



# Algonquins of Ontario

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Algonquins of Ontario recommend LeBreton Transit Station be renamed Pimisi Transit Station**

Pembroke, Ontario (August 14, 2013) – Since the early inception of the Ottawa Light Rail Transit project (now known as the Confederation Line) the City of Ottawa embraced the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the art, culture and heritage of the Algonquins through the planning, design and building of the LeBreton Transit Station as an “Algonquin-centred” station. The location of this station is of particular significance to the Algonquins as it is in close proximity to Chaudière Falls and Victoria Island, both of which are sacred gathering places for the Algonquins since time immemorial.

This spring, the City of Ottawa provided the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) with the opportunity to rename the LeBreton Transit Station with an Algonquin name. Through a comprehensive outreach to the ten AOO communities, a list of potential names for the station was compiled for the consideration of the Algonquin Negotiation Representatives (ANRs). Following a fulsome discussion of the various submissions, the ANRs reached consensus on the name – **Pimisi Transit Station**.

Pimisi means “eel” in the language of the Algonquin people. Algonquins have always had a deep connection to Pimisi as a provider of nourishment, medicine and spiritual inspiration. Kirby Whiteduck, ANR and Chief of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, explains that “Pimisi has been hunted and consumed by Algonquins in the Ottawa Valley in a sustainable way for over 4000 years. Its importance as a food source to the newcomers is also well documented and the eel was used for trade with settlers or given as a gift.”

Katherine Cannon, ANR of Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini (Bancroft) also states that “Pimisi is considered sacred to the Algonquin people as the prayer carrier of the waters, travelling far through salt water and fresh and, according to Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge, over wetlands.”

Pimisi is an ancient fish which was abundant in the Ottawa River basin for millennia, making up approximately 50% of the total freshwater biomass prior to the 1900s. For thousands of years Pimisi travelled up and down the Ottawa River unimpeded. In the past century this has changed: Pimisi is now rarely seen and since 2007 is listed as Endangered under the *Ontario Species at Risk* program.

But, there is hope. In August 2012, within the heart of the City of Ottawa, eels were observed at the Fleet Street pumping station. The AOO are now building partnerships with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, waterpower operators, including Energy Ottawa, and other groups to build upon existing knowledge and to enhance protection and recovery efforts for the American Eel.

The renaming of LeBreton Transit Station to **Pimisi Transit Station** is much more than a symbolic gesture to honour its once plentiful presence within the Ottawa River or to serve as a footnote to its once extraordinary migration up and down Chaudière Falls. Rather the renaming

to **Pimisi Transit Station** will draw public awareness and strengthen the call for action – to ensure the survival of the species. It is not lost on the Algonquin people that the survival of Pimisi is also an apt metaphor for the survival and rebuilding of the Algonquin Nation.

The recommendation from the AOO will be considered by the City of Ottawa's Transit Commission at their next meeting on Wednesday, August 21, 2013.

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