of wisdom and experience. It constantly grows and expands with the experience of new generations. It is expected that this knowledge system will continue to provide a source of wisdom through the various stages of project development and implementation. As the project moves through the site selection process and the (NWMO) engages with communities, there is an opportunity to learn from local Indigenous Knowledge."*

The NWMO's Indigenous Knowledge Policy reflects current best practices and lays out a collaborative framework for collecting and interweaving Indigenous Knowledge in all Project related decisions. This means that Indigenous communities remain in control of their Indigenous Knowledge: they decide how to formalize knowledge sharing arrangements, they decide how much and on which topics they would like to share, how it is collected, and how it is presented in impact assessment documentation.

### 1.5.7 Indigenous Participation

Indigenous participation refers to the ways in which Indigenous peoples participate in the impact assessment process, inclusive of the Baseline Studies. The IAAC (2020d) noted that Indigenous participation is encouraged for a variety of reasons, including relationship building, cooperation and partnership, and ensuring impact assessment takes into account Indigenous Knowledge and cultural considerations and customs, in addition to western scientific knowledge. Engagement with Indigenous communities near the Project related to the Baseline Studies is in the early phases at this time. The NWMO's approach to Indigenous engagement will be conducted in accordance with the NWMO's Reconciliation Policy (2019) and Indigenous Knowledge Policy (2020b), along with guidance provided by the Council of Knowledge Holders, an advisory body to NWMO management, who provides "advice on issues that could enhance the development and maintenance of good relations with Indigenous communities" (NWMO 2022).

The NWMO's non-prescriptive approach to Indigenous participation in the Baseline Studies supports Indigenous communities to share knowledge and information in a fashion and at a time that is appropriate to the community. The NWMO is committed to co-designing and/or providing capacity for First Nation and Métis communities to independently undertake certain aspects of the impact assessment at a pace that is suitable to each individual community. Information, including Indigenous Knowledge, shared by communities will remain the intellectual property of the community and will only be included in the Baseline Studies at each Indigenous community's discretion. Communities will be made aware that their information will be held confidentially unless express permission is given to include and use their Indigenous Knowledge and information in the Baseline Studies.

The NWMO is focused on engaging with Indigenous community members through their appropriate governing structures and as directed by the elected officials representing those communities. It is understood that First Nations and Métis communities have undertaken and participated in previous studies (both related to the NWMO and other Project processes) and do not desire duplication or redundancy. Therefore, the NWMO will engage in dialogue with Indigenous communities to share information about the process and explore the community's desired way to best proceed with completing the Baseline Studies. If the studies are Indigenous community-led, the NWMO will openly share results from other baseline or community studies processes.

It is noted that First Nation and Métis communities were invited to participate in the IAWG (**Section 1.5.4**) and joined the IAWG as observers. They were not present to represent or act on behalf of their communities and no Indigenous engagement took place through the IAWG.

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