



Engagement Plan for the Wekweètì Winter Road Construction, Operations and Maintenance

Government of the Northwest Territories – Department of Infrastructure



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Introduction

The Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Infrastructure (INF) has constructed, operated, and maintained the Wekweètì Winter Road for over 19 years. Comprehensive community engagement regarding the winter road has been undertaken on a continual basis since 2002. As Public Servants, the staff of the GNWT are accountable and open to the public for discussion of all matters. As such, the Department and staff are well acquainted with the communities and community members along the Wekweètì Winter Road, and engagement practices and community relationships are well established.

Affected Parties

Affected parties for the Wekweètì Winter Road were first identified in 2002, and have grown to include a number of aboriginal groups and other affected parties. The groups identified in the 2021 Land Use Permit Renewal include:

- Akaitcho Interim Measures Agreement Implementation Office;
- Tłı̨chǫ Government
- Wek'eezhii Renewable Resource Board;
- Dehcho First Nations;
- North Slave Metis Alliance;
- Northwest Territories Metis Nation;
- Prince of Whales Northern Heritage Center;
- Kitikmeot Inuit Association
- Yellowknives Dene First Nation
- Denínu Kúę First Nation
- Łutselk'e Dene First Nation; and
- Senior Administration Officer (SAO) of Wekweètì

The engagement groups for annual construction and realignment work is limited to the Community of Wekweètì (SAO) and the GNWT Lands Inspector. The Department of Infrastructure may engage with other Parties on a case by case basis as appropriate.

Past Engagement Activities

Beginning in 2002, the Department of Infrastructure has constructed, operated, and maintained the Wekweètì Winter Road. Multiple opportunities to engage stakeholders have occurred throughout the years, including discussing re-alignments and safety improvements. As a result of the open lines of communication, the Department has kept community members involved and informed on an ongoing basis.

Engagement Approach

The Department of Infrastructure believes that meaningful community engagement is crucial in building and maintaining good relationships with communities and community members. The Department of Infrastructure Regional Offices' are open for residents to provide comments and concerns, or to ask questions regarding the Departments activities. As a result of the Departments open lines of communication, well-established relationships have been built with the people and communities of the Northwest Territories.

Engagement Activities for the Project

During the life of the Wekweètì Winter Road, INF will build on the engagement approach and there will be various opportunities for affected parties to learn and provide input on the winter road operations. This engagement plan will ensure that the people of the community of Wekweètì, the major stakeholder, are fully aware of the schedule of construction, conditions, and operations of the Winter Road.

Normal winter road construction activities, minor realignment works, maintenance activities, or winter road openings and closings should not require a community meeting, but instead verbal or written communication between INF, Community of Wekweètì SAO, and GNWT Lands Inspections Division.

Engagement for on-going operations includes key activities such as:

- Prior to the construction of the Wekweètì Winter Road, the Department of Infrastructure contacts the Community Government of Wekweètì to discuss timing and any specific issues crews may face with winter road construction based on information known at the time. The SAO advises Chief and Council and any interested members of the community.
- Once construction is underway, the Department advises the SAO who is normally cognizant of this fact as the Community Government of Wekweètì is often a participant or subcontractor who works on the construction. The SAO advises Chief and Council and any interested members of the community.
- Once the winter road is constructed and ready for public traffic, the Department of Infrastructure contacts the community to advise of such through the SAO. Information with respect to road conditions are communicated at this time. The SAO advises Chief and Council and any interested members of the community.
- On a weekly basis, the Regional Superintendent sends an update to all winter road stakeholders that delineate the conditions, allowable weights and a basic overview of the winter roads throughout the Tłı̄chǝ Region. This information is sent to the community governments and is communicated through various methodologies including social media.
- In the event of a winter storm, excessive snow, high winds, overflow on portages or lakes, very rough conditions in certain areas, communication is provided immediately through the SAO who communicates with the community through their various methodologies.

- As the closure of the winter road approaches, a number of communications, via e-mail and telephone are made with the community through the SAO as well as media.
- When the winter road is closed for the season, communication through the SAO and media are given to ensure members of the community of Wekweètì are aware the road will be closed for the season.

If there is a community meeting to take place it will be open to all members of the community, including:

- Youth;
- Elders;
- Women and Men; and
- Any other community members interested in participating.

Major realignment works are larger projects and are often completed in the summer. If major realignments are to be planned, the steps taken for engagement in previous realignment activities will be followed. This would include in-person meetings, along with site visits with the Community, Tł̥chq̥ Lands Division, and other interested parties.

Historically; minor, temporary, or emergency alignment changes have been discussed with and approved by the Lands Inspector while in the field without direct Community engagement.

With climate change, recent permafrost degradation, and other weather anomalies this current process should not be changed or discounted. There often is an operational requirement to make quick, decisive decisions in conjunction with the Lands Inspector while working in the field to continue with winter road construction, road maintenance operations; or to ensure the safety of public and commercial travel in a timely manner.

Summary

A summary of engagement triggers and methods is provided below in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Engagement Triggers and Methods

Engagement Trigger	Primary Purpose	Primary Methods	Primary Participants
Prior to the Construction of the Winter Road	Discuss timing and any specific issues crews may face with construction based on information known at the time.	Verbal and/or written notification.	SAO of Wekweètì who, in turn, will advise the Chief and Council, as well as any interested members of the community.
Once construction is underway	To advise the community that construction activities has begun	Verbal and/or written notification	SAO of Wekweètì who, in turn, will advise the Chief and Council, as well as any interested

			members of the community.
Once the Winter Road is open and ready for public traffic	To advise interested parties of the road opening.	Verbal and/or written notification, as well as Social Media (DOT Website, Twitter)	SAO of Wekweèti, who in turn, advises Chief and Council as well as any interested members of the community
Updates on Road conditions	To advise affected parties of the road condition, allowable weights, and a basic overview of the Winter Road throughout the Tlicho Region	Verbal and/or written notification, as well as Social Media.	SAO of Wekweèti, who in turn, advises Chief and Council as well as any interested members of the community
Upcoming Road Closure and immediate Road Closure	To advise affected parties of the upcoming seasonal road closure, as well as immediately when the road closes.	Written and/or verbal notification, as well as social media.	SAO of Wekweèti, who in turn, advises Chief and Council as well as any interested members of the community
Major road realignments or enhancements	To advise and consult with affected parties of road realignments or enhancements	Written and/or verbal communication, as well as face-to-face meetings and community meetings if requested	SAO of Wekweèti, Tłı̄chọ Lands Division, Lands Inspector, and other relevant parties