



NIRB File No.: 25YN051

NIRB Public Registry Link: www.nirb.ca/project/126200

Associated with NIRB File No: 06AN041

NPC File No.: 150822

Associated with NPC File No: 150630

July 16, 2025

Eric Bottos
Thompson Rivers University
805 TRU Way
Kamloops, BC
V2C 0C8

Sent via email: ebottos@tru.ca

Re: Notice of Screening and Comment Request

Dear Eric Bottos:

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) received a referral to screen Thompson Rivers University's "Responses of Permafrost Microbial Communities to Climate-Driven Thaw" project proposal:

- June 9, 2025, the Nunavut Planning Commission noted positive conformity.
- June 19, 2025, the NIRB received a complete application and assigned it file number **25YN051**- please reference this file number in all future related correspondence.

The NIRB has commenced screening the project proposal pursuant to the *Nunavut Agreement* and *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*¹ and by copy of this letter, **invites interested parties and municipalities potentially affected by the proposal to comment directly to the Nunavut Impact Review Board.**

SCOPE OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Locations	Kitikmeot and Qikiqtani regions: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lady Franklin Island, 250 kilometres (km) east of Iqaluit;2. Panniqtuuq, near Panniqtuuq and 40 km from Auyuittuq National Park;3. Hoare Bay, 150 km east of Panniqtuuq;
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¹ Article 12, Sections 12.4.1 and 12.4.4 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)* and s. 87 of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*, S.C. 2013, c. 14, s. 2 (*NuPPAA*)

	4. Powell Inlet, 200 km south of Grise Fiord and 200 km north of Arctic Bay; 5. Beechey Island, 80 km east of Resolute; 6. Prescott Island, 200 km south of Resolute; 7. Pasley Bay, 150 km northwest of Taloyoak; 8. Port Epworth, 130 km east of Kugluktuk; 9. Cape Dyer, 200 km northeast of Panniqtuuq and 20 km from Akpait National Wildlife Area; 10. Dundas Harbour, 200 km south of Grise Fiord and 200 km north of Arctic Bay; and 11. Port Leopold, 150 km southeast of Resolute and 15 km north of Prince Leopold Island.
Objective	The Proponent plans to collect permafrost cores and overlying soil samples to study how permafrost microbial communities respond to climate-driven thaw.
Timeline	August 5, 2025 to September 1, 2025

According to the project proposal, the scope of the project includes the following undertakings, works or activities:

- **Transportation**
 - Travel with Adventure Canada on their *Ocean Endeavour* vessel, following their expedition itinerary.
 - Access land from the vessel using small 10-passenger inflatable Zodiacs, guided by Adventure Canada staff.
 - Reach land sampling sites by foot from landing sites.
- **Sampling**
 - Collection of a small quantity of overlying soil (10 cm below the surface) and a small permafrost core (30 cm in depth) from sampling areas no larger than three (3) by three (3) meters:
 - Using a spade and a shovel to dig and to collect overlying soil.
 - Using a portable 2-stroke engine auger to drill permafrost cores.
- **Fuel**
 - Use of 10 liters of gasoline to refill auger.

Inclusion or Exclusion of Scoping List

The NIRB has identified no additional works or activities in relation to the project proposal. As a result, the NIRB proceeded with screening the project based on the scope as described above. However, the NIRB notes that the vessel, *Ocean Endeavour*, on which Proponent is proposing to travel, and the associated activities were previously screened under NIRB File No. 06AN041 and continues to apply under the previous approvals that may be in force. Further information on the activities previously approved can be accessed from the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/125341.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

Documents received and describing the proposal can be accessed from the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126200 including:

- *Commission Conformity Determination*
- *Commission Application*
- *NIRB Online Application in English*
- *Non-Technical Summary in English and Inuktitut*
- *Sampling Radius Proposal*
- *Fuel Spill Contingency Plan*
- *Community Consultation Correspondence (Panniqtuuq)*

The NIRB may request additional information at any time during the process.

By copy of this letter, the NIRB is inviting interested parties and municipalities potentially affected by the project proposal to comment directly to the NIRB by **July 28, 2025**.

The NIRB would like parties to provide comments regarding:

- Whether the project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology, (and providing any recommended mitigation measures); and
- Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal.

Please note that *proposed* project-specific terms and conditions, should the project proceed, have been attached for consideration and comment ([Appendix A](#)).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please send comments to the NIRB via email at info@nirb.ca, via fax at (867) 983-2594 or via the individual project dashboard for this assessment on the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126200. Questions should be directed to the undersigned at 867-983-4607 or vnayak@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Varun Nayak
Monitoring Officer
Nunavut Impact Review Board

Attachments: Appendix A: *Proposed* Project Specific Terms and Conditions

Enclosures (4): Public Notice of Screening (English and Inuktitut)
Comment Forms (English and Inuktitut)

cc: Distribution List
Wynter Kuliktana, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Tannis Bolt, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Cory Barker, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Jared Ottenhof, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Chris Spencer, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Joel Fortier, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Justin Buller, Government of Nunavut
Dianne Lapierre, Government of Nunavut
Mosha Cote, Nunavut Research Institute

Appendix A: Proposed Project Specific Terms and Conditions

The following is a list of project-specific terms and conditions which, should the project proceed, may be recommended to be attached to any approval.

