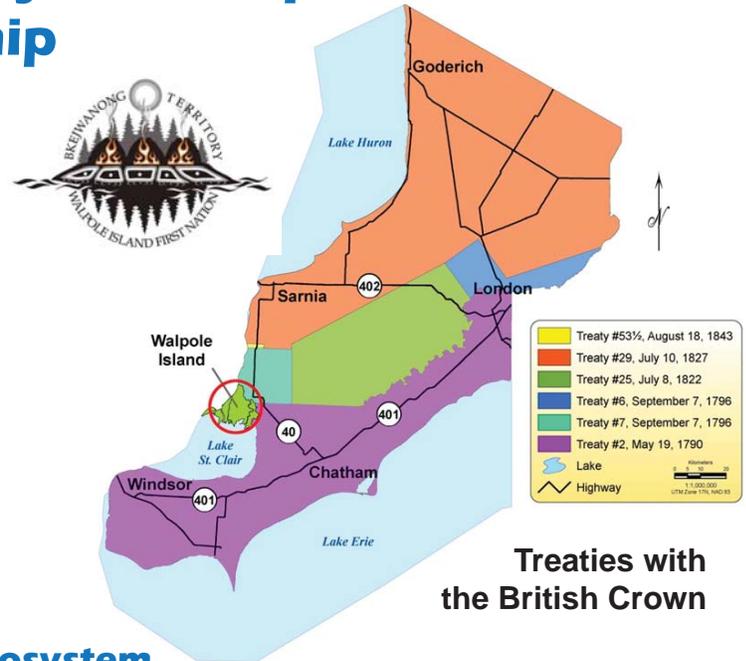


Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway and Walpole Island First Nation: A Valued Friendship

Relationship building between Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) began in 2004 with the early planning stages for the Detroit River International Crossing study. Effective consultation has led to a dedicated partnership with a shared vision. Walpole Island First Nation is historically, ecologically and culturally connected to Windsor and Essex County.

Walpole Island and the surrounding region is called Bkejwanong ("Where the Waters Divide"). The Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway (the Parkway) is located in the traditional territory of Walpole Island First Nation.



Ecological Connections – A Shared Ecosystem

The Parkway and Walpole Island both feature a Tallgrass Prairie ecosystem that is one of the rarest and most endangered ecosystems in the world.



Photo courtesy of the Walpole Island Heritage Centre

- Walpole Island and the Ojibway Prairie Complex in Windsor are home to the largest remnants of this Tallgrass Prairie in Ontario.
- A number of the plant and animal species at risk being protected on the Parkway under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA, 2007)* permits are also present on Walpole Island.

WIFN, which has been recognized internationally for sustainability initiatives and ecological stewardship, encouraged the Parkway team to consider the protection of the entire shared ecosystem, not just individual species.

- This ecosystem perspective transformed MTO's environmental approach for the Parkway. A relationship was forged based on WIFN's interest and specialized knowledge of the ecosystem. MTO began to look into ways to further support and engage WIFN.
- MTO engaged WIFN not just as observers, but as active members and contributors to the project. WIFN community members played an important role in archaeology and natural heritage investigations.

Showcasing Danshab Enterprise

Danshab Enterprise, a Walpole Island First Nation based business, created an ecological division to build on skills developed during the first species at risk transplanting effort for the Parkway in 2010. Having grown up living within and learning about Tallgrass Prairie ecosystems, the traditional and cultural knowledge and exemplary transplanting skills that the staff brought to the project has enhanced the ecological restoration efforts associated with the Parkway.



Cultural Connections – A Shared Vision

Among many Aboriginal people, 'the land' is understood to encompass not only the earth, but also lakes, rivers, streams and seas; the air, sky, sun, moon, planets and stars; and the full range of living and non-living entities that inhabit nature. In this all-encompassing view, the land is the source and sustainer of life. In return, people must act as stewards and caretakers of the earth. (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report., Vol. 2, 196, pp.117-118)

WIFN's philosophies, values and practices of interacting respectfully with the natural world and not separating themselves from it has directly contributed to the continued existence of the natural areas and many wildlife species, both common and rare, found on Walpole Island. (Species at Risk on the Walpole Island First Nation., pp.13)



Photo courtesy of the Walpole Island Heritage Center

The cultural philosophy of the First Nation is reflected in the Seven Grandfather Teachings. These universal principles of Wisdom, Love, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth, and Respect together create a balance of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental being.

WIFN's cultural philosophy has not only contributed to the Parkway's ecosystem perspective and species at risk restoration efforts, but it has also played a key role in shaping some of the aesthetic elements of the Parkway Landscape Plan.

Through the Parkway's Landscape Plan, the project team also strives to celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the Windsor-Essex region, re-establish physical, social and cultural connections, and promote a sense of nature and stewardship.

Please visit www.hgparkway.ca to learn more about the Parkway. Updates are posted on Twitter (www.twitter.com/hgparkway) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/hgparkway) and photos and videos are posted on Flickr (www.flickr.com/hgparkway) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/hgparkway).