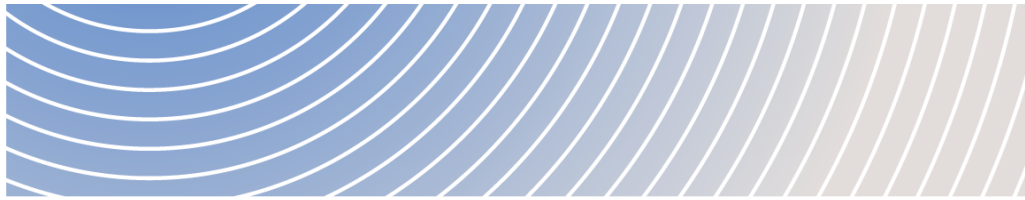




Indigenous Engagement & Participation Plan



Regional Assessment of the St. Lawrence River Area

September 2, 2026



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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
First Nations Partners	Means First Nations who are represented in the Regional Assessment Working Group: Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, Mohawk Council of Kanesatake, W8banaki Nation represented by the Conseil Tribal W8banaki, Nation Wendat, Première Nation des Pekuakamiulnuatsh, Première Nation des Innus Essipit, Première Nation des Innus de Pessamit, Première Nation Wolastoqiyik Wapishkekuk
IAA	<i>Impact Assessment Act</i>
IAAC	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
Participating Indigenous Organizations	Refers to the list of organizations identified in section 3 and targeted by this plan
Indigenous Peoples	Refers to the first peoples of Turtle Island (North America) and their descendants.
MCK	Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke
Minister	Refers to the <i>Minister of Environment</i> , as defined in section 2 of the IAA
Participating First Nations	Refers to the list of First Nations that have expressed an interest in participating to the SLRA, as identified in section 3 and targeted by this plan
Regional Assessment Working Group	Means the group established to conduct the Regional Assessment, which consists of members delegated by each of the nine First Nation Partner and Impact Assessment Agency of Canada officials.
Registry	Canadian Impact Assessment Registry
SLRA	Regional Assessment of the St. Lawrence River Area



1 Introduction

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC), in collaboration with the other members of the St. Lawrence Regional Assessment Working Group, has prepared this Indigenous Engagement and Participation Plan (hereinafter referred to as “the plan”) to present participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations with various opportunities to participate meaningfully in the St. Lawrence River Area (SLRA) process.

Please note that a separate plan for the public has been developed and is posted on the Registry. The [Public Participation Plan](#) outlines the engagement opportunities and related approaches specific to the participation of the public interested in the SLRA.

2 Context

The First Nations have a long history of occupation and use of the St. Lawrence River and its shores. Since time immemorial, First Nations fish and trade, travel, and gather in and along the St. Lawrence River. First Nations have an in-depth knowledge of the river and its resources, which is central to First Nation rights, identities and cultures.

The St. Lawrence River, which is an essential waterway connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, is recognized by the St. Lawrence economic development council as a significant economic asset facilitating the transport of goods and international trade.

On July 29, 2020, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) submitted a request to the Minister of the Environment to conduct a regional assessment of an area of the St. Lawrence River, emphasizing that the cumulative effects of development were not being thoroughly considered in project assessments. According to MCK, future impact assessments should strive to enhance the environment at the regional scale and respond to the historic impacts to the rights and interests of the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke, which have already been incurred.

In his response of October 27, 2020, the Minister determined that there is potential merit in conducting such a regional assessment and that further analysis and engagement would be necessary before deciding to move forward. The Minister instructed IAAC to initiate an engagement process, at the end of which the Minister decided, on July 15, 2021, to proceed with the Regional Assessment of the SLRA and instructed IAAC to begin the Planning Phase. On December 17, 2024, the Minister confirmed his commitment to move forward and authorized IAAC to conduct the SLRA in partnership with MCK and other interested First Nations in the region.



On August 27, 2026, the First Nations Partners and the Minister approved the SLRA's Terms of Reference, which identify how the SLRA will be conducted.

