



Anishinabek Nation **WOMEN'S WATER COMMISSION**

Traditional Naming of Water Bodies in
the Northern Superior Region within
Anishinabek Nation Territory





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Union of Ontario Indians (UOI), Anishinabek Women's Water Commission and the Anishinabek Northern Superior region wish to thank the communities for their contribution to this project. The Great Lakes Guardian Fund contributed to this project and the production of this report.

Inside photos are courtesy of the Union of Ontario Indians.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First Nations historically named places and water bodies after distinguishing features or characteristics of the area that would provide a sense of place. It was the vision of the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission to attempt to restore the traditional naming of the water bodies located within Anishinabek Nation Territory. By restoring Anishinaabemowin language, communities are empowered to know more about their culture and heritage, while strengthening character and enforcing our sense of nationhood.

Anishinabek Nation people are inherently connected to their language. The purpose of embarking on this project was to restore traditional Anishinabek names to water bodies within the Anishinabek Nation. However, with Anishinabek Nation territory being so large, it was decided to frame the project around one Anishinabek Nation region at a time. The geographic location chosen for this project was the Northern Superior Region of the Anishinabek Nation.

The Anishinabek Women's Water Commission in partnership with the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) and individuals from member First Nations across Northern Superior territory, meet to gather traditional knowledge on the Anishinabek names of water bodies. The new names have been saved and shared on maps that have been included in this report.



WOMEN'S WATER COMMISSION

Left to right is Josephine Mandamin, Head Commissioner. Veronica Waboose, Northern Superior Commissioner, Sarah St. Louis, Union of Ontario Indians, Elizabeth Plain, South West Commissioner and Elizabeth Elson, South East Commissioner.

Missing from photo is Isadora Bebemash, Huron Commissioner.



INTRODUCTION

On March 24, 2007, former Grand Council Chief John Beaucage appointed the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission (WWC). The Commission was established with a mandate to provide advice for Anishinabek Nation leadership and citizens on water and Great Lakes management issues through dialogue and information exchange. The Commission plays a leadership role in raising awareness on all water issues, sharing their traditional knowledge, teachings, and values.

The WWC consists of five Anishinabe-kwe representatives from various First Nation communities within Anishinabek Nation territory. They meet on a quarterly basis and have been involved in various Anishinabek Nation and Government Initiatives. The five representatives includes; one Chief Commissioner and one commissioner for each Anishinabek Region (please see chart).

This regional process was created to alleviate the workload and to recognize the specific needs and interests of each Anishinabek Nation region. Each region has various unique water and environmental issues that need to be addressed.

Title	Region	Name	Community
Chief Commissioner	ALL	Josephine Mandamin	Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation
Commissioner	Lake Huron	Isadora Bebamash	M'Chigeeng First Nation
Commissioner	Northern Superior	Chief Veronica Waboose	Long Lac # 58 First Nation
Commissioner	Southwest	Elizabeth (Liz) Plain	Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Commissioner	Southeast	Beth Olsen	Beausoleil First Nation



PURPOSE

Anishinabek Nation citizens are inherently connected to their language. By restoring the language and meanings, Anishinabek Nation communities are empowered to recognize and understand more of their culture and heritage.

OBJECTIVES

This project has been aimed to strengthen relationships amongst the First Nations located within the Great Lakes Basin and foster a further understanding of the Anishinaabemowin Language, meaning of places and restore a stronger sense of self to empower the communities.

The objectives of this project were aimed to:

- ◆ Restore traditional Anishinabek names to water bodies in Ontario;
- ◆ Provide an opportunity for Anishinabek First Nation citizens in the sharing of traditional knowledge to strengthen culture;
- ◆ Dialogue with Elders, traditional knowledge holders, community technicians and Leadership;
- ◆ Share and exchange Information with member First Nations of the Anishinabek Nation; and
- ◆ Produce and circulate a final report with maps for member communities.

Project Description: Northern Superior Region

The Northern Superior Region of the Anishinabek Nation encompasses the Northern Superior Watershed and includes the Northern Superior / Robinson Treaty of 1850. Lake Superior is the largest, least-polluted, and is considered the cleanest of all the Great Lakes. It is the largest freshwater lake in the world by surface area, and is the world's third-largest freshwater lake by volume.

Lake Superior watershed has sustained the livelihoods of First Nations for thousands of years. The Lake Superior watershed contains over 80 species of fish and diverse terrestrial life. Historically, First Nations named Lake Superior, "Gichigami" meaning "big water." However, further research has revealed that First Nations also called Lake Superior "Anishinabe Gichigamiing", or "the Ojibway's Ocean". The map illustrated below outlines the Lake Superior Watershed, First Nation reserve lands, as well as various traditional naming of the water bodies.

