



*Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan  
Scout Reservation*

— MASTER PLAN —



REPORT ON THE  
**STATE OF MA-KA-JA-WAN SCOUT RESERVATION**

December 17, 2021

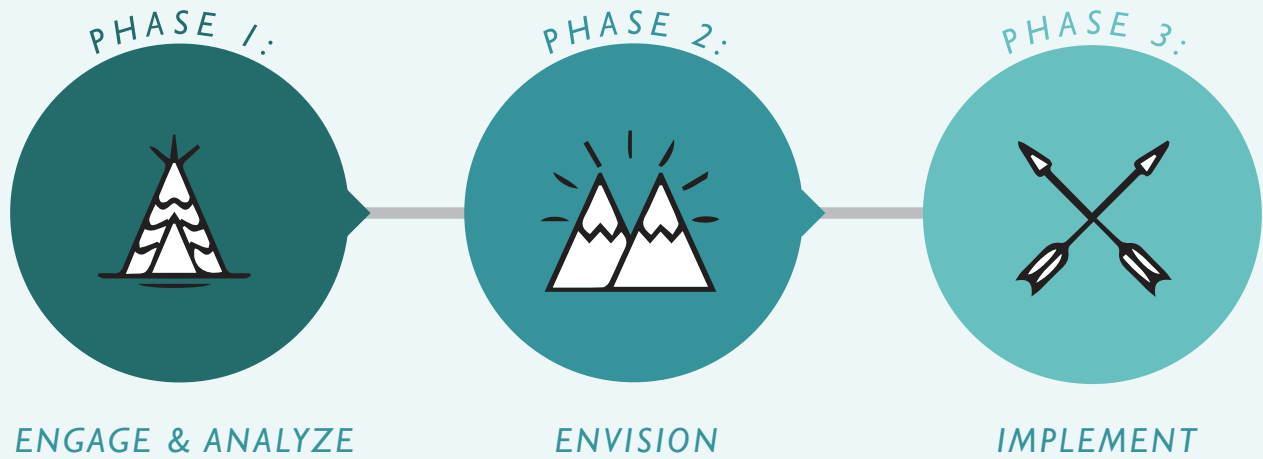


# Introduction

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## *overview*

The Lakota Group was retained by the Northeast Illinois Council, Boy Scouts of America (NEIC) in late May of 2020 to help shape a new Master Plan for the Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan Scout Reservation (MSR) after a devastating windstorm ripped through the 1,500-acre camp in Pearson, Wisconsin. While the destructive storm significantly impacted the visual character of this traditional Northwoods property, it has also provided the NEIC and its leadership the opportunity to step back and reevaluate MSR. It set in motion “Rebuilding Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan,” a three-stage initiative. With the first stage, Remediate, done and the second stage, Recover, nearly complete, this planning process represents the Renewal stage. This master planning process, which in turn has three phases, will explore how to take this special place and move it forward to not only meet the needs of Scouts today, but also in the future.



## Master Plan Process

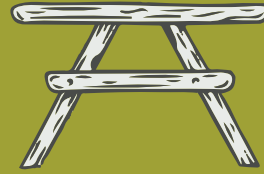
MSR is a special place, steeped in memories, history, and pride. While this Master Plan will identify opportunities for change or enhancement, it must also retain an essential ingredient of cultural and heritage preservation. This process will account for the history that created MSR’s unique environment, while also finding creative ways to celebrate it, respect it, and to make new history for future generations.

Phase I in creating the Master Plan is focused on fully understanding Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan’s sense of place. The planning process identifies this phase of work as “Engage and Analyze.” Efforts to fully engage the NEIC leadership, camp community, and other stakeholders have been spread out over two years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lakota team visited the camp in both the summer and late fall of 2020 to evaluate and inventory the camp character, facilities, and programs. Additionally, the team visited Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan in July of 2021 to observe camp in-season, during Week 5. This multi-day visit provided the planning team an opportunity to interact with

campers, camp staff, and adult leaders, as well as assess how the camp operates. The Lakota Group, along with Hey and Associates, a natural system/environmental partner, conducted additional focus group discussions, as well as an open house workshop, open for all.