Section 6 of the Terms of Reference states that the working group will develop and implement engagement plans to ensure that Indigenous Peoples (other than First Nations Partners) and the public have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the regional assessment.

The main goal of the SLRA is to gain more insight into the state of the St. Lawrence River within the assessment area by assessing the relationships between targeted physical activities, complementary activities, and the ecosystems within which they occur. In this way, a set of baseline and targeted conditions, which take into account both Indigenous Knowledge and Western science, can be established to better evaluate the effects of activities (past, existing and future). This set of conditions will help to identify strategies for these activities and other efforts to achieve environmental and social gains that improve upon present-day conditions in an efficient, collaborative manner.

For more information on the SLRA or to read submitted comments and other materials, please visit the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry at: [Regional Assessment of the St. Lawrence River Area](#).

3 Process & Principles

As mentioned above, this Plan outlines opportunities for participation in the regional assessment process for participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations. The plan is flexible, and the SLRA working group may adjust the approaches described in it as changes arise during the course of the SLRA.

3.1 Regional Assessment Working Group

In accordance with section 5 of the Terms of Reference, the SLRA First Nations Partners, along with IAAC, have formed a working group that will be responsible for delivering on the SLRA. The SLRA working group will ensure that the work progresses and may call on various groups, organizations, and experts as needed. Working Group includes Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, Mohawk Council of Kanesatake, W8banaki Nation represented by the Conseil Tribal W8banaki, Nation Wendat, Première Nation des Pekuakamiulnuatsh, Première Nation des Innus Essipit, Première Nation des Innus de Pessamit, Première Nation Wolastoqiyik Wamsiwekuk and First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute. The MCK and IAAC are co-leading the SLRA Working Group.



3.2 SLRA Process

The SLRA phases of the process¹ include pre-decision, planning, conduct, and submission of the SLRA final report to the Minister and Chiefs of First Nations Partners.

During the pre-decision phase (2020-2021), IAAC undertook engagement with Indigenous Peoples, federal and provincial authorities, non-governmental organizations, and the public regarding a potential regional assessment of the St. Lawrence River area. The [What We Heard](#) report summarizes the findings. The Terms of Reference were developed in the planning phase (2022-2026) as well as the methodology. Participation opportunities for First Nations and Indigenous organizations during these two phases included:

- ongoing IAAC' update communications;
- participating in information sessions;
- providing views on the request for a regional assessment;
- providing comments on the draft Terms of Reference;
- a call for expert support and relevant data to inform the SLRA; and
- ongoing dialogue with IAAC's SLRA team.

Table 1 provides an overview of the planned engagement activities for the SLRA conduct phase, which will be held from summer 2026 to winter 2029.

3.3 Principles

In addition to the Section 6 of the [Terms of Reference](#), the following list outlines the principles identified by the SLRA Working Group and participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations regarding Indigenous participation in the regional assessment:

- Open and transparent communication throughout the process, including feedback on comments received throughout the process.
- Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge, in accordance with the knowledge-sharing protocols of First Nations and the OCAP principles (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession), where applicable:
 - Knowledge shared as part of the SLRA may include, but is not limited to, potential effects on environmental, health, social, cultural, and economic conditions, as well as on Indigenous rights and interests, or any other elements to be considered during the SLRA. Where identified by participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations, information may also include perspectives on how effects may be experienced differently by diverse

¹ For graphic illustration of the process, see [145488E.pdf](#).



members of Indigenous communities (i.e. elders, youth, Indigenous women, etc.).

- Shared Indigenous Knowledge will only be used by the working group, as previously determined with the First Nation and in accordance with confidentiality agreements where applicable (see Section 5 – Confidentiality).
- Respect for the uniqueness of each community and adaptation of the process based on preferences where possible. This may include consideration of approaches that facilitate participation by diverse members of communities, where identified as appropriate by participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations.
- While taking into account the SLRA's timeline, reasonable time will be allowed for the review of documentation and for internal community communications.
- Inclusion of diverse perspectives (e.g., women, men, gender-diverse people, Indigenous Elders, youth and other community members with diverse lived experiences) in the process, recognizing that participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations may choose to identify perspectives from diverse members of their communities in ways that are appropriate to their governance structures, priorities and engagement approaches.
- Translators and/or interpreters to support meetings, if needed.

