

## **Column Six**

### **The Algonquin Land Claim – Heritage and Culture**

*by Robert Potts, Principal Negotiator and Senior Legal Counsel for the Algonquins of Ontario*

Algonquin heritage resources represent the physical and spiritual manifestation of ancestral ways of life, traditional values and knowledge of the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO). Archaeological artifacts attest to the history of the land and the AOO who have lived on it for centuries. It is critically important that these resources be protected to preserve AOO history and traditions, while promoting awareness and education about the Algonquin people for future generations.

The proposed Heritage and Culture Chapter of the Preliminary Draft Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) recognizes that the AOO have an interest in the stewardship and conservation of these heritage resources. The Preliminary Draft AIP highlights a number of elements to be reflected in a Final Agreement, including:

- The establishment of an Algonquin repository to receive, protect and preserve Algonquin artifacts
- Data Sharing Agreements to foster the shared interest in conserving Algonquin heritage resources
- Algonquin Native Values Mapping and Cultural Planning for the Settlement Area
- Algonquin Nation Trail System that recognizes and celebrates Algonquin history and culture, and promotes tourism and economic development
- Algonquin language and culturally appropriate place names and public signage for culturally or historically significant sites

The establishment of an Algonquin repository will mean that there will be a central place to receive, protect and preserve Algonquin artifacts. This will include the return of any Algonquin human remains and associated artifacts in the possession of the Canadian Museum of Civilization or the Royal Ontario Museum.

Arrangements will also be made with the Canadian Museum of Civilization to lend, transfer or share Algonquin artifacts with the AOO. Additionally, agreements will be made between the AOO, Canada and Ontario to make available important Algonquin heritage resources for education, research, and cultural purposes.

The Heritage and Culture Chapter also sets out that an Algonquin Burial Site Protocol will be developed and apply when a burial site is discovered within the Settlement Area. This protocol will respect traditional Algonquin burial practices and recognize that human remains and

artifacts associated with human remains are to be treated with respect and with minimal disturbance. It is the preference of the AOO that human remains and associated artifacts be reinterred in the place of discovery or in another location selected by the AOO.

Aboriginal archaeological resources encapsulate the cultural and historic heritage of the Algonquin people. Protecting and conserving these archaeological resources, while honouring and fostering pride in Algonquin identity and culture, will be of the utmost importance as the AOO continue on their journey of rebuilding and self-sufficiency.

*This column is the sixth in a series providing insights into Algonquin history, the foundation for the land claim, elements of the Preliminary Draft AIP and next steps in the journey. The next column will focus on the economic development opportunities within the Preliminary Draft AIP. For more information visit [www.tanakiwin.com](http://www.tanakiwin.com).*