



Algonquins of Ontario



RETURNING KICHISSIPPI PIMISI, THE AMERICAN EEL, TO THE OTTAWA RIVER BASIN

Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, is sacred to the Algonquin people and has been an essential part of Algonquin culture for thousands of years. Traditionally, it provided spiritual, medicinal and survival necessities to the Algonquin people. Kichissippi Pimisi was once abundant throughout Algonquin Traditional Territory; however, it has suffered dramatic population declines in recent history and is disappearing from our waters. Today, we are left with only a remnant population in Ontario.

In December 2012, the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) released its landmark report entitled, "*Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin*". The report calls for increased protection of the American Eel and highlights a number of key considerations to be included in Eel Recovery Plans. 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. The report is available at <http://www.tanakiwin.com/news.htm>.

Last year, the AOO entered into an exciting partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Federation to participate in the Ottawa River American Eel Project. This project has been ongoing since 2008 and involves a variety of partners, including:

- Pembroke District Ministry of Natural Resources (Project Lead)
- Algonquins of Ontario
- Canadian Wildlife Federation
- Algonquin College
- Arnprior Fish and Game Club
- MNR Genetics Lab Trent University
- Ottawa Riverkeeper
- Town of Arnprior

In the first year of our partnership, the AOO and the Canadian Wildlife Federation engaged a research assistant to participate in the ongoing study of the Kichissippi Pimisi in the vicinity of Lac des Chats on the Ottawa River. In addition to the scientific research conducted in the field, the research assistant also worked to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and cultural heritage through the collection of Algonquin Traditional Knowledge of Kichissippi Pimisi. The AOO are committed to continuing the collection of Traditional Knowledge as we move forward with this important project.

The AOO are now in our second year of working with the Canadian Wildlife Federation on the Ottawa River American Eel Project. The 2013 season to date has consisted of trapping 5 additional eels and surgically implanting radio transmitters and pit tags. These eels, along with the eels tagged in previous years, are being tracked by airplane and by boat. The tracking is done

in the late afternoon and evenings to most effectively capture movement patterns and habitat use. Eel ladders are also being created and will be tested for use in monitoring upstream migration at several barriers on the Ottawa River.

The AOO have an ongoing interest in gathering Algonquin Traditional Knowledge about Kichissippi Pimisi. If you or anyone you know has any family stories, anecdotes, legends or personal experience about Kichissippi Pimisi, we invite you to share this knowledge by contacting:

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“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)