

Our Home on Native Land: Part 2

The Algonquin Land Claim, covered here and on pg. 36 in our 2011 February issue, continues to stir up strong feelings.



JOHN KERR
Editor-in-Chief

5 Things I've Learned in this Issue

- 1 Pinheads and spinheads are neck and neck these days, pg. 28.
- 2 Crappie can be cranked up, pg. 39.
- 3 How to ambush a gobbler on the far side, pg. 44.
- 4 Hunter-ed numbers hit a record high, pg. 48.
- 5 Winter trapping requires a lot of education, pg. 56.

What's Ahead

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- » Wading for Walleye
- » Hunting Wary Gobblers
- » 2011 Hunting-Trends Buyer's Guide

Surprisingly, most of the letters to me on the issue came from First Nations people. This included insight from chiefs of Algonquin communities who opted out of the claim negotiations.

There are reasons for this, which I had intended to delve into. But, on second thought, the complicated system under the Indian Act responsible for them is best left for First Nations and our provincial and federal governments to sort out. That long journey is far from over.

I will stick with advocating for fair access to our natural resources for all and for conservation. So, knowing that OOD's readership includes many of our First Nations' anglers and hunters is heartening. Here are just a few of their comments.

"We natives do buy licences to hunt moose and deer during regular hunting seasons, on and off traditional lands," wrote Marion Fennell of Campbellford. "We also are conservationists, and the Algonquin Land Claim would help to ensure our resources are protected. We also join the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (there are many aboriginal OFAH members) to support the conservation and other work the organization carries out."

As for First Nations' moose hunts in Algonquin Provincial Park, Joe Taylor of Grimsby, an Algonquin who has taken part in them since he was young, points out that they're controlled, as are non-aboriginal hunts outside the park.

"This is a tough lottery system that requires a large list of family members (6) to apply for a tag," he said. "Since 1992, we have had several years without a tag (i.e. not permitted to harvest any moose). This is similar to many other friends I hunt with who are not aboriginal. In fact, those friends have

noted that their groups seem to have more luck than mine in getting tags."

Other Common Bonds

"I hunt with native and non-native friends, and all of our ancestors seemed to respect and had an interdependence with the land, either farmers or First Nation elders," wrote Neil Debassige, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Manitoulin Island. "I believe this comes from the same basic need to survive. When First Nations talk about hunting and fishing rights, many of us see those rights of survival might be eroded, like many other things in our not so distant past. For example, at one point on Manitoulin, if you were an 'Indian,' you needed a ticket, a day pass so to speak, if you wanted to leave."

Debassige points out that celebrating conservation efforts of First Nations, such as the group from M'Chigeeng First Nation planning a walleye project in partnership with the Little Current Fish and Game Club this spring, has a subtle way of changing people's paradigms and creating interdependence versus independence.

As for non-aboriginal comments, "There should be open public meetings so that all involved can voice their opinions on the process," wrote Joshua Martin of Owen Sound. "Aboriginal peoples do deserve the right to upkeep their ancestry, but not at the expense of other Canadians' rights to also use the land. I'm a third-generation Canadian who considers this my home and uses the resources of the land to survive, as well. I want to be able to keep those rights."

Nick Martino, a Trent University student, adds perspective. "We should all try to learn and understand the real history of Canada and why issues such as indigenous hunting and fishing rights, land claims, and other social

issues are here in the first place," he said. "Unfortunately, many non-indigenous Canadians view these issues as something that happened in the past and should not be relevant today. But, we are all still within a historical process that cannot be detached from history."

Clearly, the Algonquin Land Claim needs some work. Just as clearly, aboriginal and non-aboriginal anglers and hunters share a common bond with the land, its renewable natural resources, and have a deep respect for conservation.

I trust that we can get over our differences, past and present, and form a formidable alliance to ensure our outdoors heritage remains strong for generations to come. If we don't, the wave of development and urbanization will continue washing over the land and leave little of the natural world behind for anyone.

Share your thoughts:
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