Impact Assessment Agency of Canada | Agence d'évaluation d'impact du Canada

Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan

REGIONAL ASSESSMENT OF OIL AND GAS EXPLORATORY DRILLING IN THE CANADA-NOVA SCOTIA OFFSHORE AREA

JULY 17, 2026

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1. Introduction

The Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan (the IEPP) outlines how the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) will consult with Indigenous groups whose rights may be adversely impacted by future proposed oil and gas exploratory drilling activities in the offshore identified in the regional assessment process. Consultation and engagement will be conducted in the spirit of reconciliation, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, renewal of Nation-to-Nation, government to government and Crown-Inuit relations, and respect for the Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Within the context of the Regional Assessment process, IAAC[1] encourages the active participation of potentially impacted Indigenous groups, Indigenous women, Elders, 2SLGBTQIA+ and youth, in a manner that best reflects their specific cultural protocols, needs, and interests.

The IEPP for this Regional Assessment addresses:

- Crown consultation on the potential impacts of future proposed oil and gas exploratory drilling activities in the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area on the exercise of Aboriginal and treaty rights, commonly referred to as Indigenous rights;
- involvement with Indigenous groups regarding Indigenous Knowledge they may wish to contribute or apply when considering potential impacts, or any other cultural considerations and customs that must be taken into account in future project decision-making;
- engagement with Indigenous groups that encourages the participation of different subgroups of the population, in particular women, Elders, 2SLGBTQIA+, and youth;
- the general tools and processes for consulting and engaging with Indigenous groups at all stages of the Regional Assessment process, particularly during comment periods on key documents; and
- the specific tools and processes for consultation with Indigenous groups who have shown an interest in the Regional Assessment.

The IEPP is intended to be flexible and does not preclude IAAC from making changes to the approaches described in this Plan in order to accommodate changes that may occur during the regional assessment process.

[1] The Government of Canada takes a "Whole of Government" approach to Crown consultation in the context of regional assessments to ensure that Indigenous groups are meaningfully consulted and involved in the regional assessment. As the Crown Consultation Coordinator, IAAC leads the Government of Canada's consultation team on regional assessments, by coordinating the participation of other federal authorities or lifecycle regulators as appropriate, enabling a 'one window' point of contact for Indigenous groups throughout the regional assessment process.

2. Description of the Regional Assessment

The Regional Assessment (RA) of Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling in the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Area is being led by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Department of Energy (NSDoE), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator (CNSOER).

This RA will focus on the RA Study Area, where the exercise of Indigenous rights is well documented. These rights include communal commercial, Food, Social, Ceremonial (FSC), and Moderate Livelihood (ML) fishing.

The purpose of the RA will be to inform future proposed regulatory decisions under the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) and will support efficient, predictable, and well-coordinated federal–provincial oversight of oil and gas exploratory drilling activities, including consideration of whether an exclusion regulation for future oil and gas exploratory drilling activities would be appropriate in the context of Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area.

Further details of the Regional Assessment process, including the Terms of Reference are posted on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry.

