***Research Information and Consent Form for Participants***

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a doctoral research study titled “Forest Change and Wildlife Conservation: Insights from Indigenous Communities in Ontario.” This study seeks to gather insights from 40 participants from the Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation and the Métis Nation of Ontario. Participation is voluntary, so please read this letter carefully before deciding and feel free to ask any questions.

**Study Purpose**

This study aims to explore traditional knowledge holders’ perspectives on forest changes in Ontario, focusing on impacts on biodiversity and sustainable management. It will document traditional knowledge, assess the cultural, socio-economic, and spiritual significance of forests, analyze land cover changes, and explore community-led conservation practices. The goal is to recommend strategies for integrating Indigenous perspectives into sustainable forest and wildlife management.

**What is Required of Participants?**

You will be asked to share your knowledge on:

* Forest changes and their drivers.
* Impacts of these drivers on wildlife.
* The socio-economic and spiritual significance of forests and wildlife.
* Community-led management practices and recommendations for improvement.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes, with additional time allowed upon request. Participants should provide appropriate, respectful responses. Offensive or degrading language will not be tolerated.

**Participant Rights**

As a participant:

* Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences.
* Your decision to participate or withdraw will not affect you in any way.
* You can refuse to answer any question.
* You may request to have your data withdrawn at any point during the study.
* You will receive relevant information throughout the research to support your decision to continue or withdraw.

**Risks and Benefits**

There are no known risks associated with this study. The research focuses solely on perspectives about forests, wildlife, and their management. No biological or personal data, such as names or gender, is required unless voluntarily shared. Participants will have the opportunity to share their invaluable traditional knowledge, contributing to the development of sustainable forest and wildlife management strategies that incorporate Indigenous perspectives. By documenting cultural, spiritual, and socio-economic connections to forests and wildlife, the study helps preserve Indigenous traditions and practices for future generations. Participants will have access to the research findings, including land cover maps and policy recommendations, which may support their community’s conservation initiatives and resource management efforts.

**Data Usage and Storage**

The collected data will be used for academic purposes, including policy recommendations. Findings, including land cover maps defined by traditional knowledge, will be submitted as part of the research report to EDIA DRI. The data will not be commercialized and will remain accessible only to the researcher (Moses Elleason), the supervisor (Brian McLaren), and co-supervisor (Dr. Lance Robinson). Data will be stored on a secure computer and Google Drive and deleted five years after the thesis completion.

**Researcher Contact Information**

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Dr. Lance Robinson

Co-supervisor

Centre for Northern Forest Ecosystem Research

Ministry of Natural Resources

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**Consent**

By signing this form, you agree to the following:

I have read and understood the information provided.

I agree to participate in the study voluntarily.

I understand the risks and benefits involved.

I may withdraw at any time or decline to answer any question without consequences.

I understand the research findings will be made available to me upon request.

By consenting to participate, I have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Date) (Email)

**Please circle YES or NO to the following questions:**

Do you allow the identification of your participation if warranted? YES NO

Do you allow audio/video recording during the interview? YES NO

Would you like to receive a report on the results of this project? YES NO