This State of Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan report encapsulates the team’s understanding, thoughts, and observations as well as an assessment of the camp’s facilities, unique site attributes and environment, and programs. This report also denotes current obstacles and constraints and begins to identify potential opportunities for future improvement to share and confirm with NEIC leadership. This report will serve as the basis for the planning team to move into developing preliminary Master Plan concepts and strategies in the second phase of the process, Envision.

# Engagement



## overview

Engagement is very critical for the Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan Scout Reservation Master Plan success and provides the Scouting community and leadership a sense of ownership to the plan. The public visioning and outreach program for this process included significant engagement of current and former users of the Scout reservation.

From the beginning, stakeholders were engaged in a dialogue about camp, focusing primarily on aspects of the built environment and current programs — key assets, areas for improvement, and what its future could be. Additional stakeholders were engaged in person during Week 5 of summer 2021. Below is a summary of engagement opportunities provided to the NEIC community throughout the planning process:

- Stakeholder and Focus Group Interviews - Approximately 70 participants
- Online Survey - 300 participants
- In Person Community Discussions - Approximately 100 participants
- Social Media Campaign - Approximately 50 participants

The following summarizes major common themes brought up by participants across all engagement platforms and activities. A more detailed and nuanced description of what the planning team heard can be found in the full Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan Comprehensive Analysis report.

# Stakeholder Input

## RESERVATION

- **Layout of Facilities** - Continuing to develop a more centralized location and core of shared facilities, including the Camp Admin Office, Country Store, and any new facilities in this area, would allow for more intentional engagement between adult leaders, camp staff, and Scouts. A centralized location would drive the camp's energy into a focused space.
- **Scenic Trails** - Scouts mentioned the desire for scenic trails around Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan with educational signage explaining the different ecological areas.
- **Business Center** – A Business Center facility with Wi-Fi access was a major focus during discussions with adult leaders and staff.
- **Camp Museum** – Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan's history and heritage is exhibited in multiple facilities, such as camp offices, dining halls, and more. It would be ideal to preserve these elements in one location.
- **Staff Housing** – Stakeholders from both East and West Camps voiced their desire to improve staff housing conditions and consider alternative locations.
- **Transportation** – There is an overall desire to employ a transportation system with regularly scheduled trips among East Camp, West Camp, and the Reservation Facilities, with the potential to explore a shared biking system and/or a water taxi.
- **Signage Plan** – Adult leaders and staff expressed a desire for more consistent and frequent signage throughout camp.

## CAMPSITES

- **Whitney Campsite** – Located directly on Lake Killian, the Whitney campsite benefits from numerous advantages that are deemed lacking at other campsites. A unified campsite typology would create more equity between the different troops.
- **Additional Forms of Camping** – Scouts mentioned their desire for alternative forms of camping, such as hammock camping, treehouse camping, or lake island camping.



# Stakeholder Input

## WATER ACCESS

- **Visual Access to Lake Killian** – One of Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan’s many gems is Lake Killian. However, the lake is largely hidden behind forested areas.
- **Access to Lake Killian** – Scouts and staff spend the majority of their spare time by the aquatics areas as they are two of the few programmed sites along the water. Staff housing occupies a significant portion of the lakefront that can be better utilized for the general public.
- **Access to Muskrat Lake** – When asked, a lot of Scouts and adult leaders were not familiar with Muskrat Lake, a hidden gem in Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan.
- **Access to Bannard Lake** – Located in Wabanningo, Bannard Lake is an unprogrammed site in MSR and has potential to offer more for visitors to the camp.

