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Guided by Our Elders

The Whitefeather Forest Initiative is guided by our Elders for our youth today and for future generations. Our Elders are the inspiration of the Initiative and gave the original mandate to develop the Whitefeather Forest Initiative in 1996. In 2000 they formed the Whitefeather Forest Initiative Steering group through which they guide the Initiative. Other Indigenous Knowledge experts from Pikangikum also participate on the Steering Group. In our Ojibway culture we honour and esteem Elders who have contributed greatly to maintaining our identity and way of life. They are referred to not just as Akiwenziwug, or elderly ones, but as Kitchi Anishinaabeg or Kitchi Aywii'ug meaning highly esteemed ones.

Some of the Elders who were with us at the beginning of planning for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative are no longer with us today. We honour and cherish the wonderful gifts of knowledge and guidance that they have contributed to the planning of the Initiative.

IN MEMORIAM:

- Oliver Hill
- Sophie Hill
- John (Jake) Kejick
- JP Kejick
- Alex Keeper
- Jimmy Keeper
- Aipi King
- Jemima King

- Joe King
- Kenneth King
- Whitehead Moose
- Charlotte Owen
- Larry Pascal
- Charlie Peters
- Ellen Peters
- Gideon Peters
- Jemima Peters
- Jimmy Peters
- Johnny Peters
- Lillian Quill
- Norman Quill
- Tom Quill Sr.
- George B. Strang
- George K. Strang
- Lucy Strang
- Marie Strang
- William Strang
- Alec Suggashie
- Fred Turtle
- Gordon Turtle
- James Turtle
- Scotty Turtle

We gratefully acknowledge the following former Chiefs of Pikangikum First Nation, who together with their Councils, have supported our work to develop the Whitefeather Forest Initiative:

- Dean Owen
 - Charlie Pascal
 - Gordon Peters
 - Paddy Peters
 - The late Louie H. Quill
 - Peter Quill
 - Amanda Sainnawap
 - Jonah Strang
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The Whitefeather Forest



The land I see when I go out into the forest, what the Creator has made for us, is all good. What the Creator has made for us is beautiful, like something that is really clean, an untouched forest. If we take care of our forest like the way the Creator made it, the forest will last forever.
Elder Norman Quill (in translation)

The Whitefeather Forest is a good land, a land in which everything is still working the way that it was in the beginning of time.

[[Keeping the Land](#), p. 21]



The Whitefeather Forest is located in Northwestern Ontario within the ancestral lands of the people of Pikangikum. It is centered on the headwaters of the Berens River Watershed. It is bounded by Woodland Caribou Provincial Park in the southwest, the Red Lake and Trout Lake Sustainable Forest License units in the south and southeast, the Albany River Watershed to the east and the Severn River Watershed to the north.

The Whitefeather Forest is a northern boreal landscape of expansive coniferous forest interspersed with numerous lakes and rivers. Under the care of our people, the Whitefeather Forest has been protected and enhanced as a rich, boreal ecosystem inhabited by black bear (Mahkwa), caribou (Atik), moose (Moos), timber wolves (Maaingan), wolverine (Kwiingwaagway), fox (Waagoosh), ducks (Shiishiib), bald eagles (Migisi), sandhill cranes (Ochiichaag) and many others.



Fire plays an essential role in the health and sustainability of the Whitefeather Forest. The fire cycle in the Forest has been enhanced by our practices in the past. The cold climate and snow cover also shape the forest. To get a closer look at our winter landscape, go to our video of [Caribou in Winter](#).

The biological diversity and abundance of the [Whitefeather Forest] Planning Area is great; Pikangikum Indigenous knowledge of the area is equally vast.
[[Keeping the Land](#), p. 21]

A Cultural Landscape



One of our Elders, Charlie Peters, has taught us that you cannot go anywhere in the Whitefeather Forest without finding our presence there. His teaching is that we are reflected in the land and the land is reflected in us.

We refer to our ancestral lands as Ahneesheenahbay ohtahkeem with the understanding that the landscape has been physically modified and given cultural meaning by Meekahncheekahmeeng paymahteeseewahch.
[[Keeping the Land](#), p. 24]



The Whitefeather Forest is an Indigenous Cultural Landscape of Pikangikum people. Since time immemorial, we have maintained the biological diversity of the landscape. In many cases we have even nurtured greater abundance and diversity on this land. Our people have achieved this through customary indigenous resource stewardship practices and management techniques supported by a rich Indigenous Knowledge tradition.



From its vast tracts of jack pine to wild rice (Manomin) fields planted by Pikangikum people, to rich muskrat marshes that were historically burned to increase food for these fur-bearing animals as well as the ducks and other animals that live there, the Whitefeather Forest cultural landscape is of international ecological significance.

The ecological richness of the Whitefeather Forest landscape is complemented by a cultural heritage legacy that includes features such as pictographs, campgrounds, portages, and canoe channels. These enhance the numerous pristine waterways that flow through the forest.

It is the intention of Pikangikum First Nation in the Whitefeather Forest Initiative to provide economic opportunities for our members while protecting the rich ecological and cultural heritage of our ancestral forests.

For us, land and people are inseparable. Our Ahneesheenahbay ohtahkeen is not merely a landscape modified by human activity but a way of relating to the land, a way of being (on the land).