General

1. Thompson Rivers University (the Proponent) shall maintain a copy of the Project Terms and Conditions at the site of operation at all times and make it accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
2. The Proponent shall operate in accordance with all commitments stated in correspondence provided to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC File No.: 150822), and the NIRB (Online Application Form, June 19, 2025; Project Summary, June 16, 2025; and Supporting documents [Sampling Radius Proposal, June 16, 2025; and Fuel Spill Contingency Plan, June 10, 2025]). This information should be accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
3. The Proponent shall operate the site in accordance with all applicable Acts, Regulations and Guidelines.
4. The Proponent shall ensure that it meets the standards and/or limits as set out in the authorizing agencies' permits or licences as required for this project.
5. The Proponent shall ensure that all personnel, staff and contractors are adequately trained prior to commencement of all project activities, and shall be made aware of all operational plans, management plans, guidelines and Proponent commitments relating to the project.

Waste Management

6. The Proponent shall manage all hazardous and non-hazardous waste including food, domestic wastes, debris and petroleum-based chemicals (e.g., greases, gasoline, glycol-based antifreeze) in such a manner to avoid release into the environment and access to wildlife at all times until disposed of appropriately or at an approved facility.
7. The Proponent shall dispose of all combustible wastes as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies. All non-combustible wastes from the project site shall be removed to an approved facility for disposal.

Fuel and Chemical Storage

8. The Proponent shall ensure that re-fuelling of all equipment occurs a minimum distance away from the high-water mark of any water body as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies.
9. The Proponent shall ensure that wildlife deterrent systems are utilized at the time of a spill incident in order to avoid wildlife (terrestrial or marine) and migratory birds from being contaminated.

Air Quality

10. The Proponent shall eliminate unnecessary idling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible.

Wildlife – General

11. The Proponent shall not substantially alter or damage or destroy any wildlife habitat in conducting this operation unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorizing agencies.
12. The Proponent shall not chase, weary, harass or molest wildlife. This includes persistently circling, chasing, hovering over, pursuing or in any other way harass wildlife, or disturbing large groups of animals.
13. The Proponent shall not hunt or fish, unless proper Nunavut authorizations have been acquired.

Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance

14. The Proponent shall carry out all phases of the project in a manner that protects migratory birds and avoids harming, killing or disturbing migratory birds or destroying, disturbing or taking their nests or eggs. In this regard, the Proponent shall take into account Environment and Climate Change Canada's *Avoidance Guidelines*. The Proponent's actions in applying the *Avoidance Guidelines* shall be in compliance with the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and with the *Species at Risk Act*.
15. The Proponent shall not disturb or destroy the nests or eggs of any birds. If active nests of any birds are discovered or located (i.e., with eggs or young), the Proponent shall avoid these areas until nesting is complete and the young have naturally left the vicinity of the nest by establishing a protection buffer zone² appropriate for the species and the surrounding habitat.
16. The Proponent shall avoid the seaward site of seabird colonies and areas used by flocks of migrating waterfowl, a minimum distance away on the recommendation of the appropriate authorizing agencies.
17. The Proponent shall not pursue seabirds or waterbirds swimming on the water surface and shall avoid concentrations of these birds if encountered on the water.

Caribou and Muskoxen Disturbance

18. The Proponent shall avoid interfering with any paths or crossings known to be frequented by caribou during periods of migration as identified by current land use plans in place and/or by Inuit Qaujimaningit.
19. The Proponent shall not locate any operation or undertake activities that could block or cause any diversion to migration of caribou or muskoxen.
20. The Proponent shall immediately cease activities likely to interfere with the migration or calving of caribou or muskoxen until such time as the caribou or muskox have passed.

Land Use and Restoration of Disturbed Areas

21. The Proponent shall use existing trails where possible during project activities on the land.
22. The Proponent shall ensure that the land use area is kept clean and tidy at all times.

² Recommended setback distances to define buffer zones have been established by Environment and Climate Change Canada for different bird groups nesting in tundra habitat and can be found at www.ec.gc.ca/paom-itmb.

23. The Proponent shall remove all garbage, fuel and equipment at the end of each field season and/or upon completion of work and/or upon abandonment.
24. The Proponent shall ensure that all disturbed areas are restored to a stable or pre-disturbed state using Best Available Technology Economically Achievable (BATEA) upon completion of work and/or abandonment.

Heritage Sites

25. The Proponent shall ensure that archaeological and paleontological sites are not purposely or inadvertently disturbed as a result of project activities.
26. The Proponent shall ensure that all personnel are aware of the Proponent's responsibilities and requirements regarding archaeological or palaeontological sites that are encountered during land-based activities. This should include briefings explaining the prohibitions regarding removal of artifacts, and defacing or writing on rocks and infrastructure.

Other

27. The Proponent should consult with local residents regarding their activities in the area and solicit available Inuit Qaujimaningit and information that can inform project activities.
28. The Proponent shall ensure that project activities do not interfere with Inuit wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities.
29. The Proponent should, to the extent possible, hire local people and access local services where possible.