

Algonquins of Ontario

RETURNING KICHISIPPI PIMISI – THE AMERICAN EEL – TO THE OTTAWA RIVER BASIN

Bridging the Gap between Scientific and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge



This document has been created to complement the Algonquins of Ontario landmark paper *Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin*, originally published in December 2012. Support for this project was provided by the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) through a Species at Risk Stewardship Fund grant from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR).

The Algonquins of Ontario appreciate the strong partnership that emerged with the CWF as a result of this initiative as well as our continued positive working relationship with the Pembroke MNR. Our sincere thanks to staff from both organizations, especially David Browne, CWF Director of Conservation, for the support and assistance they have provided. This initiative demonstrates the value of adopting a collaborative, partner-based approach to tackle complex issues, such as the restoration of Kichissippi Pimisi to its traditional habitat throughout Algonquin Traditional Territory.

The collection and compilation of the Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge presented within this document was completed through the dedicated efforts of Christine Luckasavitch, member of Whitney and Area Algonquins.

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The image of the American eel was created by Tony Amikons, Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation.

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American eel remediation is a rapidly evolving area of practice. Literature and guidance continue to be published with the gathering of emerging sources of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK), stories and oral histories. This 'living' document will be revised as new information and practices become available.

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This document is dedicated to the Elders who shared their family stories, anecdotes, legends and personal experiences about Kichissippi Pimisi. Their recollections and storytelling are invaluable resources in the Algonquins of Ontario's ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and cultural heritage, and ultimately, to reconnect current and future generations of Algonquins to this sacred creature, Kichissippi Pimisi.

Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin

Bridging the Gap between Scientific and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge

“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)

Introduction

On December 18, 2012, the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) released their landmark report entitled, *Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin*.

The American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) is known to the Algonquin people as Kichissippi Pimisi, which mean “big river eel” (AOO 2012). Kichissippi Pimisi 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 declined 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.

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 AOO are determined to be the voice of the eel in mankind’s efforts to ensure the survival of the species.

The AOO’s 2012 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, it was there for European settlers, always providing economic, material sustenance and medicines, inspiring us to be strong and to live sustainably on the land. Now it is our turn to support Kichissippi Pimisi.

Building on the AOO landmark report *Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, the American eel, to the Ottawa River Basin*, in 2012 the AOO joined the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF), the Pembroke Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and the Arnprior Fish and Game Club in their efforts to build upon the knowledge gained from previous years of study and to assist in the development of strategies for American eel recovery in the Ottawa River. The AOO assumed responsibility for the collection of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) of Kichissippi Pimisi throughout Algonquin Traditional Territory. The collection of ATK aims to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and cultural heritage in order to raise awareness of the significant decline of the American eel. This knowledge collection endeavors to strengthen a connection between the Algonquin people, our traditions and our ancestors.

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge

ATK is based upon the understanding of the interconnectedness of humans, wildlife, spirituality, environmental conditions and land forms in a specific location. ATK describes the complex and unique knowledge held by Aboriginal peoples as they have lived in their respective territories with all of its creatures since time immemorial. In recent years, the significant value of including ATK in the resolution of environmental issues it has become increasingly evident. ATK complements scientific research and thus provides a more holistic understanding of the state of Mother Earth.

The Algonquin people, like all Aboriginal peoples, have a deep and inherent connection with Mother Earth. Our traditions and culture have been shaped by our relationship to the land, along with the plants and animals that we share it with. Algonquins have always had a deep connection to Kichissippi Pimisi as a provider of nourishment, medicine and spiritual inspiration. No part of the animal was left unused.

Practical Uses

Historically, Kichissippi Pimisi was one of the most important sources of sustenance. It was a prime source of nutrition for the Algonquins during their travels and protected them from starvation during harsh winters. Due to the historical abundance of eel, in past times one could spear over 1,000 eels in a night. Kichissippi Pimisi was also used for trade when settlers began arriving in Algonquin Traditional Territory. Given the tightening properties of its skin, the eel provided many non-food uses as well, such as bow grips, hair ties, snowshoes and moccasin ties.

Medicinal Uses

Eel skin has incredible healing properties and was often applied as a cast or brace for broken bones or to rid the body of infections as it dried. Eel skin is also known to have medicinal value given its tightening quality when dried, providing relief for sprains and rheumatism. It is said to be more effective than modern methods for curing arthritis.