Please see Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6. To review the data distribution in:

1. Lake Superior Watershed (Figures 3 and 4) and;
2. Longlac # 58 First Nation (Figures 5 and 6)

Northern Superior Watershed

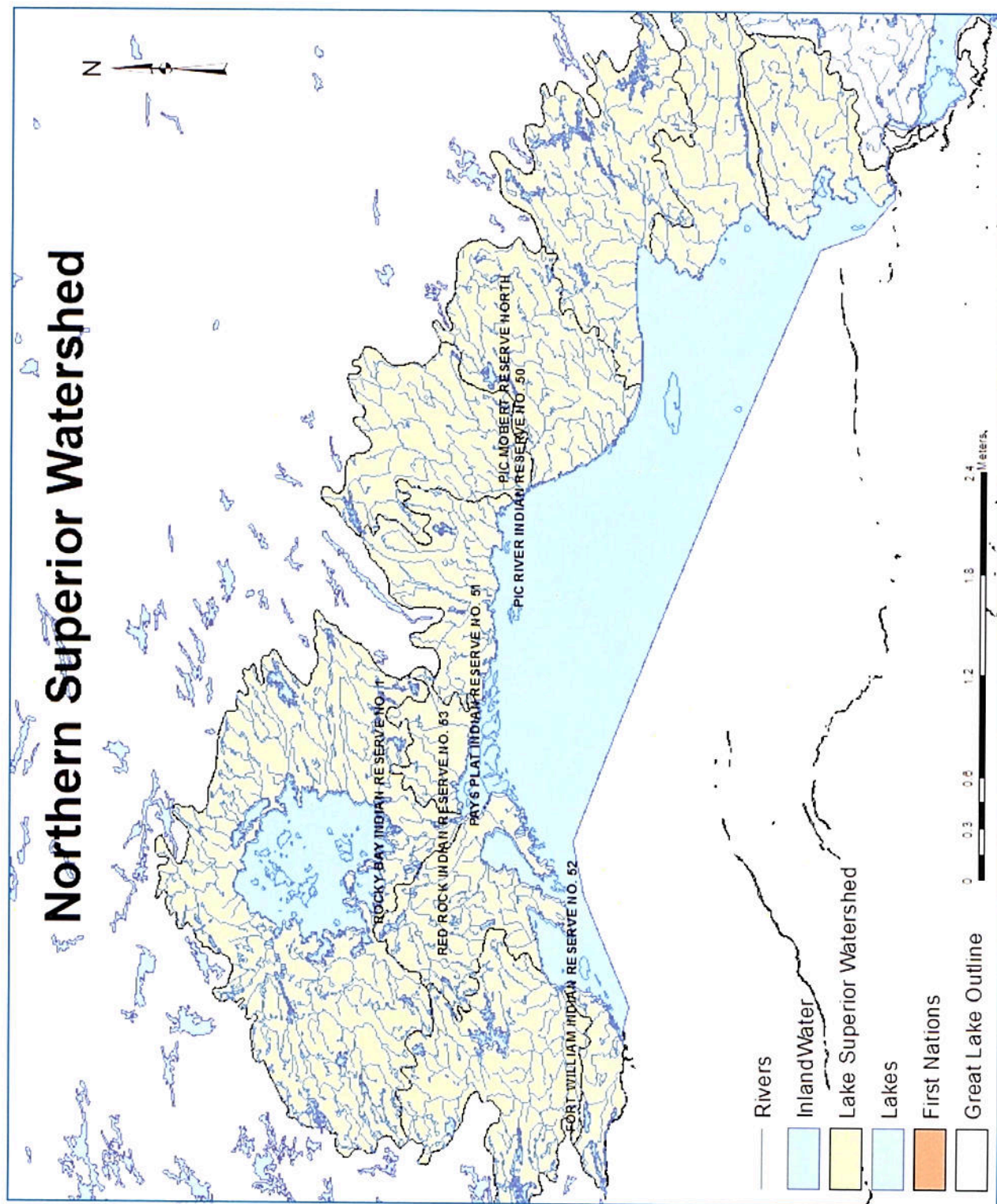


Figure 1

Longlac 58 First Nation - Traditional Naming of Waterways

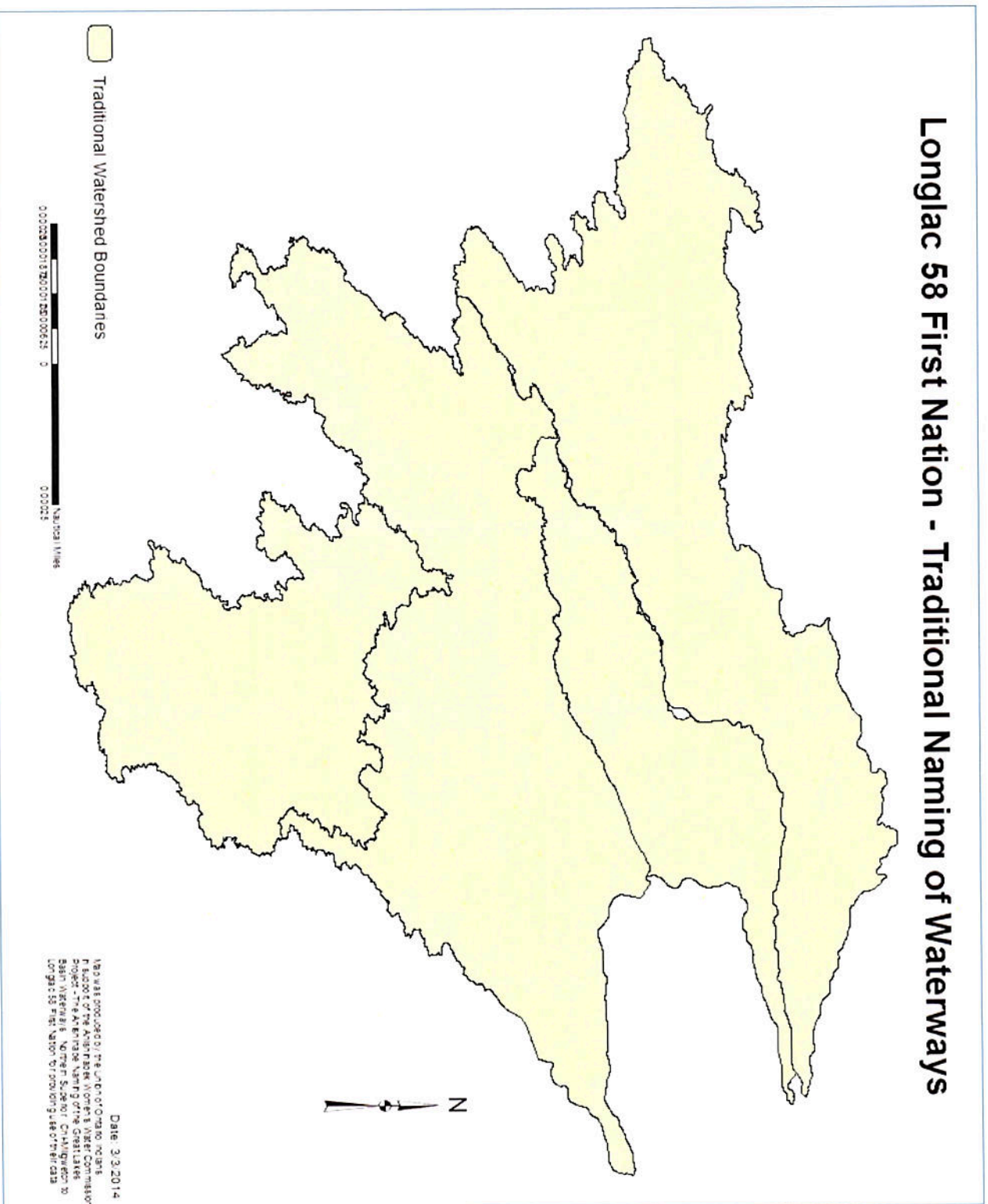


Figure 2



METHODOLOGY

This project was built on communication and research, where the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission (WWC) and staff from the UOI worked collaboratively with First Nation leadership, citizens, elders and knowledge keepers of the Northern Superior Region to gather Anishinabek Names of water bodies. The data collection by the WWC will provide valuable insight and provide more meaning to the water bodies located within the region.

Communications / Dialogue

The approach was to engage community members included: Initial correspondence letters, follow-up correspondence, Northern Superior Regional Chiefs meeting, to name a few.

Research / Data Collection

The UOI created an internal working group to collaborate on the data collected. The Data by the various First Nation communities was collected was put into (ESRI ARC) Geographic Information System (GIS) program. The data (water body names) were entered into attribute tables under the water body layers where it can be illustrated on the maps.

Illustrated in the maps are significant areas where the data collected the traditional names of water bodies and were input into the layers. Various methods were used to visual the maps as is. The GIS methodology is too complex to explain within this report.

