

Species at Risk Act (SARA) Consultation, Cooperation  
and Accommodation Project

## **Black Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) Session Report**

February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Created by:  
The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources  
(CIER)



**CIER**

Centre for Indigenous  
Environmental Resources

## Acknowledgments

The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) would like to thank the participants that attended the virtual “Species at Risk Act (SARA) Consultation, Cooperation, and Accommodation Project” workshops.

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## Introduction

This multi-year project will facilitate Indigenous communities' and organizations' participation in Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) listing and recovery planning processes for terrestrial species as part of implementing the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). Each region will focus their resources on an area of study and development that maximizes efforts to each species.

The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) role is to support and facilitate a range of activities between Indigenous communities and organizations, and ECCC on developing recovery documents, sharing knowledge and language, addressing threats to terrestrial species at risk survival and recovery, and land use planning for species at risk on reserve lands and within traditional territories. CIER also manages the provision of funds on behalf of ECCC SARA participation, capacity funding requests and Expression of Interest call for proposals.

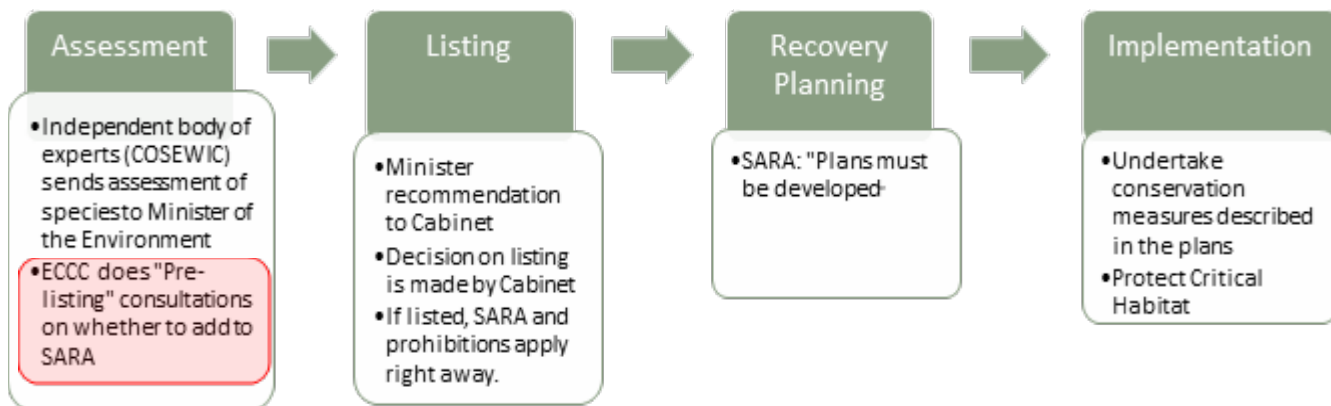
## Black Ash Session Agenda

Time (EST)	Agenda Item & Who	Notes
2:00-2:15	<p><b>Introduction</b> Lynn Mallett</p> <p><b>Welcoming and Polling Question</b> Lynn Mallett/Alexia Goodswimmer</p> <p><b>Acknowledgements, Agenda and Housekeeping Items</b> Lynn Mallett</p>	<p>Introduction Activity: CIER</p> <p>Aacknowledgements: Sara Heppner-Waldston – Graphic recording</p> <p>Victoria Leck, Consultations Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service under ECCC</p> <p>Burke Korol, Wildlife Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service under ECCC</p> <p>Alexia Goodswimmer - Research Associates at CIER</p> <p><b>Polling Questions #1:</b> What words come to mind when you think about Black Ash?</p>
2:15 – 3:00	<b>ECCC to provide Species at Risk introduction and overview with Q&amp;A</b>	PowerPoint presentation by Victoria Leck Discussion, and Q&A session facilitated by Victoria
3:00 – 3:35	<b>Black Ash presentation by Burke Korol with Q&amp;A</b>	<b>Polling Question#2:</b> Does Black Ash occur within your community/territory?
3:35-3:45	<b>Victoria Leck wrap-up</b>	Final questions and contact information
3:45-3:50	<b>Graphic Recorder wrap up - Sara Heppner-Waldston</b>	Overview of graphic recording – Sara Heppner-Waldston
3:50-4:00pm	<b>Closing and Wrap-up</b>	Closing comments – CIER

## Presentation Overview

This presentation was a repeat of the Black Ash Species at Risk session carried out on November 10th, 2021. The objectives were to welcome Ontario Indigenous communities and organizations to review and discuss the Black Ash in their communities, cover the characteristics of Black Ash, inform on how to identify, and protect Black Ash, and have a discussion on ways to provide support to Indigenous communities and organizations.