Spiritual Significance

Kichissippi Pimisi is considered sacred to the Algonquin people as the prayer carrier of the waters, travelling far through salt water and fresh and, according to ATK, over wetlands (Cannon 2011). Each year, during the seasons of eel harvests, entire Algonquin villages would gather in ceremony to give thanks to the Creator for this life-giving animal (Sarazin 2012).

Trade

Historically, eels were a highly valued trade item. During Samuel de Champlain's journey on the Ottawa River in the 1620s, he reported that the indigenous people he encountered were very skilled at fishing eels and were hard bargainers in trade. As his men were on the verge of starvation they gave their coats and other possessions in trade, while Champlain traded at a rate of one beaver pelt for ten eels (Allen 2007). Today this value is significantly different. Eels are no longer present throughout much of Algonquin Traditional Territory; they are no longer available for trade. Younger generations of Algonquins along the Ottawa River may have lost their connection to this animal.

Recent History

With many of our rivers no longer free-flowing, eel passage is limited within Algonquin Traditional Territory. With the severe decline of Kichissippi Pimisi in our waters, we are very close to losing our connection to this sacred animal. Those individuals who were interviewed vividly remember the abundant presence of Kichissippi Pimisi in our waters and yet our youth have a total disconnect from it.

The value of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge is greatly illuminated by the Algonquin philosophy of *ginawaydaganuc* – we are all connected, and we have a responsibility to be stewards of this land. Any element of our traditional life that is facing the threat of disappearance will affect our way of life for future generations. If we do not have the elements of Algonquin traditional life present in our Traditional Territory, we will not have the ability or purpose to pass along these teachings.

Collection Methodology

To initiate *Bridging the Gap between Science and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge: Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin*, an Outreach letter (see Appendix A) was developed detailing the scope of the research. This Outreach letter was circulated by the Algonquin Negotiation Representatives (ANRs) throughout the ten Algonquin communities, including the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, Antoine, Bonnechere, Greater Golden Lake, Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini (Bancroft), Mattawa/North Bay, Ottawa, Shabot Obaadjwan (Sharbot Lake), Snimikobi (Ardoch), and Whitney and Area. It was also distributed at community meetings and was posted on the AOO's Tanakiwin website. Awareness of this project was also spread by word of mouth. ANRs and family members assisted in reaching out

to individual community members who are known to be avid anglers, trappers or are known to hold stories of Kichissippi Pimisi.

Upon receiving responses from interested persons willing to share their first-hand accounts, memories and oral histories of Kichissippi Pimisi, each interviewee's contact information was compiled and interview dates and locations were determined.

A Statement of Informed Consent (see Appendix B) was presented to each interviewee prior to his or her interview. The Statement of Informed Consent included an invitation to share ATK, the purpose of ATK collection and its role within the American eel in the Ottawa River Basin project, an outline of the interview process and a statement of confidentiality.

An interview template (see Appendix C) outlined the format of the interview. This template was used only as a guideline as it was deemed critical that each interviewee be provided with the flexibility to impart knowledge and share information as he or she wished. In turn, this allowed for more personal stories to be shared and strengthened the overall data collection process.

ATK was collected throughout Algonquin Traditional Territory in Ontario from October 2012 to February 2013. In total, 14 individuals were formally interviewed, making significant contributions by sharing their knowledge and supporting information. All individuals involved in this project were both willing and excited to share their anecdotes and oral histories. The majority of these people were over the age of 65. Of the 14 individuals interviewed, 6 were not of Algonquin descent. Interestingly, only 7 of those interviewed were able to provide first-hand accounts of catching eel themselves. In comparison, all were able to provide stories that had been passed down from their Elders, which speak of a time when Kichissippi Pimisi was plentiful in our waters. These stories and anecdotes range from fishing methods to the cleaning and preparation of the fish to medicinal uses.

Two interviews were conducted via telephone, lasting approximately 30 minutes each. One interview was conducted at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec. One interview was conducted at Tim Hortons in Pembroke, Ontario. One interview was conducted via e-mail. The remaining 10 interviews were conducted in the individuals' respective homes. If his or her spouse was present, they were invited to partake in and/or listen to the interview. Each interviewee was contacted with 2-3 days' notice of the interview. Each in-person interview lasted a minimum of 1.5 hours, with the longest lasting approximately 3 hours. In some cases, conversations following an interview were conducted via e-mail.