Activities Completed

Meetings / Dialogue	Details
WWC Face-to-Face Meeting	
Initial Correspondence	Introduction of the Project
Follow-up Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background of the project Request for contact information Provided contact information
Northern Superior Chiefs Meeting	Northern Superior WWC Rep & UOI Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended & presented project Collected contact information
WWC Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review information collected Dates of meeting with First Nation representatives Next Steps
Follow-up Phone Calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts provided by First Nations
WWC Face-to-Face Meeting	
UOI Staff Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FN / Parks Canada Map Book / Articles Review
Meeting with First Nation Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josephine Mandamin, Wikwemikong Veronica Waboose, Long Lake #58
WWC Follow-up Meeting	
WWC Follow-up commination	

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Figure 3

Longlac 58 First Nation - Traditional Naming of Waterways

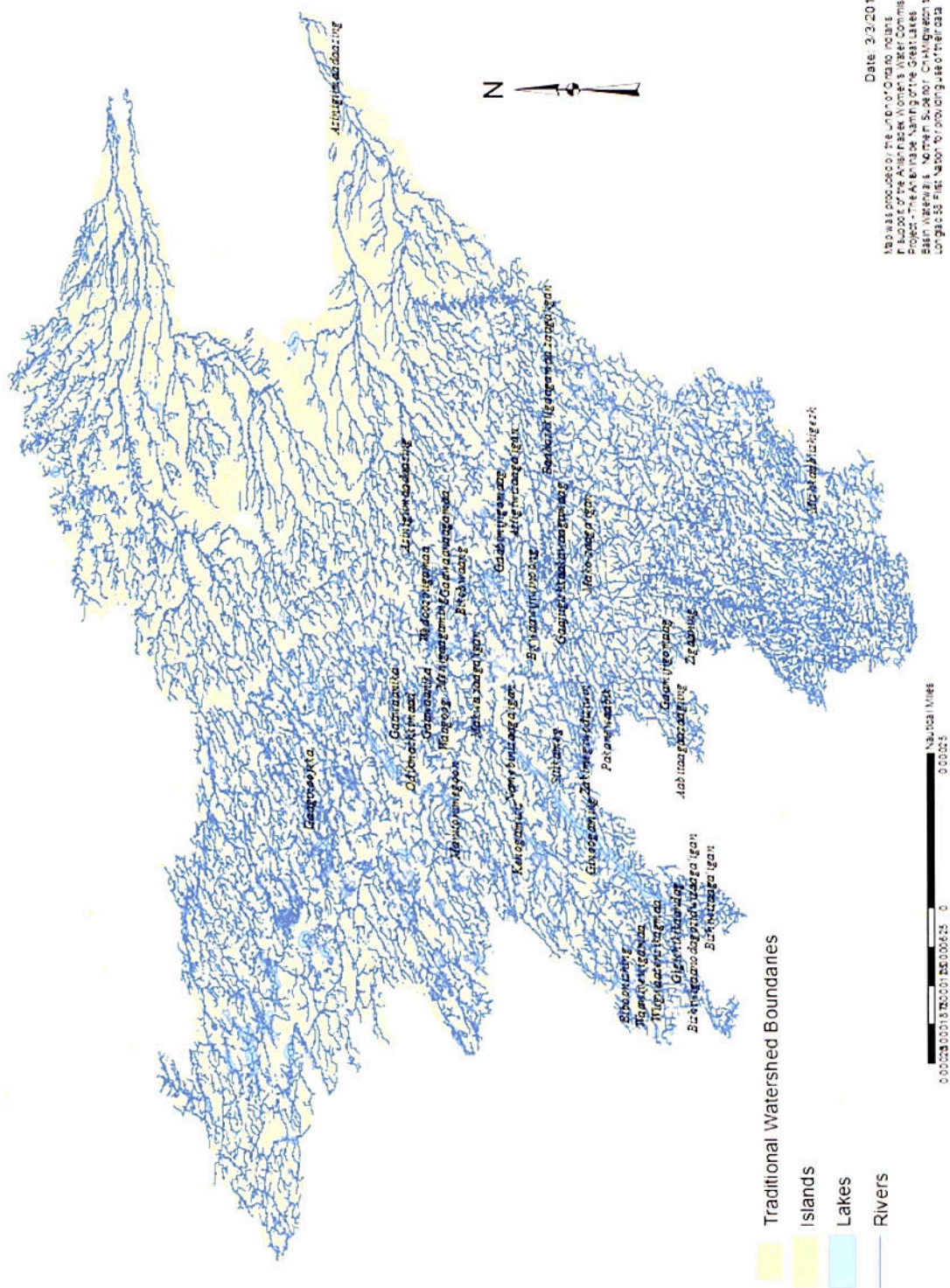
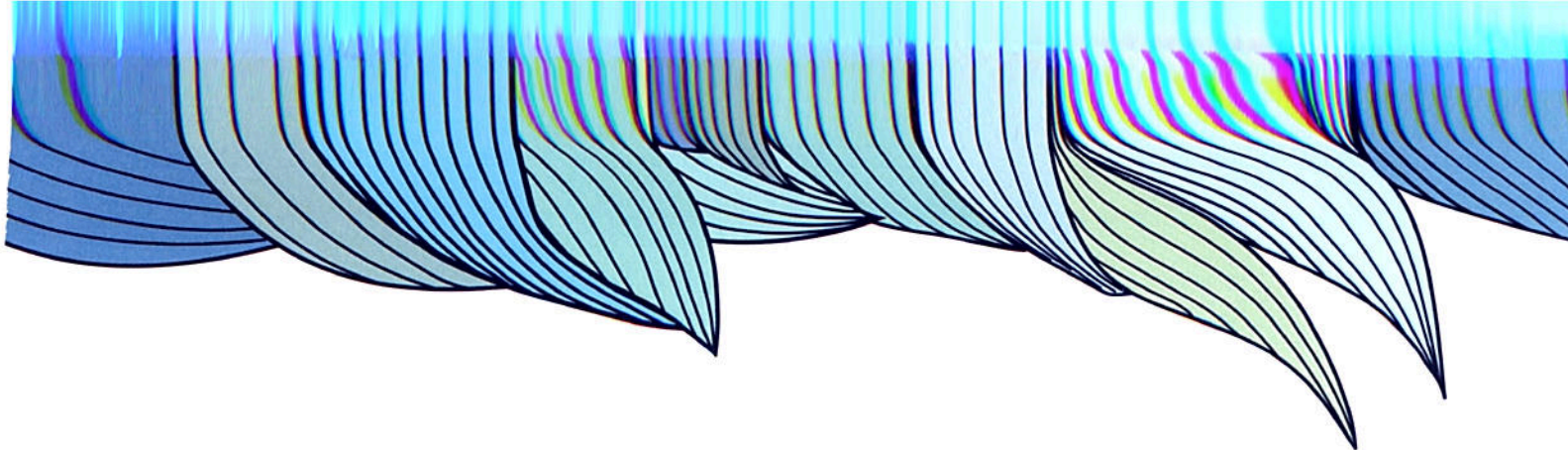