## ADA ACCESSIBILITY

- **Circulation** – A staff member that uses a wheelchair described multiple accessibility challenges as a result of the changing terrain and uneven grass surfacing.
- **Accessible Program Areas** - Eco-con, Shooting Sports, as well as other facilities are not accessible, as a result of narrow paths and steep slopes.
- **Accessible Facilities** – Stakeholders mentioned that the only barely accessible bathroom is located by Country Store.
- **Visual Disabilities**
- **ADA Diversity**



# Stakeholder Input

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

- **Native Tribes** – In past years, native tribes in Wisconsin were more actively involved with Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan, conducting training sessions and collaborating with staff members and Scouts. However, over the last few years, the council has been finding challenges in continuing this collaboration. Stakeholders mentioned the need to continue exploring different avenues to ensure a strong partnership with local tribes.
- **Boy Scouts** – While Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan is continuously working on comprehensive inclusion of all genders, marketing materials are still focused on “Boy Scouts.” Stakeholders mentioned the need to tailor branding and marketing material to speak to MSR’s wider audience.
- **Racial and Economic Diversity** – Although Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan welcomes all races and ethnicities to its campground, the council does not provide clear incentives for low-income communities. Stakeholders mentioned the need for additional intentionality when marketing camp activities as well as stronger relationships with communities of color.
- **Female Staff** – Scouts and adult leaders, especially female-identifying, expressed an interest in increasing the number of female staffers to encourage more gender diversity in Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan.
- **Female Campers** – Female Scouts and adult leaders mentioned that they often feel out of place, due to the overwhelmingly male composition of campers and staffers and the sense that females are allowed, but not welcomed. As one female leader put it: “Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan is a Boy Scout camp that permits girls to attend.”
- **Special Needs Training** – Scouts with special needs often struggle at camp, in part because staff and adult leaders are unaware of those needs or unsure how to help such Scouts. According to stakeholders, it is crucial for staff members and adult leaders to be more equipped to handle such situations. Over time, it is important for Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan to focus on inclusionary camping to serve the growing number of special needs families.



# Stakeholder Input

## PROGRAMS

- **Improved Programming** – Survey participants who rated program offerings as good, mentioned the need to improve Fishing, Sailing, and First Aid merit badges. While the majority of participants ranked program offerings as high, they also identified areas for improvement, including Scoutcraft for both East and West Camps. They also suggested improving and expanding West Camp shooting sports, as well as enhancing the overall aquatics experience.
- **Additional Merit Badges** – Stakeholders were interested in participating in additional Merit Badges, including, Scouting Heritage, Geocaching, Citizenship in Society, and STEM-related merit badges, to name a few.
- **Off-season Programming** – While stakeholders acknowledge the challenges of off-season programming, especially for the colder seasons, programs including fishing camp, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, ice fishing, Okpik, Klondike Derby, as well as igloo building were noted.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- **Website Upgrades** – Adult leaders mentioned the need for overall improved communications, explaining that the guide is vague, and the scheduling tool on the website is not user friendly. Stakeholders suggested additional video content, to better promote programs experiences, be uploaded to the website.
- **Signing Up for Merit Badges** – Troop leaders mentioned that signing up online for Merit Badges is often complicated and not very user-friendly.
- **Visual Marketing Tools** – Merit Badge and High Adventure program marketing materials can be wordy and redundant. Stakeholders suggested visual marketing tools, such as videos, to provide additional clarity and further encourage Scouts to take part in such programs.
- **Airtable Platform** – MSR has recently employed an online platform to gather satisfaction surveys post-camp. However, less than 10% of adults and Scouts provide feedback. Stakeholders mentioned that incentivizing survey results with a discount code to be used the following year would further encourage participation.