All of these Elders were thrilled to have a visitor who would listen to them share their cherished memories, and without fail, they always extended an invitation to visit again.

Findings

Yves Grandmaitre, owner of Oziles' Marina and Tackle

The first interview was conducted via e-mail with **Yves Grandmaitre, owner of Oziles' Marina and Tackle** at Petrie Island in Ottawa, to determine whether the American eel is as plentiful as it once was. Owning a marina, Yves hears many stories from anglers.

"I can tell you that having fished in and around Petrie for the better part of 40 years, I remember when young I would regularly catch eels in the 36" to 48" range at almost every outing. At one point back in the mid-seventies, we had a neighbouring cottager who... would bring in huge eels all the time. As compared to today, hardly any eels are caught anymore. I might of heard of maybe one or two eels being caught in the last five years."

Anne-Marie Smith of the Mattawa/North Bay Algonquins

On behalf of her brother John William (Billy) Smith, who has since passed, Anne-Marie Smith of the Mattawa/North Bay Algonquins was honoured to share that her youngest brother Bill used to fish religiously at the deepest part of the Chaudière Falls in Ottawa, below the hydro-electric dam. Anne-Marie recalled that at one point, all that Bill would catch here were eels. She believes that this deepest point is where Samuel de Champlain observed Algonquins making their tobacco offerings during his trip up the Ottawa River in 1613.

Harold “Skip” Ross of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation

Harold “Skip” Ross was born along the banks of the Petawawa River, a major tributary of the mighty Kichissippi. Eel was a staple in his family, and for this reason he feels a significant connection to this animal. Skip explains, “the eel was a spiritual being for us. It was so rich; it fed us, kept us healthy. It contributed greatly to our well-being. My mother used to catch eel in the Petawawa River. We would catch them near our house on the Petawawa River in the evening in my birch bark canoe. Sometimes my mother would go out fishing during the day for pickerel, but she would come back with eels.”

Skip’s grandfather would often smoke eel for his family. The last time Skip saw an eel in the Petawawa River was around 1940. When Skip was a trapper near Lake Temagami, he witnessed Nipissing and Algonquin people catching eel in 1946. That was the last time he saw an eel. Skip recalls “that long ago, eels were not hard to catch. Mind you, they were not as plentiful as they would have been hundreds of years ago. I’ve been told that at one time there were more eels than any other fish in the Petawawa and Ottawa Rivers. But now there aren’t any. Leave it to the hydro dams. The habitat has changed. The water quality is no longer what it was. I used to be able to drink straight from the river. I would never think to do that now.”

Wallace Eady of the Snimikobi (Ardoch) Algonquins

Wallace frequently visited the First Chute of the Bonnechere River with his grandfather when he was young. This was his favorite fishing hole, and according to Wallace, catching eel there was no surprise. Wallace remembers hearing stories from “old timers” about the incredible population of American eel in the Bonnechere River prior to construction of hydro-electric facilities. Wallace said “when the mature females migrated, they looked like a big brown streak going down the middle of the river. It seemed as though all the females would move on the same day.” Wallace believes that with the abundance of eels in the Bonnechere River, the “old timer” generation was able to retain a strong connection to the animal, exemplified in their concern for free passage for the animal prior to the construction of hydro-electric facilities.

Wallace remembers people asking “What will happen to the dams when the eels run? Eels will go wherever they can go.” Within the past decade, people were still so well connected to this animal that they knew the eels were extremely determined to make their passage up and downstream however possible, including through the large water turbines at hydro-electric facilities. The first eel run on the Bonnechere River after the construction of the generators in Renfrew, it has been reported, jammed the turbines.

Gordon Palbiski of Whitney, Ontario

Gordon Palbiski was born and raised in Whitney, Ontario and honed his fishing skills on Galeairy Lake (previously known as Long Lake), Hay Lake and Lake Opeongo, all located within the Madawaska River watershed. Growing up on the banks of Galeairy Lake, Gordon recalls that his family would “set lines for lake trout a few times a week. We would come back, check the lines and you would usually catch one or two eels every day.” His family would often eat the eel that they caught, yet Gordon remembers that they were “very oily”, and that he “liked ling and trout better. But eels were very easy to catch around here.”

Clover, Gordon’s wife, “caught eels off the dock in Lake Opeongo in the early spring, almost by mistake” with her father. At that point in time, “eels were very easy to catch around here.”

