

## **Column 1**

### **The Algonquin Land Claim – A Journey of Reconciliation**

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

The Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) have reached a historic point on our journey of survival, rebuilding and self-sufficiency – a journey of reconciliation – and one that includes reaching out and building relationships with our neighbours within our Traditional Territory. This journey began nearly 250 years ago when the first Algonquin Petition was submitted to the Crown in 1772.

The Algonquins of Ontario claim includes an area of 9 million acres within the watersheds of the Kichissippi (Ottawa River) and the Mattawa River in Ontario. Unlike most other First Nations, the AOO have never had a land surrender treaty with the Crown. There are currently more than 1.2 million people living and working within this unceded territory that covers most of Eastern Ontario, including the Nation's Capital. There are also 85 municipal jurisdictions fully or partially located within the Settlement Area, including 76 lower and single tier municipalities and 9 upper tier counties.

Algonquins have lived in present-day Ontario for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Today, the AOO are comprised of ten Algonquin communities. These include the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation and the Algonquin communities of Antoine, Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini (Bancroft), Bonnechere, Greater Golden Lake, Mattawa/North Bay, Ottawa, Shabot Obaadjiwan (Sharbot Lake), Snimikobi (Ardoch) and Whitney and Area.

The ten communities are represented by 16 Algonquin Negotiation Representatives (ANRs) who are elected by Algonquin Voters for three-year terms. The ANRs include the Chief and Council of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation and one representative from each of the nine other Algonquin communities.

Based on a Protocol signed in 2004, these communities are working together to provide a unified approach to reach a settlement of the Algonquin land claim.

On December 13, 2012, the Preliminary Draft Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) was released. The Preliminary Draft AIP is a culmination of many years of negotiations between the AOO, Canada and Ontario. Our negotiations, beginning in 1991, continue to build on the determined efforts of the Algonquin people to be heard. It has been a long journey and it is far from over.

Elements of the Preliminary Draft AIP serve as key building blocks to: 1) reaffirm the honour and pride of the Algonquin people; 2) ensure the survival and prosperity of the Algonquin people and culture; 3) raise awareness and understanding about Algonquin history and culture; 4) stimulate cultural and economic development opportunities; and 5) achieve reconciliation of the relationships between the AOO and the Governments of Canada and Ontario.

As we continue our journey, the Algonquins of Ontario are united in our commitment to achieving a

just and equitable settlement of this claim. We look forward to working together as neighbours in the spirit of reconciliation.

*This column is the first in a biweekly 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 transfer of funds and the land component of the Preliminary Draft AIP. For more information visit [www.tanakiwin.com](http://www.tanakiwin.com).*