

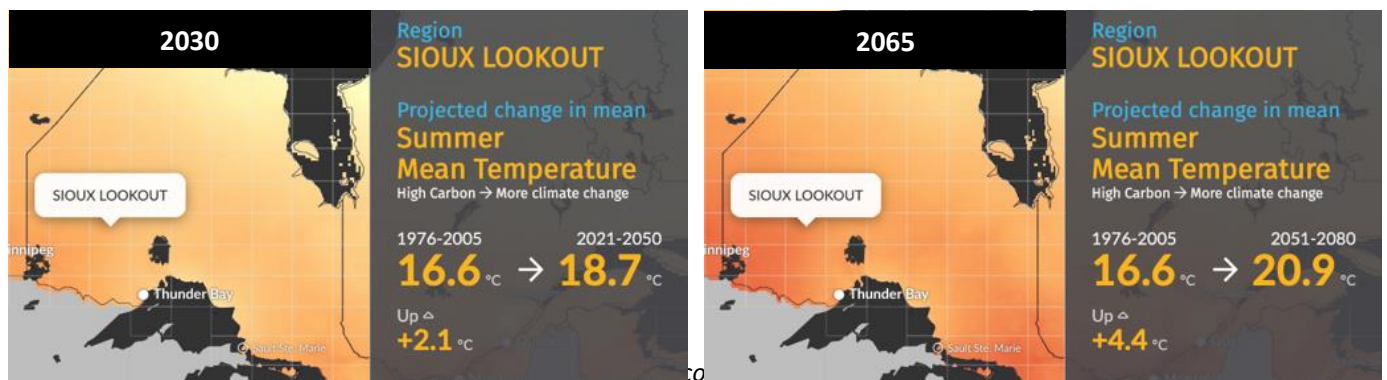


Traditional Routes: Summer travel over water and land

Rivers and lakes provide transportation corridors as do traditional routes on the land in summer, but as the climate changes these traditional routes are becoming more challenging to navigate.

How can climate change impact travel on land and on water?

Northern Ontario is getting warmer and will continue to warm with climate change. More heat waves in summer are expected and more droughts. The increased frequency and duration of droughts due to increased temperature may lower water levels so much that people cannot navigate rivers or streams. On the other hand, extreme rainfall and/or wind may contribute to unanticipated and dangerous weather conditions if traveling by boat. When travelling over land, increased windstorms and extreme weather may down trees making it difficult to navigate traditional routes.



What are people noticing?

Across the north, people are finding that low water levels in summer is making travel across the land more difficult. Near Lake Nipigon, for example, travelers needed to portage in spots where the water was too low to paddle. On the James Bay coast, low water in summer has meant that some travelers are unable to reach their destinations. When trails near Wunnumin get blocked by fallen trees, chainsaws are needed to clear them out.



Low water levels make navigating streams difficult. Photo of stream entering Eabamet Lake.



Forests are drying out and being downed by high winds making travelling on land difficult. Photo near Dowling.



How can we prepare?

Equipment modifications

In communities along rivers, some traditional routes are no longer accessible during parts of the summer. Simple equipment modifications can involve adding a bracket that allows you to quickly pivot the motor out of the water as the driver approaches shallow waters. More costly equipment could include motors designed for shallow water like long shaft mud motors where the prop stays near the surface or jet drive motors that does not use a propeller.



Common outboard motor is replaced by a mud motor to navigate better in shallow water and reduce damage.

Community initiatives

Where river waters are shallow near a community, the construction of a permanent road along the river would give residents the option of driving to their boats that are shored further downstream to avoid the shallowest waters. Where traditional trails are blocked by downed trees, communities can band together to do the hard work of removing the trees to allow passage to community members once again

Emergency planning and preparedness

Emergency planning for safe travel is always a good idea, but especially with the unpredictable and changing weather. Checking weather forecasts before a trip can help an individual to plan the best travel time and allow them to better be prepared for possible adverse weather. Telling a reliable community member where you are going and when you expect to return so that someone can come looking for you if you don't return. Safety equipment and supplies as well as food and water should always be a part of a packing list (e.g. satellite phone, extra food, pocket knife, fire starter, first aid kit, extra medication, water container and purifier, and warm clothing). Emergency planning information and a complete packing list should be available to community members either as a poster or on a community website. www.adventure16.com/info/checklists provides a useful starting point for packing and planning in different seasons.

Check the weather to best prepare.

Tell a friend where you're going & when you expect to be back.

Always pack safety equipment & supplies.