



1.6 Michi Saagiig and Indigenous Engagement: From Collaboration and Partnership

It was evident from the beginning that Indigenous involvement needed to move beyond simple involvement and engagement, to enhanced opportunities for collaboration and partnership in realizing the Plan.

When Trent University began work on the TLNAP, their efforts to reach First Nations, Indigenous communities, faculty, and staff began with a statement:

- *“The Board of Governors, President and senior management have committed to ensuring the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan includes a robust engagement process that includes the voices, perspectives and worldview of local First Nations, area Indigenous community members as well as Trent University students, staff and faculty.”*

A Values-Based Approach

While Part II of the TLNAP has a number of guiding principles, the engagement process with Michi Saagiig and Indigenous communities also had its own set of principles that would help guide these important discussions.

- **Indigenous-led Engagement** – The success of an engagement process with First Nations, Métis communities, and representative Indigenous organizations should always be led and advised by Indigenous people themselves. The community engagement meetings and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge workshops were led by skilled and knowledgeable Indigenous people.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** – Trent University recognizes and is committed to building engagement processes that respect the diversity of all Indigenous nations within the project area, including Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe and Métis communities, First Nations residents living both on- and off-reserve, and respect for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff of other Indigenous nations.
- **Anishinaabe Values** – All engagement activities will be guided by traditional Indigenous values including the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe (Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth, Wisdom).

Elders and Knowledge Keepers

From the very beginning, the TLNAP was developed in collaboration and with the ongoing advice from Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers supported by the First People's House of Learning. It was made clear to Trent University, that Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and the input received from First Nations and Indigenous communities required the involvement of Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers. Their involvement would be crucial to the success of the Plan.

The opening ceremony that launched the TLNAP process was led by Gitigaa Migizi (Doug Williams) and included Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers from across the territory.

The meetings of the Trent Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers Council always began in ceremony, with an invocation to the spirit, by sharing sacred Anishinaabe knowledge, good food, and good company.

Lasting Legacy

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the TLNAP is the evolution of how Indigenous peoples are included in Trent University processes. Indigenous involvement in the TLNAP project has swung the spectrum from community engagement, to collaboration, to partnership.

- **Legacy 1 – Trent Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers Council**

Throughout the creation of the Plan, the Council provided valuable advice. Trent will benefit from the valued and continued advice from respected Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers from local Michi Saagiig First Nations.

- **Legacy 2 – A deeper understanding of ITK**

Through this process, Trent University has recognized the importance and relevance of ITK, leading to deeper understanding of Anishinaabe perspectives and ways of knowing.

- **Legacy 3 – Strengthened relationships with Michi Saagiig**

Regular meetings with the Michi Saagiig Consultation Liaisons provided a forum for communicating progress and responding to questions on the TLNAP and specific initiatives. Continuing this Table will build upon the positive relationship with Michi Saagiig First Nations.

Indigenous Engagement and Collaboration Moving Forward

Under the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan, Trent University has chosen to adopt a set of Anishinaabeg guiding principles to inform land use planning and decision making moving forward.

Central to this approach is a commitment to meaningful engagement, collaboration, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, which will be informed by these guiding principles, collectively referred to as Anishinaabeg Nibwaakaawin (Wisdom), and found in full in Section 3.2.

Trent University, in collaboration with the Michi Saagiig and Indigenous peoples, are committed to these principles in the following areas:

- Collaboration and Reconciliation
- Ceremony and Cultural Protocols
- Traditional and Ceremonial Lands
- Indigenous Traditional Knowledge
- Indigenous Commemoration and Placemaking
- Environmental Collaboration