

MEDIA RELEASE
January 19, 2011
For Immediate Release

Algonquin Native Lights Sacred Fire to Denounce Anticipated Forest Destruction

OTTAWA – Algonquin Daniel Bernard “Amikwabe” set up a camp this morning to keep a Sacred Fire burning round the clock next to the entrance of the Beaver Pond forest at the end of Walden Drive in Kanata. This is a personal initiative “to denounce the massacre of the wildlife and this sacred forest” in response to a declaration by Algonquin Elder William Commanda that the forest is sacred.

The landowner, KNL Developments, moved tree-clearing equipment on to Beaver Pond lands January 18 after receiving City of Ottawa approval to proceed with plans to build a housing development. Development plans have been contested by citizens for decades, and protest has peaked in recent months.

Grandfather William Commanda, the most senior Algonquin Elder, has stated that the area is sacred to his people, and has written letters to all levels of government urging protection of the land. Four First Nations groups, Chiefs, and Elders have written similar letters of concern (see links below).

Archaeological artifacts have been found nearby that show evidence of pre-contact civilization. Natives and non-Natives alike are calling for a comprehensive archaeological assessment and meaningful consultations with Aboriginal peoples before any development proceeds.

On January 12, the City’s Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Subcommittee passed a resolution noting that the City of Ottawa “should be seen as an example role-model to other municipalities in Canada in respecting Aboriginal affairs” and asked the City take the lead in conducting a new archaeological survey of the entire South March Highlands.

Gordon O’Connor, MP for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, recently asked the National Capital Commission to include the Beaver Pond forest in its upcoming revision of the Greenbelt master plan. Carleton-Mississippi Mills MPP Norm Sterling wrote letters January 17 to the Premier of Ontario and several other Ministers in support of protecting this land.

Robert Lovelace, former Chief of the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation, recently wrote that “If Mayor Jim Watson were a real leader, he would know enough to realize that the incremental destruction of the last wildlands in the city needs to stop. As a real Chief, he would be on the side of the people and the land.” (see link below)

A Sacred Fire is a peaceful religious observance. Bernard, of the Algonquin Beaver Clan, invites others to join him and pray for the forest and the animals. He plans to keep the fire burning until Sunday, January 23.

Members of the community are providing support to Bernard, and will be joining him throughout the protest. All are committed to protecting the Beaver Pond forest and other environmentally sensitive areas of the South March Highlands, which is home to more than 675 species, including 19 species at risk, and recognized by the City as one of the most biodiverse areas in Ottawa

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For more information:

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Directions:

Exit Highway 417 at Terry Fox Drive and go North past the shopping centers. Turn Right and take Kanata Avenue up the hill. Proceed past Goulbourn Forced Road on the left and high school on right, to Walden. Turn Left on Walden and proceed to the very end.

BACKGROUND:

Letters sent by First Nations to-date:

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2011-01-09-Kinouchepirini_Algonquin_FirstNation_Letter.jpghttp://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2011-01-09-SMH_Ottawa_Algonquin_FN_Support.pdf

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2011-01-10-AAFN_letter%20to_Ottawa.pdf

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2011-01-14-Ottawa_Letter_From_Kichesipirini_Algonquiu_FN.pdf

And by Grandfather William Commanda:

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2010-08-24_Circle_of_Nations-South_March_Highlands.pdf

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2010-12-20-GWC_Letter_To_Council.pdf

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2011-01-05-GWC-Message_Regarding_Development_at_South_March_Highlands

And by other Grandfathers:

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2010-08-14-A_plea_for_the_forest-Grandfather_Albert_Dumond.pdf

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2011-01-14-Grandfather_Lovelace_Letter_to_the_Editor_Revelation18.pdf

Motion passed unanimously by Ottawa's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Subcommittee:

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/2011-01-12-Unanimous_AHCAC_Motion_on_SMH.pdf

Background info:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZBcLvtcJBY> (4 minute documentary video)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhSU5heJl5o> (cultural and natural heritage video)

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Presentations/2011-01-13-SMH-1-SMH_Overview_v16.pdf (SMH Overview presentation)

http://www.renaud.ca/public/Presentations/2010-12-07-SMH-2-Stewardship_Plan_Overview_v4.pdf

Other Letters of Support (e.g. David Suzuki Foundation, MP Gordon O'Connor, MPP Norm Sterling) may be downloaded from http://www.renaud.ca/public/Letters_of_Support/

www.ottawagreatforest.com (website for the stewardship plan to protect the SMH)

www.southmarchhighlands.ca (website for the coalition to protect the SMH)

Submission to NCC on South March Highlands: <http://www.renaud.ca/public/Presentations/2010-09-07%20Greenbelt%20Coalition%20Position%20Paper%20App5%20-%20SMH.pdf>