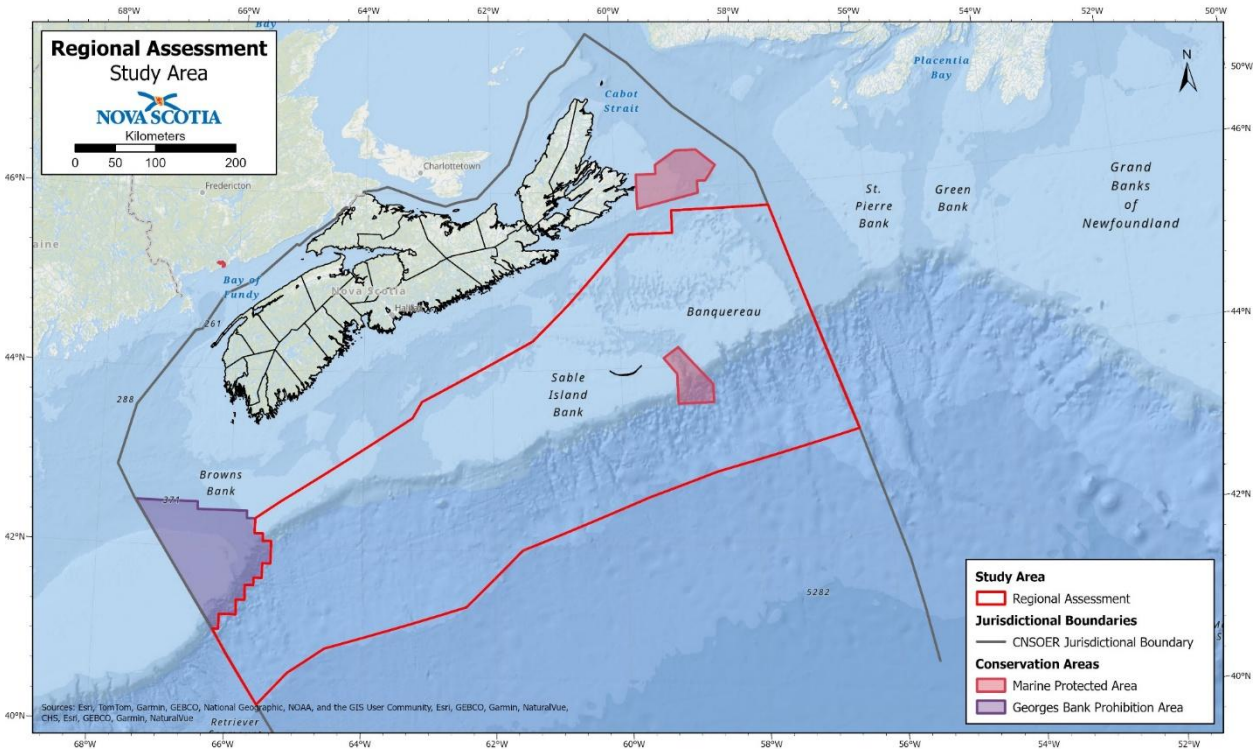


Figure 1. Map of the study area.



Figure 2. Map of Mi'kmaq First Nations in Nova Scotia.

For more information on the Regional Assessment of Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling in the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Area or to read more information and comments received, visit the assessment's Canadian Impact Assessment Registry page.

3. Indigenous Peoples

IAAC identified Indigenous groups where the Crown has a duty to consult regarding the potential impacts of future proposed oil and gas exploratory drilling activities in the offshore on the exercise of Indigenous rights as recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.

The list of Indigenous groups identified may be updated throughout the process as IAAC receives and gathers more information on potential impacts of future proposed oil and gas exploratory drilling activities and Indigenous rights that may be affected.

Although the Regional Assessment process is not a rights-determination process, IAAC acknowledges that the content and extent of the duty to consult varies according to the nature of the rights and the severity of the proposed activities on these rights.

IAAC's aim is to establish a respectful process that recognizes a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints. IAAC invites input from Indigenous groups potentially impacted by future proposed oil and gas exploratory drilling activities and encourages their participation in the Regional Assessment process,

while remaining committed to respecting Indigenous Peoples' cultures, values, and languages and the right to self-determination.

The Government of Canada is committed to renewing its relationship with Indigenous Peoples by implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* Act and working with Peace and Friendship Treaty Partners to implement Treaty obligations in a way that upholds the spirit and intent of Treaties. IAAC is committed to undertaking all our work in a way that aligns with the objectives and spirit of the *UN Declaration*, and to ensuring that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected throughout federal assessment processes.

IAAC will consult with the following Indigenous groups to understand the concerns and potential impacts of future proposed oil and gas exploratory drilling activities in the study area on their ability to exercise Indigenous rights. These consultations will support the Regional Assessment process.

Kwilmu'kw Maw-Klusuaqn Negotiation Office representing 11 of 13 Mi'kmaq First Nations of Nova Scotia: • Acadia First Nation, • Annapolis Valley First Nation, • Bear River First Nation, • Eskasoni First Nation, • Glooscap First Nation, • Membertou First Nation, • Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation, • Pictou Landing First Nation, • Potlotek First Nation, • Wagmatcook First Nation, • We'koqma'q First Nation.
Sipekne'katik First Nation
Millbrook First Nation

4. Consultation and engagement objectives and methods

The following is a list of objectives and methods to ensure meaningful consultation and collaboration throughout the Regional Assessment process.

- Prioritizing relationship building and communicating with Indigenous groups in an ongoing, open, and transparent manner.