Hector Vincent Amikons, Elder of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation

Hector was happy to share his memories of eel fishing in the spring or fall using a spear. He was very eager and was able to provide these accounts in great detail.

“You just hang a light on your canoe and go around with the spear. We were spearing pike, pickerel, bass, suckers – whatever we could get. Eel come along he got caught too. You can pick out the size that you want. You look at the size and if it was too small you let it go. We usually picked a nice spruce or balsam, about a 1 ½ thick, 12-13’ long. We used spruce or balsam because it was light and hard to break. Usually three pronged spears, each prong 3 ½ to 4’ long with a barb made of steel. The middle one had a barb on both sides. We had a blacksmith here in Golden Lake. He could make you the best spear – better than you could buy. He would make spears that you could bounce off of rocks. You might have to sharpen it, but it didn’t bend or break.”

Throughout his youth, Hector had encountered eel in large numbers. When he was a child, he went to his grandparents’ farm on a “big bay” off the Bonnechere River.

Hector recalls, “...the main river passed in front. We went to swim off the beach, and the water was just full of eels! We thought they were black snakes at first, my grandfather just said ‘No no no, they’re eels. They won’t bother you.’ There must have been 40 -50 eels in that little bay. They must have been sunning themselves or resting.”

Hector, who is now in his late 70s, also shared his memories of a school trip to the Moses-Saunders Dam near Cornwall.

“The most eels I ever saw was at the Cornwall dam. They were all big eels. I don’t know if they were salt water eels or what they were. They were big. And they were all chopped up in chunks. I asked what happened to them? They went through the turbines on the way back to the ocean. I couldn’t believe the amount of eels that was floating around in the water.”

In addition to Hector’s valuable knowledge of the presence of American eel within the Ottawa River Basin and traditional fishing methods, Hector was able to recall traditional knowledge that had been passed down to him.

“I was told that the eels migrated every seven years. They migrated up the river and seven years later they migrated back down. My Elders told me that. They would see the migration of eels coming in and eels going out. They knew that it would be seven years before you see that migration again.”

Jean-Paul Lefebvre – Nimi Ata Mikizik (Dances With Eagles) of the Mattawa/North Bay Algonquins

Jean-Paul Lefebvre lived his entire life on Lake Temiskaming and is a trapper by trade. In an interview conducted by Anne-Marie Smith in French on behalf of the AOO (later transcribed to English), Jean-Paul shares his memories of eels in the waters of Lake Temiskaming, including teachings he received from his Elders. Jean-Paul describes the commonality of eel consumption in his village.

“Folks took eel everywhere along the Lake, it was a regular thing, they ate a lot of it and it was their custom to eat eel... It’s not common, of my generation, there’s not many people who have caught an eel.”

These accounts demonstrate that within the past 100 years, Algonquins were still very much aware of the presence and life cycle of the eel, and they would harvest these fish accordingly. The information Hector provided attests to the connection of our Algonquin ancestors with Kichissippi Pimisi and their ability to live in harmony with it.

Medicinal Uses

In addition to accounts that verify the once strong eel presence in the Ottawa River Basin, some oral histories were collected that demonstrate the presence of traditional knowledge in recent history, specifically, medicinal uses.

Beatrice Dumas of Whitney, Ontario

“You could cut the skin with scissors, and put it on your wrist for arthritis. Mother would also wrap eel skin around our necks if we had a sore throat or a cold. It was beautiful; the eel skin would cure us right away and she wouldn’t have any crying kids to take care of. She was a very busy lady.”

Dominic Craftchick of the Whitney and Area Algonquins

Dominic also recalled hearing that his Elders would wrap eel skin around their wrists. He was unsure exactly why they would do this, perhaps to relieve pain caused by arthritis, but was certain that there is something in the eel skin that takes soreness away.

The Impact of Hydro-Electric Dams

Most notably, many of the Elders were certain that the construction of hydro-electric dams caused a significant change in eel presence and populations in the waters within Algonquin Traditional Territory. Some went even further to say that the changes in water levels have affected the places where eels would ball into the mud.

Anthony Commanda of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation

“We used to always see them by the bridge [in Golden Lake]. Never seen them much after 1965. Dams changed everything. Fish don’t spawn like they used to. Water levels are much higher and they really fluctuate.”