4 Participating First Nations & Indigenous Organizations

IAAC has initiated discussions with First Nations and Indigenous organizations who have confirmed an interest in participating in the SLRA to date (see the lists below). First Nations or Indigenous organizations not identified on these distribution lists and who wish to participate in the suggested activities are invited to contact IAAC at: stlawrence-saintlaurent@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

IAAC notes that while the conduct of the SLRA may help gather information on Indigenous rights, the SLRA is not a rights determination process.

The following First Nations have confirmed an interest in participating in the SLRA, primarily in relation to the potential effects of activities on their ability to exercise their rights, as well as on their values and interests :

- Innu Takuaitkan Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam
- Conseil des Innu de Ekuanitshit
- Première Nation des Innus de Nutashkuan



- Conseil des Innus de Unamen Shipu
- Conseil des Innus de Pakua Shipi

List of Indigenous organizations who have expressed an interest in participating in the SLRA, primarily by providing comments and data during the process:

- Mamu Innu Kaikusseht Agency (AMIK)
- Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqey Indigenous Fisheries Management Association (MWIFMA)

5 Tools and Methods for Engagement and Participation

To ensure that participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the SLRA, the following tools and methods for engagement and participation may be used, as needed:

- Emails from IAAC and follow-up calls as needed to each First Nation and Indigenous organization;
- Meetings between IAAC and each First Nation and Indigenous organization, as needed;
- Public notices posted on [the Registry](#) and sometimes published in newspapers and broadcast on community radio;
- Updates on the SLRA via social media (e.g., posts on IAAC's Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn accounts) providing information and updates on the process, announcing public participation opportunities, and funding opportunities;
- An inventory of existing information relevant to the SLRA;
- Interactive community sessions and workshops;
- Community-specific engagement approaches, where requested, to support participation by diverse groups within communities (i.e. elders, youth, Indigenous women, etc.);
- Virtual sessions with a presentation for the public and a question-and-answer period. These sessions would be streamed live online. Links to access the presentations would be posted on the Registry and sent by email.
- [Subscribe to Registry notifications](#)

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and other tools or methods may be used during the SLRA to facilitate participation involvement of participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations. At any time during the Conduct phase, participants will be solicited and encouraged to contact IAAC to let the SLRA working group know of any:

- Views about the communication tools listed above.
- Preferences or suggestions for new tools to facilitate your participation.
- Any cultural, economic, technical, linguistic or other accessibility barriers that may restrict or prevent you, your community or your organization from participating in the process for this Regional Assessment.

Accessibility: IAAC will ensure that documents posted on the Registry are accessible to individuals with visual impairments, meaning they will be adapted to allow screen readers to read the content aloud. If a participant has additional accessibility needs that have not yet been addressed, please don't hesitate to contact us — IAAC aims to ensure that everyone can participate fully.

Documents (draft report, final report, updates or others) produced by the SLRA working group will be available in both official languages. Simultaneous translation will be provided during public sessions, unless sessions are offered separately in both official languages. Documents may be translated into Indigenous languages upon request.

5.1 Financial Aid

Funding support is available to assist the participation of First Nations and Indigenous organizations during the implementation phase of the SLRA. To learn more about eligible activities for funding or to apply for funding, please consult the information on IAAC's Participant Funding Programs at the following link: [Participant Funding Program - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/participant-funding-program.html) or send an email to: fp-paf@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

5.2 Approach to Activities

Table 1 outlines the objectives, planned engagement activities, participation tools that support these activities during the conduct phase and the expected timelines. These activities were identified based on the feedback and perspectives gathered to date.

First Nations and Indigenous organizations that wish to propose additional activities beyond those listed in Table 1 are invited to contact IAAC.