SARA is designed to protect individuals and habitat, allow for recovery of species, and work in a complementary fashion with provincial legislation. The diagram below shows the SARA Process. The red box seen below refers to the current point of processing for Black Ash.



\*Figure adapted from ECCC SARA101 presentation by Victoria Leck.

When deciding whether to list a species, the Minister considers:

- Recommendations from the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and the Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge sub-committee.
- If the species supports livelihoods (e.g., through harvesting, subsistence, or medicine).
- Potential impacts to people's activities with the species and potential cultural, social, or economic costs or benefits to individuals, communities, or organizations.
- Any current/planned activities that may overlap range or harm the species and/or destroy part of its habitat.
- Any other information people choose to share during consultation.

Black Ash was assessed as threatened by COSEWIC in November 2018.

## Black Ash Characteristics:

- Deciduous, hardwood tree with flexible wood.
- Opposite, compound leaves with 7-11 leaflets.
- Grows up to 15-20 m tall, 30-50 cm diameter.
- Mature trees have grey bark with vertical, narrow, scaly strips.
- Grows in mucky or peaty soils in swamps, such as river floodplains.
- Flowers in mid- to late spring.
- Pollination & seed dispersal by wind.
- Seeds can remain dormant in soil for up to 8 years.
- Provides food & shelter to many species, including ash-specific arthropods.



The habitual needs and distribution of the black ash consist of

- Wetland species of swamps, floodplains, and fens.
- Most sites in which it is dominant are flood prone.
- Also occurs in moist upland forests, but at lower densities.
- ~51% of global range found in Canada

Threats to black ash include Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). EAB has caused modest overall declines of ash in New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba to date. Approximately 73% of the Canadian Black Ash population is likely to be affected by EAB within the next 60 years under current climate conditions.



During the presentation 2 polling questions were asked. The results for the first polling question can be found below.

Figure 1: What words come to mind when you think about Black Ash?



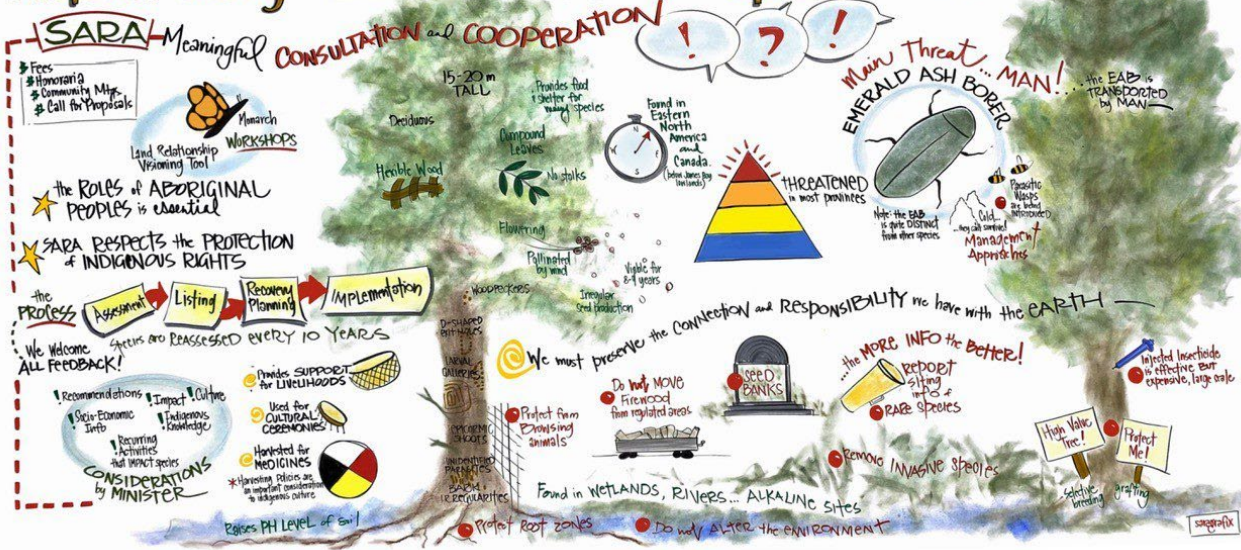
#### Discussion Summary

As part of the project, CIER facilitated a half day Black Ash specific workshop on February 17, 2022. This session provided an overview of the Black Ash species in Canada, which is undergoing listing consultation and could be subject to recovery planning if listed within the next two years as part of the SARA Consultation, Engagement and Accommodation Project. This session was organized to bring together Indigenous communities and organizations to be involved in listing and recovery planning for Black Ash, as well as the types of activities they might want to include in a project funding request.