Figure 5

[illegible][illegible]



RESULTS

This project addressed the education and awareness aspect of the Great Lakes Guardian Fund. The knowledge collected through communication, data collection and research encouraged pride and stewardship, as well as promoted the water bodies' traditional names, and the connectivity to the Great Lakes system, amongst the participants involved.

The dialogue and data collected with community Elders, technical staff and the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission has been a significant step forward for member First Nation relationship-building. By discussing the Great Lakes and water bodies, communities have been empowered by gaining knowledge and understanding of the water bodies located within the Northern Superior Region of the Anishinabek Nation.

The data and knowledge collected will not only benefit the Anishinabek Nation, but also be helpful for Governments, Industry and Tourism by allowing others to see the richness and complexity of the water bodies. Hopefully it will change behaviours, build understanding and promote the Anishinabek perspective and views of the Northern Superior watershed system. Not only did this project support the Northern Superior region of the Anishinabek Nation, it also supported the principles of the "First Nations Water Declaration" in Ontario.


SUMMARY

The project objectives have been completed. The Anishinabek Nation WWC and UOI staff have communicated and discussed with Elders, traditional knowledge holders, community technicians, and leadership about Northern Superior water bodies, stories, and knowledge. The traditional names of the water bodies were collected and illustrated on maps that have been included in this report.

The Anishinabek First Nation WWC, UOI staff, Elders, technical FN staff and citizens assisted in strengthening culture by the sharing of the traditional knowledge, and naming of water bodies. The information that has been collected will be shared and exchanged with member First Nations of the Anishinabek Nation by way of this final report.

By restoring language and meanings, Anishinabek Nation communities are empowered to recognize and understand more of their culture and heritage. This project strengthened relationships among First Nation located within the Great Lakes Basin, and has fostered a further understanding of the Anishinaabemowin Language, meaning of places and the restoration of a stronger sense of self to empower communities.





**The Mission
of the Lands
and Resources
department is to
foster a better
quality of life
by ensuring
access to natural
resources in
support of the
goals, principles
and values of
the Anishinabek
Nation.**