Ed Commanda of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation

“We used to fish for them in weedier, muddier bays in Golden Lake. But that was before dams were put in for the log drives. Those dams shut water off totally. Eels used to travel this water

system, but there are no fish ladders at any of the dams. Look at those dams in Douglas and Eganville. There is no way that eels can pass through there. What happens when they need to migrate to the ocean?"

Dominic Craftchick of the Whitney and Area Algonquins

"There used to be lots of [eels], by the dam [at Hay Lake]. They liked all of the logs and rocks. That was about 70 years ago though. Once those dams went up, there was nowhere for the eel to live; their habitat was destroyed."

Beatrice Dumas of Whitney, Ontario

"On account of the dams, eels don't come up the Madawaska River anymore."

Gordon Palbiski of Whitney, Ontario

When the dam between Hay Lake and Galeairy Lake was constructed, Gordon recalls that "the dam at Hay Lake and Long Lake had cracks in the wall. Eels used to crawl in there, trying to find a way to get through. They would even try to go in backwards. They would end up getting stuck in the cracks and dying in there."

As eels are no longer present throughout the Madawaska Rivershed, Gordon reflects, "I don't know when the eel stopped coming. But I know what happened to them. The dams, eh. The big hydro dams on the bigger rivers. They can't get through there."

Jean-Paul Lefebvre – Nimi Ata Mikizik (Dances With Eagles) of the Mattawa/North Bay Algonquins

"Before they had the dams, in the bay at Ville-Marie...there was a big sawmill there – a nice big lot there right up until the river at the other end. There used to be a little lake to the right of the bay before the channel. Now there's maybe 10 feet of water 2,000 feet out in front of the dock. In the winter there's 1,000 feet where you drill a hole in the ice and end up in mud... there's no lake under the ice. The lake has pulled back because they've opened the dam before it froze. The fish that are there, any eels... there's nothing that will live if you have no water there... they are used to living in water, not squashed by the ice... I've never followed an eel to know its habits. But I do imagine that what they told me when I was little – and those people were used to talking about eel – the teachings they gave me were not lies like we hear in other places... there is no benefits for anyone to tell lies to a child, if he does, he is lying to himself. So I took it for the truth."

Reflections

Throughout this interview process, no first-hand accounts, memories or oral histories regarding the spiritual significance of Kichissippi Pimisi to the Algonquin people was found. However, there are publications written by Algonquins, such as the landmark report *Returning Kichissippi Pimisi, The American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin*, which refer to the eel as a spiritual entity. This report refers to Kichissippi Pimisi as "a source of spirituality and is considered sacred by the Algonquin people... the eel is a prayer-carrier of the waters because it travels farthest... it connects all of Mother Earth" (AOO 2012). Chief Kirby Whiteduck's book *Algonquin Traditional Culture* (2002) describes Jesuit Missionary Gabriel Segard's interactions with the Hurons. As Algonquins are immediate neighbours and allies of the Hurons, there is no doubt that customs and beliefs were very similar. Father Segard observes:

“They take special care not to throw any fish-bone into the fire, and when I threw them in they scolded me well and took them out quickly, saying that I did wrong and that I should be responsible for their failure to catch any more, because there were sprits of a sort, or the spirits of the fish themselves whose bones were burnt, which would warn the other fish not to allow themselves to be caught, since their bones would also be burnt.”

Given that the Hurons specifically instructed Father Segard not to throw his fish bones in the fire, and that such action was in fact taboo, indicates a type of spirituality given to the creature. That so much respect is paid to all parts of the fish, including fish bones, demonstrates the strong spiritual connection that these ancestors held for the fish as a valuable life source.

In addition to sitting with Elders and listening to their stories, historical knowledge was gathered through a review of historic documents, archaeological reports, and published reports on the American eel. Although current archaeological information on eel presence in Ontario is in its infancy, William A. Allen’s presentation, “The Importance of Archaeology in Understanding Species at Risk: The American eel as a Case in Point” at the 2007 Ontario Archaeology Symposium draws attention to Morrison Island, located in the Ottawa River opposite Pembroke, Ontario, as the largest known eel harvesting site in North America. In total, 2,979 eel bones were found, estimated to represent approximately 520 eels.