- SARA Overview was presented by Victoria Leck, Consultations Biologist with Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) under ECCC
- Black Ash biology was presented by Burke Korol, Wildlife Biologist with the CWS under ECCC.
- Black Ash biology support for Manitoba Wendy Eskowich, Wildlife Biologist with the CWS under ECCC.

In attendance to the workshop were 23 individuals from 22 different organizations and communities. Graphic recording of the presentation and discussions of Black Ash were captured by Sara Heppner-Waldston and can be seen below.

# Proposed Listing of BLACK ASH under the Species at Risk Act



## Detailed Discussion (Q&A)

Q: Is there any evidence that the parasitic wasp has effects outside the EAB population? Curing an invasive species problem with another invasive species has backfired before<sup>1</sup>.

CWS: Yes, it has backfired before. Generally, when something like a parasite like that is brought in, the goal is to keep the effects of this parasite to this insect. So, it's currently all in a testing phase. The testing occurs before widespread release, where the scientist wants to ensure these effects are just on these insects specifically, that's why testing goes on for 10+ years.

Q: Any evidence of disease resistant trees?<sup>2</sup>

A) I won't go as far as saying they are resistant (there is a name for them), there is some level of resistance. Canadian Forest services may have documented trees like that (i.e. with their level of resistance). They have a possible genetic makeup, that has a natural level of resistance. Or perhaps it could be a candidate for grafting with trees from Asia, which do have a resistance. These (trees that show resistance) can or may be used for breeding, seed gathering. Best to avoid the harvesting of those trees.

Q: Is there any sense of or understanding of the survival potential of "Suckering" Black Ash trees? There seems to be a lot of White Ash regeneration from "Suckers"<sup>3</sup>.

CWS: I don't know enough of the ecology of that, and if suckers show up it typically is a response to stress. COSEWIC status reports tend to have a lot of information on the ecology of the trees, and we suggest searching there.

Q: What is the northern range of Emerald Ash Borer?<sup>4</sup>

CWS: The range covers Ontario as far north as the Southern End of James Bay and Northwestern Red Lake area. There are not as many records in the James Bay low land

Comment: Remember the northern most survival line is up by James Bay.<sup>1</sup>

Q: There is a black ash stand on the Matabitchuan River in Northeastern Ontario. There has been a hydro dam manipulating water level of the Matabitchuan since 2011. The plant seems to be working much more intensely in the past few years, the water levels fluctuations are extreme. It is not easy to get flow data from Hydro One. Should this extreme fluctuation be a concern?<sup>5</sup>

CWS: The general issue is usually regulating water. If, in habitats as mentioned, the trees have grown, and started off along the river, they are naturally growing by the water. The dam is there for flood control and variation. The trees should be used to these changes in their environment.

Comment: We have the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) here in Thunder Bay, some trees in my neighborhood had been affected, since 2011.<sup>6</sup>

Q: So, is the equivalent of the EAB range the same as the range of the Black Ash Species?<sup>4</sup>

CWS: Luckily not now, however it has been predicted that it won't spread into at least a quarter of the Black Ash range due to temperatures being too cold the larvae cannot survive. That does not mean that "firewood" can be brought up into the range, the spread of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is human influenced by transporting the affected wood. (eg. firewood, road construction)

Q: Our surveys are they included in that Forest Management work?

CWS: The knowledge of the distribution of the EAB is incomplete. Forestry does not track diseases and monitoring of EAB. Some communities however do monitor populations. Getting people interested such as landowners and First Nations is important, anyone that can help inform about distribution can help with learning control and how it spreads. We need to gain and gather more knowledge to fight against it.

Comment: Black ash is found throughout our 12 reserve parcels and makes up varying percentages of the overall tree stand for each parcel. the highest being 40% of overall tree stand for 1 of our parcels.<sup>7</sup>

CWS: That is interesting, and that data would be helpful. I personally document plants all the time, 20 years ago they were common now they are a threat.