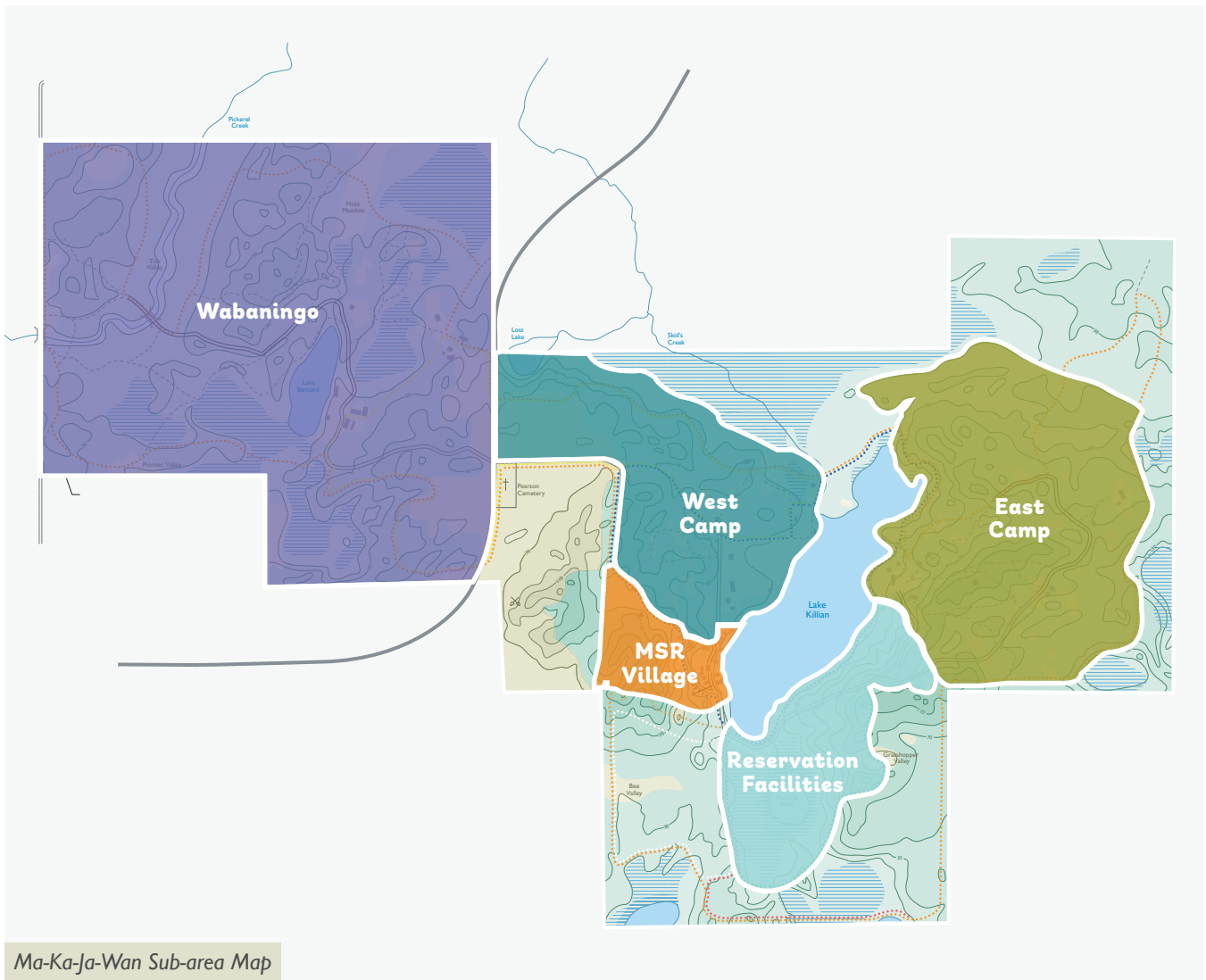
# Camp Assessment

## *overview*

To better evaluate the various facilities and areas within Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan, the Lakota team conducted a camp assessment, which was categorized into several clusters or “sub-areas” (as shown on the map on the following page) including:

- MSR Village Center
- West Camp
- East Camp
- Reservation Facilities / Muskrat Lake
- Wabaningo

This assessment focuses on location, accessibility, maintenance and upkeep, as well as utilization. Challenges and opportunities for improvement are highlighted at key locations, and initial observations are provided for each sub-area.