Combining current scientific data, archaeological records and ATK from Algonquins whose ancestors have lived in the Ottawa River Basin since time immemorial, it is apparent that Kichissippi Pimisi was abundant in the Ottawa River until recent times, when our rivers were able to flow unimpeded. Since the construction of many hydro-electric facilities along the Ottawa River, Kichissippi Pimisi has suffered dramatic population decline. In the words of Algonquin Grandfather William Commanda, “the plight of the American eel is finally obliging us to re-examine our relationship with the natural world, and to take concrete steps to entrench survival and coexistence for all life forms.”

Acknowledgments

We thank all those who made important contributions to this paper by taking the time to review earlier drafts and provide their thoughts and valuable feedback.

Personal Communications

The following individuals made special contributions to this report by personally sharing their knowledge, and we thank them:

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Appendix A



Algonquins of Ontario



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

The Algonquins of Ontario, in partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, are pleased to introduce Christine Luckasavitch, a member of the Whitney and Area Algonquins, as the Research Assistant to the American Eel Project. Christine is assisting a field biologist in the ongoing study of the Kichissippi Pimisi – American Eel – in the vicinity of Lac des Chats on the Ottawa River. The study includes radio tracking tagged eels to determine their migration habits and the location of their wintering habitat. In addition to scientific research conducted in the field, Christine aspires to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and cultural heritage through the collection of Algonquin Traditional Knowledge about the Kichissippi Pimisi.

The Kichissippi Pimisi is very sacred to the Algonquin people. Traditionally, it provided spiritual, medicinal and survival necessities. Kichissippi Pimisi was once very abundant throughout Algonquin Traditional Territory; however it has suffered dramatic population declines in recent history and is disappearing from our waters.

To assist in reestablishing a connection between the sacred Kichissippi Pimisi and the Algonquin people, the Algonquins of Ontario are gathering Algonquin Traditional Knowledge. If you or anyone you know has any family stories, anecdotes, legends or personal experience with Kichissippi Pimisi, we invite you to share this knowledge with Christine and participate in reconnecting our people to our traditions.

For more information, please contact:

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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)

Appendix B



Algonquins of Ontario



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

You are invited to participate in “Returning the Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin,” an exciting project currently being completed by the Algonquins of Ontario in partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Federation. The purpose of this project is to reestablish a connection between the sacred Kichissippi Pimisi and the Algonquin People.

The collection of oral histories will be conducted through personal interviews throughout the Algonquin Traditional Territory in Ontario. The interviews will feature a series of questions focused on fishing methods, catch, preparation and cultural significance of the Kichissippi Pimisi. The length of each interview will vary for each participant, allowing the length of time necessary.

Following verbal consent, the interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. If you wish, you may refuse the recording of the interview and written notes will be taken.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The digital recordings, transcripts and written notes from these interviews will be stored electronically and will be password protected. Access to these resources will be limited to the Algonquins of Ontario. The information collected during this process will be stored indefinitely at the Algonquins of Ontario Consultation Office in order to contribute to the body of knowledge of the Kichissippi Pimisi.

Quotations will be used in the final document of this research. If you wish, you can choose to remain anonymous and have your quotations remain anonymous. You will

have the opportunity at the end of the interview to modify any statement. When quotations are selected, they will be provided to you prior to the completion of the project for your review and approval.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

The results of this research will be submitted to the Algonquins of Ontario to contribute to the "Returning the Kichissippi Pimisi, the American Eel, to the Ottawa River Basin" project. The report is expected to be completed by the end of December 2012. The final report will be shared with the Canadian Wildlife Federation as well as the broader public. A final copy will be provided to you.

CONTACT

If you have any questions or concerns, please direct them to:

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Appendix C



Algonquins of Ontario



**KICHISIPPI PIMISI – AMERICAN EEL
ALGONQUIN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE INTERVIEW**

NAME:

COMMUNITY:

Date:

Time:

Summary:

Is this your own memory or was it passed down?

When is the last time you saw or caught an eel?

Who did you go with?

How did you catch them?

How often did you go?

What time of year did you go?

Were they plentiful?

Did you have a particular place to fish for them year-to-year? Can you describe this location?

How have these locations changed over time (eg. depth, pollution, flooding, drought)?

When is the last time you ate eel?

How was it prepared? Who prepared it?

Was this experience shared amongst your family? And/or amongst the community?

Was the eel honoured? How?

Are you aware of any traditional significance of the Kichissippi Pimisi?

Is there anything else you would like to add?