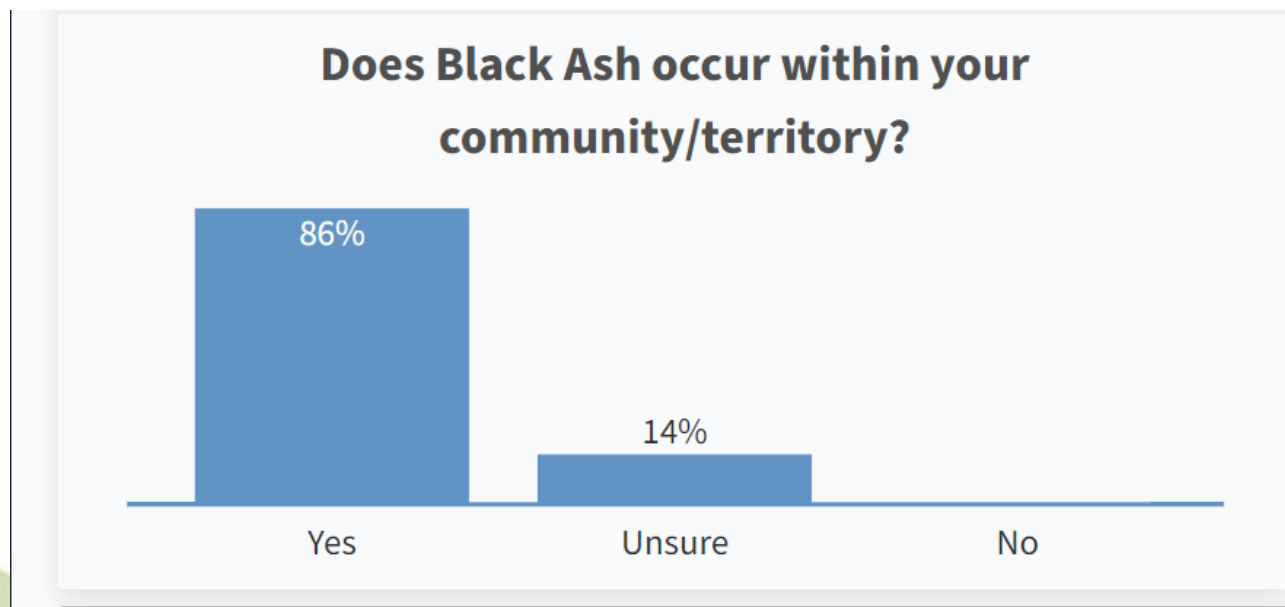
There is not a lot of historical data on Butternut, so it has not been documented on Forest Management Plans. However, now it is going under review.

#### Summary of contributing remarks from Indigenous Communities

Participants were invited to share information or answer a few of the questions provided from Environment and Climate Control Canada (ECCC) below.

Listing Impacts (Polling Question #2):

Figure 2: Does Black Ash occur within your community/territory?





Questions asked to participants:

1. Is Black Ash used in your community/territory?

- Does Black Ash support livelihoods, e.g., through harvesting, subsistence or medicine?
- Does Black Ash provide cultural or spiritual benefits?
- Does Black Ash provide environmental benefits?

2. How would listing Black Ash impact you and your community?

- What are some costs and/or benefits that would result with listing?
- Are there any current or planned activities that would be impacted by listing Black Ash?

3. Recovery Planning/Implementation:

- What conservation actions do you think are necessary in order to recover these species?
- Are there any current conservation actions occurring within your community/territory or any actions that could be implemented on your lands?
- Are there any specific threats in your community/territory that have not been identified, or conservation approaches that should be added?
- How would you like to be involved in the development of a future recovery strategy for this species?

A general summary of the participants responses can be found below:

- Black Ash has traditional significance for most of the participants.
- There are traditional and historical uses for Black Ash such as, medicinal purposes, craft making for daily use, historical practices and using the species to continue teaching.
- Daily products made from Black Ash that was and/or is still utilized by adults, children, and babies (tools, toys, cradleboards).
- It is used in traditional ceremonies.
- Ceremonial use is reflected repeatedly for the participants.
- There are Black Ash practices for camping or hunting purposes.
- Historical stories shared about the spiritual connection that Black Ash has with participants. Traditional ties and spiritual uses.
- There is a variety of significance it hosts, for traditional practices that are utilized to this day by different communities and territories
- One community member wanted to iterate that the impacts to Black Ash are not caused by harvesting from Indigenous communities.
- Black Ash helps with reconciling with our Indigenous and First Nation connection to our land, trees and now protecting the Species at Risk.

Question asked during this time:

Q: Will the listing of Black Ash affect Indigenous communities for harvesting?

CWS: (Victoria) There can be prohibitions however if it cannot be harvested after a listing, I cannot answer to that. Species at Risk Act states that it has not been designed to take away from Indigenous rights.

Q: Are there any species native to Canada which look like Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)?

CWS: (Burke) There are over 4000 species of beetle. EAB does have distinct features and ECCC cannot recall ever having an instance of where the EAB has been confused with another similar looking species of beetle.

#### **Appendix A:**

##### Appendix A – Participant discussion legend

The contact information from participants has been left out of this public document. Participant information will be kept private internally, to help ECCC with report writing and the engagement phase of their SARA work.