

Algonquins of Ontario call for the protection of Kichissippi Pimisi (the American Eel) in the release of their landmark report

“Today, the plight of the Eel must awaken us to the crucial need to transform our relationship with Mother Earth and All Our Relations, and to awaken us to the pivotal role of Indigenous Peoples in this process.”

(Elder Dr. W. Commanda undated)

Pembroke, Ontario (December 18, 2012) – The Algonquins of Ontario are pleased to announce today the release of their landmark report entitled, “Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin.”

The American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) is considered sacred to the Algonquin people and has been an essential part of Algonquin culture for thousands of years. Recently the number of eels in the St. Lawrence Basin has been reduced significantly, falling approximately 99% from local populations in the 1980s, a span of only 30 years. Today, we are left with only a remnant population in Ontario.

In the report, the Algonquins of Ontario set out to be the voice of the eel in mankind’s efforts to ensure the survival of the species. It is vital to the Algonquin people that viable populations of the American Eel be restored to its historical range in Ontario and specifically to traditional waters throughout the Ottawa River Basin, including the traditional waters of the Mississippi, Bonnechere, Petawawa, Mattawa, Madawaska and South Nation Rivers and other tributaries.

The report highlights a number of important considerations that must be included in eel recovery plans within and beyond Ontario’s boundaries, some of which fall outside current proposed legislation or Ontario’s jurisdiction. More specifically, the seven considerations are as follows:

1. There are solutions to the barrier and mortality issues created by hydro-electric dams and we must provide safe passage for the eel – both upstream *and* downstream.
2. Safe passage for the eel must extend beyond the political boundaries of Ontario.
3. We must continue to effectively fill the knowledge gaps.
4. There must be eels available to populate the waterways and so we must appeal to others to provide safe passage of the eel beyond Ontario waters, to the waters of the St. Lawrence River and international waters through which the eel migrates.
5. The merit of short term assisted upstream passage to provide access to suitable habitats throughout the watershed should be considered.
6. Eel habitat in the Ottawa River basin must have long term protection from degradation.
7. We must *all* learn from our mistakes.

The importance of the American Eel to the Algonquin people cannot be overstated and as such, returning Kichissippi Pimisi to its home in the Ottawa River basin must involve the Algonquins of Ontario. Kichissippi Pimisi was there for the Algonquin people and their ancestors in the Ottawa Valley for centuries, and more recently, was there for European settlers, providing economic, material sustenance and medicines, inspiring us to be strong and to live sustainably on the land. Now it is our turn to be there for the eel.

A copy of the report is available at www.tanakiwin.com/ottawa_valley.htm.

For additional information, please contact:

Algonquins of Ontario Consultation Office

31 Riverside Drive, Suite 101

Pembroke, ON K8A 8R6

Tel: 613-735-3759

Fax: 613-735-6307

Email: algonquins@nrtco.net

Website: www.tanakiwin.com