

# Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for Indigenous Engagement in Forest Management Planning

Nadeesha Dissanayaka, Ryan Bullock

Department of Environmental Studies & Sciences, The University of Winnipeg

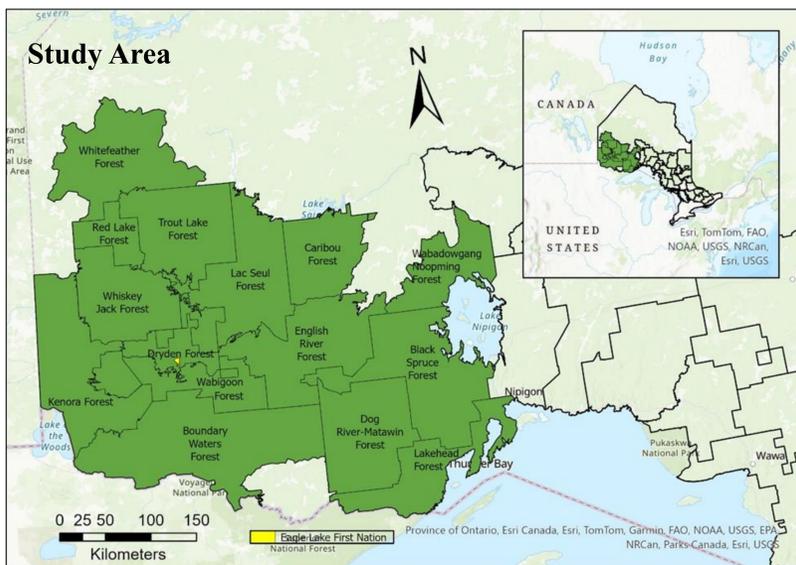
## Introduction & Research Context

A Forest Management Plan outlines strategies and measures to promote sustainable use of forest resources while balancing environmental, social, and economic interests within a specific region<sup>1</sup>. In accordance with the Forest Management Planning (FMP) process, when a Forest Management Plan overlaps with Indigenous Peoples' traditional territories, communities have a legitimate right to engage in the FMP process. However, many Indigenous communities face different challenges in engaging these processes<sup>3,4</sup>. Therefore, addressing these challenges is essential to increasing meaningful Indigenous engagement in the FMP process.

## Research Questions

This case study is guided by a single research question:

1. What are the challenges (barriers) and facilitators (opportunities) affecting Indigenous engagement in the context of FMP?



Forest Management Plans in northwestern Ontario

## Research Process



## References

- <sup>1</sup> Government of Ontario. (2024). Forest Management Planning Manual <https://www.ontario.ca/page/forest-management-policies>
- <sup>2</sup> Bullock, R., Zurba, M., Reed, M. G., & McCarthy, D. (2020). Strategic Options for More Effective Indigenous Participation in Collaborative Environmental Governance. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*.
- <sup>3</sup> Tindall, D. B., Trosper, R. L., Perreault, P., (Eds.). (2013) *Aboriginal peoples and Forest Lands in Canada*. UBC Press. Vancouver. Toronto.
- <sup>4</sup> Yodelis, M. (2016). "They could take you out for coffee and call it consultation!": The colonial antipolitics of Indigenous consultation in Jasper National Park. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 48(7), 1374–1392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X16640530>

## Objectives

My research objectives are to:

1. Identify challenges and opportunities for Indigenous engagement regarding:
  - i. tools, techniques and technologies are used in engagement
  - ii. the personal characteristics/capabilities of participants, and;
  - iii. the engaging environment and surrounding conditions.
2. Make recommendations to enhance Indigenous engagement, regarding what works and what needs improvement (based on objective 1).

## Research Design

### Methods & Methodology

Case study methodology  
Qualitative study

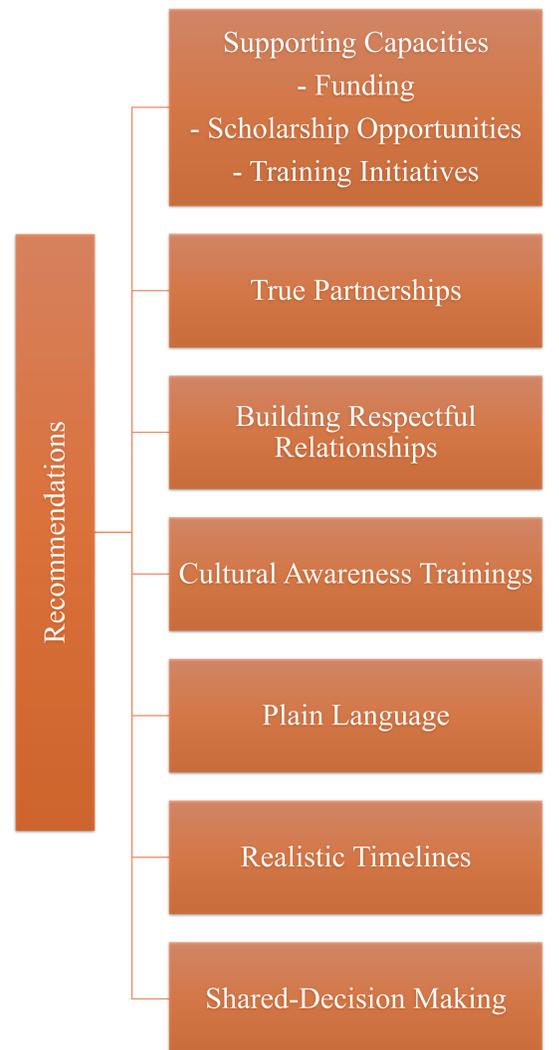
### Data collection

- I conducted semi-structured interviews with:
- Indigenous community representatives
  - Forestry professionals
  - Researchers & government officials

## Summary of Findings

Categories	Identified Factors
Tools, Techniques and Technologies	Language
	Cultural awareness training programs
	Supportive culture/ Respectful environment
Person's /People's Characteristics/ Capabilities	Culturally relevant data collection methods and techniques
	Communication Modes/Methods
	Person's capacity
Engagement Process and Surrounding Conditions	Personal attitudes and perceptions
	Person's economic standing
	Financial support
	Staff capacity
	Interest-based approach
	Shared decision-making
	Timelines
	Community interests and priorities
	Facilitates for participants
	Consultation process

Indigenous communities are diverse, each with unique capacities, cultures, histories, and governance systems. Therefore, one-size-fits-all solutions are ineffective<sup>2</sup>.



## Conclusion

Indigenous engagement in Forest Management Planning is crucial for legal, ethical and practical reasons. Meaningful engagement guides mutual learning, builds trust, and helps prevent conflicts. It also contributes to capacity-building, economic opportunities, and infrastructure development. Moreover, if properly executed, this supports the government's long-term reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities.



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

Environment and Society Collaborative Lab



Eagle Lake First Nation



Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Canada