

**THE WHITEFEATHER FOREST INITIATIVE:  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES  
AND  
RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**

**A PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK**

**LETTER OF AGREEMENT**

**BETWEEN:**           **Pikangikum First Nation**

**AND:**               **The Partnership for Public Lands (CPAWS-Wildlands League,  
Federation of Ontario Naturalists, World Wildlife Fund  
Canada)**

**PREAMBLE**

The people of Pikangikum First Nation are the keepers of a land-based indigenous way of life that has been passed on to them from their ancestors. Their culture is a vital part of the cultural diversity of humanity. Through their indigenous way of life they have always cherished the diversity of all living and non-living things on their land.

Pikangikum First Nation people have developed the Whitefeather Forest Initiative as a community economic renewal and resource stewardship initiative to provide livelihood opportunities for their youth in keeping with their cultural teachings and values. The initiative is being guided by the Elders of Pikangikum. The vision of Pikangikum people for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is based on an acknowledgement that the Creator placed them on their ancestral lands, where they have lived since time immemorial. It is also based on an acknowledgement that they are to take care of their lands as a sacred trust given by the Creator. Their vision for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is also one of partnerships rooted in cross-cultural respect and shared values for the care and protection of their ancestral lands, which they know are part of the heritage of all of humanity.

Pikangikum First Nation and the Partnership for Public Lands share a common vision to protect and take care of the land and resources in the Traditional Territories of the Pikangikum First Nation that will form the basis for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. This shared vision respects the teachings and wisdom of Pikangikum Elders that supports the care and protection of the diversity of life on the land. This shared vision supports dialogue and working together on the basis of respect and in a manner that will bring together the best of different knowledge traditions. It is on this basis that we are able to

enter into our agreement set out below.

## PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

In this Agreement, Pikangikum First Nation and the Partnership for Public Lands are establishing a relationship of cooperation and partnership in relation to the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. Both partners acknowledge that this partnership is based on mutual respect for the views and aspirations of each party and recognize that our organizations have limited means but that we will work together where possible to create success in mutual endeavours.

The Whitefeather Forest Initiative is centered on Community-Based Land Use Planning, an approach that has now been adopted as policy under Ontario's Northern Boreal Initiative (<http://204.40.253.254/envregistry/016410ep.htm>). (Title: Northern Boreal Initiative - Community-based Land Use Planning Approach). It is the position of both Pikangikum and the Partnership for Public Lands that:

1. Community-Based Land Use Planning will be completed prior to any development activities, including the establishment of protected areas and the commencement of commercial forestry within the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area.
2. Community-Based Land Use Planning should guide the identification and development of resource-based opportunities, including protected areas, and infrastructure development in the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area.

It is the desire of both parties to establish a strong partnership for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative based on our complementary strengths and abilities. We agree that

1. The Whitefeather Forest Planning Area and adjacent areas are "... a geographic area that is a cultural landscape, modified, influenced and given special meaning", by the Pikangikum First Nation People;<sup>1</sup>
2. The outcomes of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative will maintain the ability of Pikangikum people to pursue cultural and livelihood activities on the land;
3. A primary goal of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative will be to conserve biodiversity and protect viable populations of Woodland Caribou and Wolverine and their habitats as part of the overall strategy in which the Partnership for Public Lands and Pikangikum will cooperate to establish and manage an interconnected system of protected areas within the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area.

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<sup>1</sup> From Parks Canada, *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*, Ottawa: Department of Canadian Heritage, 1994, at p. 119.

4. We will also work cooperatively with the Province of Ontario to establish the Whitefeather Forest Initiative, guided by the Elders of Pikangikum First Nation and centered on the Indigenous Knowledge tradition, environmental values and perspectives, and customary indigenous stewardship values and practices of Pikangikum people and harmonized with broader-scale ecological considerations and provincial responsibilities of Ontario;
5. The economic benefits of Whitefeather Forest Initiative should flow primarily to the Pikangikum people;

## **PARTNERSHIP PLANNED ACTIONS**

Pikangikum and the Partnership for Public Lands agree to pursue a series of actions to help realize the Whitefeather Forest Initiative in a timely fashion:

