

Column Three

The Algonquin Land Claim – Parks and Protected Areas

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The Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) have long held a way of life deeply rooted in conservation and ecological integrity. Environmental stewardship of land and resources has been an integral practice of the Algonquins since time immemorial.

With the release of the Preliminary Draft Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) in December 2012, the AOO once again reaffirmed their desire to work with their partners and neighbours to ensure that ecological integrity is the first priority in the management of Protected Areas, specifically Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves in the Settlement Area. The Preliminary Draft AIP proposes a number of elements to be reflected in a Final Agreement, some of which are highlighted below.

Participation in Protected Area Management Planning

The Final Agreement will provide that Ontario will appoint at least one person nominated by the AOO to the Ontario Parks Board of Directors. This representation will ensure that the voice of the AOO is heard, and that lessons and practices learned from years of sound management and living in harmony with the land and resources are shared. Should other Boards be established related to Protected Areas in the Settlement Area, the AOO will also have representation.

The Preliminary Draft AIP also proposes that the Final Agreement will set out three levels of Algonquin engagement in Protected Area management planning:

Level 1: The AOO will review and comment on Protected Area Management Plans and Management Statements prepared by Ontario.

Level 2: The AOO, as members on the Protected Area planning teams, will participate in the development and amendment of Management Plans and Management Statements.

Level 3: In Algonquin Provincial Park and 15 other identified Provincial Parks, the AOO and the Protected Area Manager will work through an Algonquin Planning Committee to jointly develop, amend and examine Management Plans, Management Statements, Secondary Plans, Natural Heritage Education Programs and any other strategic plans for Protected Areas.

Access to Protected Areas

The Final Agreement will also deal with access roads, trails, use of motorized vehicles and other access issues in Protected Areas through Protected Area Management Planning processes that consider the maintenance of ecological integrity as well as the Algonquin interest in access to Protected Areas for harvesting.

The AOO will work with Ontario Parks and the Algonquin Forestry Authority to develop Forest Management Plans that deal with the construction and decommissioning of forestry roads and water crossings in Algonquin Provincial Park.

Cultural Recognition in Protected Areas

Leading up to a Final Agreement, the AOO and Ontario will work together to explore the development of a signature project such as a cultural centre, museum or other tourist destination in Algonquin Provincial Park or in another Protected Area, subject to the appropriate feasibility studies. Such a project will recognize the interrelations of the land and the Algonquin way of life, while celebrating Algonquin culture.

Fundamental to this Chapter of the Preliminary Draft AIP is the continued sharing of long-standing and effective conservation and management practices by the AOO with their partners. The AOO are committed to ensuring the vitality and future prosperity of all Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves within the Settlement Area, for the continued use of the AOO and our neighbours.

This column is the third 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 existing harvest management practices of the Algonquins of Ontario. For more information visit www.tanakiwin.com.