## MSR Village Center

This area builds a first impression for camp visitors and hosts the majority of administrative facilities to help prepare Scouts for their stay at Camp Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan. While this area is not currently designated as MSR Village Center, this title is a good descriptor of the area and will be useful from a planning perspective.



## Key Observations

- The camp administration office is the first impression of MSR and improving the space should be a priority.
- The existing health lodge and country store should be updated and take on a fresher, cleaner, and more organized feel.
- Staff housing, formerly utilized as family cabins, is significantly deteriorating and can benefit from an extensive upgrade.
- Similar to a village center concept, new facilities in this location should be organized more clearly around a central space or views/and access to Lake Killian.
- A business center with Wi-Fi access and a quiet/private space should be explored for use by adult leaders, potentially at the planned Holstein Cabin or other key location in the heart of MSR.
- Trails connecting along the west side of Lake Killian would bring more physical and visual access to the water.
- The main arrival sequence is supported by a beautiful and traditional camp gateway signage feature. Further enhancements should be considered for the continuum of the drive to camp to accentuate and support a stronger sense of place.
- Conversations led to contrasting opinions from scoutmasters as well as other stakeholders in regards to enhancing technology and communications in camp. The planning team recommends additional Wi-Fi services be limited to certain facilities to accommodate troop leaders' and staff's needs.





## West Camp

West Camp, situated west of Lake Killian, is home to 11 main campsites. Some of these campsites have more than one area that can be reserved; in total there are 23 reservable sites. With subtle grade changes, West Camp offers efficient circulation between the different campsites, supporting facilities, and amenities.

## Key Observations

- West Camp is less visually connected to Lake Killian than is East Camp. Lake Killian is the symbolic heart or organizing element to Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan. Access to, and visibility of, the lake for West Campers should be a paramount planning goal. The presence of the water is instrumental to the feeling of being in nature and indicative of a true Wisconsin Northwoods experience. Selective clearing, overlooks, gathering areas, trails/pathways, and signage should be developed along the lakeshore.
- West Camp's gathering sites—dining hall, trading post, fire bowl, camp office, aquatics area—are fairly distant from each other, with the result that there is little sense of interconnectedness. It is cost-prohibitive to relocate existing facilities, but plans for land usage and for facility renovations (such as a possible expansion of the dining hall) or new construction should seek to foster a more integrated and cohesive “community core.”
- Staff housing area in West Camp should be relocated to a more secluded zone, possibly not along Lake Killian.
- Moving shooting sports in West Camp to a location that better accommodates all shooting activities should be considered.
- Pinnacle and Eco-Con could be vastly improved as program offerings with better or improved facilities in West Camp.
- Improved pathways and wayfinding signage should be considered.
- Moving the Whitney Campsite should be considered to open up access to Lake Killian for all Scouts.



## East Camp

East Camp, the older of the two camps in Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan, provides for a more traditional and pristine experience. Tucked within the woods, East Camp is spread out on hilly terrain, allowing for a more nature-based experience. Despite being a self-sufficient camp with adequate programming, East Camp imposes circulation challenges to its Scouts. This section of Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan was highly impacted by the 2019 storm and is still under recovery and remediation.

## Key Observations

- East Camp has an overall better connection to the lake with a pathway that traverses a large portion of its shoreline. Selective clearing, overlooks, gathering areas, pathways, and signage should be developed along the shoreline.
- This portion of camp should build off of its unique character and charm, identifying new elements, features, or programs of the camp experience that support the strong sense of history. This can potentially include an expanded Eco-Con that continues to take advantage of this prime location on the lake, enhanced Scout ecological learning experiences, and improved traditional camp sites.
- Dining Hall in East Camp cannot accommodate the number of campers present in high-volume weeks. Alternatives include expanding the existing dining hall with temporary structures or building a new dining hall facility away from Lake Killian.
- East Camp's rich natural context should be more closely considered for any new facilities - such as taking advantage of the terrain for new facilities. This natural context can also drive new programming that is unique to this portion of Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan.
- The aquatics area structure and supporting facilities should be considered for improvements or replacement.
- Staff housing area in East Camp should be relocated to a more secluded zone, possibly not along Lake Killian.
- East Camp staff shower facilities should be upgraded.
- Enhancements should be considered to the Firebowl, such as new seating, landscape terraces, and a gateway sign, similar to the West Camp Firebowl.
- Improved pathway connections and wayfinding signage should be considered.