The engagement objectives during the SLRA conduct phase, lasting up to 30 months, are as follows:

- Support First Nations and Indigenous organizations in understanding the SLRA process.
- Provide financial assistance to First Nations and Indigenous organizations to support participation to the SLRA conduct phase.



- Ensure meaningful participation, including offering opportunities to contribute. For example, contribute to information gathering and to proposing useful and applicable approaches that can inform findings and recommendations for the SLRA.
- Gather feedback and perspectives on the draft regional assessment report.

**Table 1: Approaches for activities for participating First Nations and Indigenous Organizations**

Activities	Timeline	Participation Tools ²
IAAC will inform by email and phone call participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations about the availability of funding to support participation in the implementation phase.	Summer – Fall 2026	- Emails and phone calls - Submission of comments
IAAC will provide updates by email and phone call on the regional assessment process.	Ongoing, as needed	Meetings, information sessions, or workshops (virtual or in-person)
The SLRA Working Group will organize information sessions, virtual or in-person, for participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations.	Ongoing, as needed	Posting relevant documents and notices on the Registry
Other specific activities will be identified and developed as the work progresses, based on ongoing engagement and emerging needs.	Ongoing, as needed	Follow-up to confirm receipt of documents
Public comment period on assessment priorities.	Spring 2027	
Participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations will have the opportunity to share, via email or in-person meetings, data and knowledge on assessment priorities, potential effects and targeted activities or complementary activities as defined in the TOR to inform the SLRA.	2026-2027	
Participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations will have the opportunity to share, via email or in-person meetings, information related to land and marine uses and their views on the potential effects of activities on the exercise of their rights and interests.	2027-2028	
IAAC will post the draft SLRA report on the Registry website. The SLRA Working Group will seek comments from participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations on this document. The public comment period will take place once the draft version is posted on the Registry website.	Fall 2028	

² For more details, please see section 4.



The SLRA Working Group will hold sessions (virtual or in-person) with participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations on the draft report and potential recommendations.

Following the posting of the draft version of the draft SLRA report.

IAAC will post the final SLRA report on the Registry.

Spring 2029 - Following consideration of comments by the Working Group.

IAAC will post any response from the Minister of the Environment on the Registry. Following the Minister's response.

Table Description: An overview of the activities and approaches planned or undertaken for the engagement of participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations.

Note: The list in the table is not exhaustive, and other activities may take place during the conduct phase of the SLRA.



6 Confidentiality

Comments and other documents received by the SLRA Working Group throughout the SLRA process will be posted on the Registry, except for those deemed confidential or subject to a non-disclosure agreement. IAAC's [Submission Policy](#) outlines which submitted information may be made public and which should remain confidential. For more information on how IAAC protects confidentiality, please consult [the Privacy Notice](#). If a participant does not wish for their information and/or comments to be published on the Registry, IAAC must be informed prior to the submission of comments or documents by email at : stlawrence-saintlaurent@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence is protected from disclosure under section 119 of the IAA, unless written consent is provided or the information is publicly available³. Additionally, confidential Indigenous Knowledge may be disclosed to certain parties if required for reasons of procedural fairness and natural justice, or for use in legal proceedings. This ensures that interested parties have a fair opportunity to participate in processes that may affect their interests and that they have access to all necessary information and evidence relied upon by the decision-maker.

7 Submitting Comments and Contact Information

The SLRA Working Group invites participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations to share their comments and information at any time during the SLRA process. IAAC can receive comments and information in various ways, including verbally or in writing. If you encounter any difficulties in the submission process, please contact IAAC by email at: stlawrence-saintlaurent@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

If you have questions or need information, please contact the IAAC office responsible for coordinating the regional assessment process:

Regional Assessment of the St. Lawrence River Area

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

160 Elgin Street, 22nd Floor

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3

Email: stlawrence-saintlaurent@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

³ To learn more about IAAC's approach to protecting Indigenous Knowledge, please visit the following webpage: [Protecting Confidential Indigenous Knowledge under the Impact Assessment Act - Canada.ca](#)