- Providing funding under the Participant Funding Program[2] to support the participation of Indigenous groups, including Elders, youth, children, women, men, persons with disabilities, and gender-diverse and two-spirit persons in the Regional Assessment process.
- Providing clear and timely information to Indigenous groups on the Regional Assessment process and opportunities for collaboration in the Regional Assessment, including on the associated workload and timelines.
- Accommodating communication and consultation processes according to the communities' schedule and protocols, where possible.
- Considering cultural needs including seasonal events (e.g., harvesting and hunting periods) and cultural protocols (e.g., offerings and gift giving), and ceremony (e.g., opening prayers).
- Providing reasonable time for in-community visits, as appropriate.
- Using workshop formats to discuss key documents through the Regional Assessment process, where appropriate.
- Recognition of place names as part of Indigenous Knowledge and the use of Indigenous place names to promote dialogue.
- Determining the approach for handling confidentiality of both written and oral information to prevent unauthorized disclosure of Indigenous knowledge and thereby promote the sharing of Indigenous Knowledge.
- Prioritizing inclusive meetings that allow for diverse participation (e.g., accessibility of meeting locations, timing of meetings, transportation, childcare, size of focus groups to suit members' preferences, door prizes to encourage participation).

5. Consultation and engagement activities

IAAC commenced its engagement and consultation efforts on the RA during the Pre-Planning Phase. In the Pre-Planning Phase, Indigenous groups were informed of the RA and potential interest of Indigenous groups in the RA process was confirmed.

Following the Pre-Planning Phase, IAAC continued to engage during the Planning Phase with Indigenous groups on the draft Terms of Reference and this plan.

The table below provides a description of the main steps in the RA process and consultation and engagement activities. Indigenous groups listed in section 3 interested in consultation activities beyond those included in table 1 are invited to provide input. Indigenous groups may have consultation protocols (i.e., Terms of Reference For A Mi'kmaq – Nova Scotia – Canada Consultation Process, Sipekne'katik Governance Initiative Protocol) in place for processes like the RA. IAAC is committed to integrating community-specific protocols into this RA process, as appropriate.

[2] More information on IAAC funding programs can be found on the IAAC website.

Table 1: Potential Consultation and Engagement Activities

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Planning

IAAC Objectives
✓ Support understanding of the Regional Assessment.
✓ Provide Indigenous groups funding to support participation during the Planning Phase.
✓ Establish a common awareness of the Regional Assessment process.
✓ Obtain comments and feedback on documents related to the Planning Phase.
✓ Collaborate on the development of the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan and draft Terms of Reference.
✓ Share information on the Regional Assessment process and on opportunities for participation.
✓ Explore opportunities for maximizing Indigenous leadership and collaboration on the Regional Assessment with Indigenous groups that have shown an interest.

Timeline: February 13, 2026 to July 8, 2026</th></tr>
<tr><th>IAAC Activities</th><th>Indigenous Groups' Activities</th></tr>
<tr><td>• Since February 13 2026, IAAC has communicated with Indigenous groups to support their understanding of the Regional Assessment process and to highlight opportunities for collaboration in the Regional Assessment, including upcoming next steps.
• On April 21, 2026, the Agency offered grant funding to support participation during the Planning Phase and the draft Terms of Reference comment period.
• From May 5, 2026 to June 9, 2026, IAAC invited comments on the draft Terms of Reference and the draft IEPP. On July 6, 2026, IAAC made contribution funding available for the Conduct Phase.</td><td>• Indigenous groups applied for available grant funding during the comment period of the Planning Phase to support participation.
• Indigenous groups participated in early meetings to discuss and inform key planning documents.
• From May 5, 2026 to June 9, 2026, Indigenous groups participated in the comment period for the draft Terms of Reference and commented on the draft IEPP.</td></tr>
</table>

• IAAC held both in-person and virtual meetings with Indigenous communities to support their understanding of the Regional Assessment process and to seek their engagement in development of the draft Terms of Reference and the draft IEPP.	

Phase 2 - Conduct

IAAC Objectives

- ✓ Establish a common awareness of the RA process.
- ✓ Provide Indigenous groups funding to support participation for the conduct of the RA process.
- ✓ Encourage Indigenous groups to share Indigenous Knowledge and information.
- ✓ Obtain comments / views on the Draft RA report
- ✓ Notify Indigenous groups of key steps in the RA process, such as the receipt of the **draft RA report** and the comment period on the **report**.
- ✓ Identify potential impacts on the exercise of Indigenous rights and avoidance or mitigation measures in collaboration with Indigenous groups.