### **Pre Tenure Period – Planning and Building Capacity**

1. Pikangikum and the Partnership for Public Lands will co-operate with Ontario so that Community-Based Land Use Planning within the Whitefeather Forest Initiative area is completed. This land-use plan will include a protected areas network and areas that will be identified for inclusion in a forest-management tenure. This will be completed by the end of 2005.
2. Areas identified as suitable for forestry through the outcome of the land-use planning process will become the areas where Pikangikum will seek forestry tenure in 2006.
3. Pikangikum and the Partnership for Public Lands will co-operate with the Ontario government to ensure a process to apply the provisions of the *Environmental Assessment Act* for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative and achieve coverage by 2006. This is to be done in a manner that addresses the particular community-based needs and vision of Pikangikum First Nation for the Initiative and the ecological circumstances of an intact northern boreal forest ecosystem.
4. The Partnership for Public Lands endorses the efforts of Pikangikum to secure funding to undertake Community-Based Land Use Planning and associated tasks for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. These tasks will include skills development, business planning, and infrastructure development.
5. The Partnership for Public Lands endorses the protected areas Accord between Pikangikum, Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi, Bloodvein and Poplar River First Nations.

6. The Partnership for Public Lands will cooperate with Pikangikum and the Ontario government to develop an agreement for a forest management regulatory system for the Whitefeather Forest to achieve the economic, social and environmental objectives of Pikangikum.
7. The Partnership for Public Lands and Pikangikum First Nation will work in cooperation to ensure that the forest management system developed for the Whitefeather Forest meets or exceeds the requirements of the Forest Stewardship Council certification program.
8. The Partnership for Public Lands and the Pikangikum people will participate in workshops at Pikangikum to examine future protected areas stewardship arrangements in the Northern Boreal Forest, starting with a cross-cultural dialogue on current protected areas management practices in Northwestern Ontario and how a new cross-cultural approach could result in culturally appropriate and sustainable protected areas management in the Whitefeather Forest.

#### **Post Tenure Period – Protected Areas Stewardship and Establishing Economic Opportunities**


9. The Partnership for Public Lands endorses the objective of Pikangikum to ensure that primary economic benefits from resource extraction and protected areas in the Whitefeather Forest area go to the Pikangikum people.
10. The Partnership for Public Lands will participate (where feasible) in the Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative in its efforts to engage the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Great Lakes Forest Research Centre and, forest industry and university partners and to carry out research supporting forestry and other livelihood pursuits in the Whitefeather Forest.

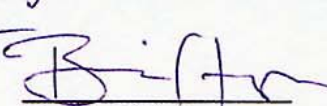
Nothing in this Agreement shall prejudice in any manner or way any of the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights of the citizens of Pikangikum First Nation or the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights of any other First Nation person.

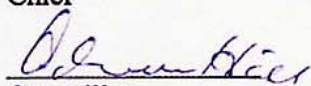
The parties signing this Agreement represent that they are familiar with, and agree to the terms and conditions set forth in this agreement and that they are duly authorized to sign the Agreement and agree and intend to be bound by the Agreement.

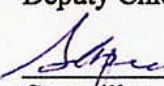
In signing this Letter of Agreement, we solemnly seek continued gifts of good guidance and strength from the Creator in our efforts to work together on developing our partnerships in the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.


Signed this 15 day of August / 2003 at Pikangikum First Nation  
For Pikangikum First Nation

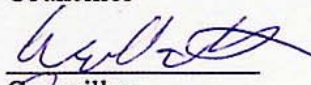
  
Chief

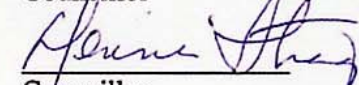
  
Deputy Chief

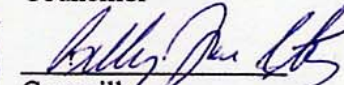
  
Councillor

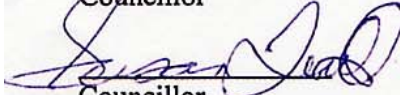
  
Councillor

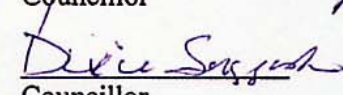
  
Councillor

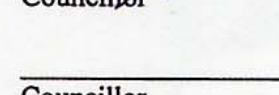
  
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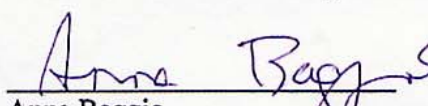
  
Councillor


  
Councillor


  
Councillor


  
Councillor

Signed this 15 day of August at Pikangikum 2003  
On behalf of the Partnership for Public Lands

  
Anna Baggio  
Director, Northern Boreal Program  
CPAWS-Wildlands League

  
Anne Bell,  
Acting Executive Director, CPAWS-Wildlands League

  
Gregor Beck  
Director, Conservation and Science, Federation of Ontario Naturalists

  
Steven Price  
Director, North America Programs, World Wildlife Fund Canada