

FIRST NATION RESIDENTS ENJOY RESTORED SHORELINE



After more than a decade of collaboration between OPG and the Long Lake #58 First Nation, the three-year project to remediate the community's shoreline in northwestern Ontario has been completed.

The restoration has been a long time coming for Long Lake #58 residents who, since 1905, have lived on the same 2.5-square kilometre tract of land located west of Longlac, Ont.

In 1938, construction of the Long Lake Diversion led to flooding that affected the community's shoreline on the northeast side of Long Lake. Later, in the 1970s, OPG's predecessor Ontario Hydro attempted to protect the shoreline from further erosion, but the project led to more problems than it fixed.

"Ontario Hydro agreed to put rock there to protect the shore, but it wasn't well designed," said Karl Piirik, Senior Plant Engineer at OPG's Northwestern Operations. "The understanding of shoreline erosion wasn't as well known back then."

When the rock barrier started to fail, questions were raised about the materials used in the repair. And that's when it was discovered the rocks – waste rock from a nearby mine – had higher levels of naturally occurring minerals that posed a potential health concern to the First Nation residents using the shore.

"We needed to make sure the residents were free to safely use and enjoy the shore," said Cathy Levis, Environmental Site Advisor at OPG's Northwestern Operations. She helped lead an environmental site assessment that determined the nature of the contamination in the water.

In 2006, a past grievance settlement was reached between OPG and the Long Lake #58 First Nation, with OPG taking full responsibility for its predecessor's actions. The company worked with the First Nation to develop a plan to bring the shoreline back to usable condition for the community. Under the agreement, Long Lake #58 was granted sole ownership of the three-year project.

"That was a huge leap forward in terms of building trust and working with the First Nation," said Piirik, who advised workers at the site about water level conditions so they could conduct the job safely. "The community decided what they wanted and how it was to be done. That ownership was probably the biggest thing that contributed to this being a success."

This past September, during an emotional ceremony to mark the completion of the project, members of the First Nation lauded OPG's role in the successful remediation process. The shoreline is now protected by clean rock and also includes a new pathway that allows easy access for residents.

"OPG stepped up and said, 'We would do the right thing. We would fix it.' You could tell how much it meant for the community," Piirik said.



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