Timeline: July 8, 2026 to December 2026

Expected IAAC Activities	Indigenous Groups' Potential Activities
• IAAC sends correspondence detailing how comments made by Indigenous groups on the Terms of Reference and the IEPP have been considered. • IAAC administers participant funding for the remainder of the RA process. • IAAC works with Indigenous groups to implement the IEPP. • IAAC provides Indigenous groups with guidance on how to protect confidential information, including to improve trust and transparency in how Indigenous Knowledge is considered, protected, and woven into regional assessments.	• Indigenous groups apply for funding to participate in the remaining phases of the RA process. • Indigenous groups share their points of view on the potential impacts from oil and gas exploratory drilling in the Study Area on the exercise of their rights and interests to inform the RA process. • Indigenous groups work with IAAC to identify adverse effects (direct and incidental) and discuss mitigation and monitoring measures to address possible adverse effects. This may also include a workshop to discuss draft recommendations in the RA Report. • Indigenous groups submit comments on the draft RA Report to IAAC.

• IAAC works with Indigenous groups to develop and implement community-specific consultation plans, including the identification of collaboration approaches where appropriate, • IAAC has dialogue with interested Indigenous groups to understand potential impacts on the exercise of Mi'kmaq rights and interests. • IAAC posts the draft RA Report on the Registry website and sends notification emails to Indigenous groups. • IAAC works with Indigenous groups to develop collaboration and partnership approaches, where appropriate, for the review of the draft RA Report. • IAAC seeks the views of Indigenous groups on potential impacts from oil and gas exploratory drilling in the Study Area on the exercise of their rights and discusses with Indigenous groups and whether the Report adequately identified mitigation measures. • IAAC informs Indigenous groups of the ways in which comments and information from Indigenous groups may be shared (with permission) with other participants in the RA process, such as federal authorities, or provincial authorities. • IAAC holds a comment period on the draft RA Report. Comments will help determine whether the Report contains all the studies and information noted in the Terms of Reference. Indigenous groups will also be able to share their comments on the effects, mitigation measures, and other content. • IAAC, where appropriate, organizes meetings between federal authorities, Indigenous groups, to discuss technical issues, inform the assessment of impacts on rights and interests and early identification of mitigation measures and recommendations.	

6. Participant Funding

In addition to funding made available for the Planning Phase, funding is also available to support Indigenous groups to participate in the Conduct Phase of the Regional Assessment process (July 8, 2026 - December 2026). This participant funding will be made available to support involvement in meetings and commenting on the draft Regional Assessment Report.

For information about the activities that are eligible for funding or how to apply for funding, please see the Participant Funding Program National Program Guidelines.

7. Contact IAAC

IAAC invites Indigenous groups to share comments and information with IAAC at any time during the Regional Assessment process. These comments can be made by contacting NSOffshoreDrilling-NEForageEnMer@iaac-aeic.gc.ca or through the Impact Assessment Registry website by clicking «Submit a Comment».

Comments and other documents received by IAAC will form part of the file and are posted on the Registry website, apart from comments or documents deemed confidential or subject to a non-disclosure clause. IAAC's Submission Policy determines what can be shared publicly and what should remain private. For more information on how IAAC protects privacy, refer to IAAC's Privacy Notice.

IAAC will respect the principles of Indigenous groups ownership, control, access and possession of information provided into the Regional Assessment process. IAAC will also seek permission from Indigenous groups prior to using artificial intelligence tools to collect, process, train or derive outputs from Indigenous Knowledge shared with IAAC during the Regional Assessment process.

Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence is protected from disclosure under section 119 of the IAA, except if written consent is provided, or if the information is publicly available[3]. **If an Indigenous group does not want their comments or knowledge posted on the Registry website,** or if they wish to provide documents that contain confidential or sensitive information that should be protected from release to the public, IAAC should be contacted before submitting the information**.** IAAC must consult with Indigenous groups prior to disclosing Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence under an exception.

[3] More information on IAAC's approach to protecting Indigenous Knowledge is found on IAAC's website at the following link: Protecting Confidential Indigenous Knowledge under the Impact Assessment Act