## Reservation Shared Facilities

Reservation shared facilities are mostly located south of Lake Killian and north of Muskrat Lake and include Muskrat Lake, the OA Bowl, chapel/remembrance area, and the climbing wall/zip line areas.

## Key Observations

- Reservation facilities are utilized by East and West Camps and should be considered a council priority for future programming opportunities. Underutilized program areas south of Lake Killian, such as the flying squirrel, should be considered for potential improvements.
- A more consistent approach to transportation should be considered to transport Scouts from both camps to these shared facilities.
- As an honored space at MSR, the Order of the Arrow Bowl can benefit from future improvements to remediate the results of the 2019 storm and continue to provide a unique and signature experience to all Scouts.
- There is potential to add a mountain biking loop in this area due to the interesting topography and landscape.
- Access to Muskrat Lake should be enhanced with better wayfinding signage, educational signage, and an enhanced boardwalk.



## Wabaningo

Wabaningo, located west of County T Road, is home to the maintenance facility, horse ranch, family cabin, camp ranger’s home, and High Adventure, along with two campsites used for overflow and training in the spring season. This site has also been utilized for National Youth Leader Training (NYLT) sessions.

## Key Observations

- Wabaningo, the newest addition to the Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan camp, is more open and underutilized compared to other areas. While any additional programming in this area will require more staffing and improved logistics, it has the potential to provide additional facilities.
- Horsemanship, one of the most coveted programs at MSR, should be an investment priority. This program is highly attractive to female Scouts (currently up to 50% of users).
- Natural areas within Wabaningo, including wetlands, Pickerel Creek, and Bannard Lake, should be utilized to expand nature-based or wilderness programming.
- Expanded seasonal programs and facilities’ offerings to non-Scouting units should be considered for Wabaningo, and may provide the camp with supportive revenue opportunities.
- Clearing the Boundary Trail, connecting West Camp and the Ranch at Wabaningo, would greatly reduce the distance and undoubtedly increase usage of programs at Wabaningo.
- The council may consider the long-term viability or sale or lease of some portion of the Wabaningo area for private development, residential interest, or new family cabins. Any proceeds of any such transaction could be dedicated to capital reinvestment in East Camp, West Camp, Wabaningo, and general reservation areas.
- Expand wayfinding and signage to better connect the Wabaningo area to the rest of the camp.
- Formalized campsites for the High Adventure program should be considered.
- Consider Wabaningo as a location for alternative forms of camping (tree house camping or other) for a new Scouting experience.

## *Visioning*

*The NEIC intends to position Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan Scout Reservation as the premier Scouting camp in the region. To support this goal, the Master Plan for Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan should respect the rich history of the reservation, enhance its embrace of nature, and promote a visually appealing and better-organized built environment, while facilitating innovative programming and enriching experiences that cultivate young leaders in a safe and inclusive space.*

## *Next Steps*

Building from this existing conditions report (further expanded upon in the full Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan Comprehensive Analysis report), the Lakota team will move into the second phase of the process, Envision, to develop Master Plan concepts and strategies that address the key themes brought up by the Scouting community and the observations made by the planning team. These concepts will be presented to the NEIC Scouting community for review, and opportunities to make comments and ask questions will be made available.

Ultimately, the final Master Plan will present a matrix of concepts for programming, optimization of the natural environment, and renovation and development of facilities that will help to guide the NEIC as it seeks to realize the vision of Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan described above.

[Click Here to View the Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan Comprehensive Analysis report!](#)