[[Keeping the Land](#), p. 24]

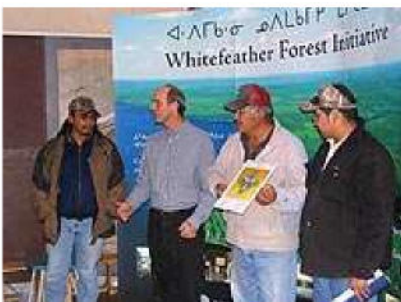
Our Land Use Strategy



We have developed a plan to carry forward our ancestral stewardship responsibilities for the lands we have occupied since time immemorial, to keep it as a land “in which everything is still working”. This strategy documents our plan for fulfilling our vision for the Whitefeather Forest which is:

A future in which Beekahncheekahmeeng paymahteeseewahch are able to maintain our ancestral stewardship responsibilities for Keeping the Land (Cheekahnahwaydahmunk Keetahkeemeenahn) for the continued survival and well-being of Pikangikum people.

[*\[Keeping the Land, p. 1\]*](#)



“Keeping the Land – A Land Use Strategy for the Whitefeather Forest and Adjacent Areas”, was produced by

Pikangikum First Nation and prepared in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. It was formally signed off at a ceremony in Pikangikum in 2006.

We are very proud of the Keeping the Land Strategy. It is the first community-based Land Use Plan that has been approved in Ontario. We are also very happy that the Government of Ontario is proud of this strategy. It shows that it is possible to work together in a respectful way.

Download a pdf of [Keeping the Land](#).

Read about the Keeping the Land [graphic](#) on the cover of our Land Use Strategy.

Customary Land Uses



As they guide the development of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative, Pikangikum Elders continue to teach that we are people of the forest. We must always cherish all living ones who live with us on our lands. We must always cherish the smallest critter to the largest moose and the smallest medicinal plant to the tallest tree.



The resource stewardship tradition of Pikangikum is based on respect. We are to respect the way the Creator made all living ones on our land and the freedom they have been given to exist on the land so they can flourish. They must continue to be free to roam over the land as the Creator made them.

Moose and caribou, birch and jackpine, muskrats and beaver, ducks and geese, sturgeon and whitefish – these and many other living ones have always given us sustenance and livelihood. Our deep relationships with all living ones on our land, is reflected in our clan system – doodemahk. There are seven clans at Pikangikum including moose and sturgeon.

In our culture, harvesting is central to maintaining our forest. If we harvest our resources in the ways taught to us by our ancestors, they give themselves to us for our survival and livelihood. If we were to stop harvesting our



resources, they would begin to disappear. This is why Pikangikum Elders say we must continue our traditions of hunting, fishing and gathering in accordance with our customs that have been handed down to us. This is our resource stewardship tradition.

Even when we have undertaken resource management activities to increase the abundance and diversity of our land we have followed this tradition. When our ancestors brought Manomin (wild rice) into our waters or when they used fire to increase food for animals, they always respected their responsibility to carry out these practices in a way that respected the freedom of the living ones they were supporting. We have continued these practices of respect to this day.

We have always relied on our land to provide for us. It is not the intention of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative to displace customary pursuits with new livelihood pursuits. These pursuits, such as trapping, hunting and fishing, and the way we engage in them, will continue to be central to our relationship to the land. We will continue to keep our forest. This is set out in our Keeping the Land strategy:

Vision for Customary Land Uses:

Maintain the practice of deeply rooted and culturally vital customary livelihood activities – including but not limited to hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering and craft making – in a manner that nurtures the cultural identity and well-being of Beekahncheekahmeeng Paymahteseewahch and supports the maintenance of an Indigenous Knowledge tradition of the land that will make a vital contribution to contemporary resource management in the Planning Area [Whitefeather Forest].

Our Stewardship Vision



Keeping the land means to receive a gift, our livelihood, the way we have lived on the land. The land helped us to be very active... I remember one day we were cutting firewood and I was looking at the trees. I just looked at those trees; every tree was created differently, so beautiful. Each one was created in its own unique way. This is why we were taught to keep the land, why we started this Initiative. Let's hold onto these gifts from the Creator. We have been richly blessed; especially the land where everything that we have been blessed with is found.

Elder Ellen Peters (in translation)



Our Elders teach us how important it is for Pikangikum First Nation people to continue to cherish our lands and all living ones – paymahteeseewahch – by following the customs we have been taught. We must continue to carry out our responsibilities of Keeping the Land – Cheekahnahwaydahmunk Keetahkeemeenahn. Keeping the Land embodies our tradition of how we live in the Whitefeather Forest.

The trees and plants, the animals and fish, and all of the living ones in the Whitefeather Forest have been made by the Creator. They are precious. The Creator has given the people of Pikangikum these resources of the Whitefeather Forest for our survival. They are for us to harvest for our livelihoods.



Our Elders direct that it is important for us to show respect for all our fellow living ones in the Whitefeather Forest. We are to do this following our customary ways. This is part of a living tradition that stretches back to ancient times.



Our Elders say that we must continue to hunt animals in order to show them respect. If we do not show them respect by hunting them and using what they give us for our livelihood and survival, the animals will go away. We must find ways to continue to live in the Whitefeather Forest today so that this practice of respect for the land can continue.



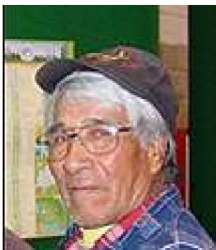
When we used to work our traplines and harvest an abundance the animals would return again. This was the Creator's way of looking favourably upon us. But now don't harvest so many caribou and there is no increase in their numbers, only a decline. I often think when the Creator looked favourably on us we were given a good harvest. Why should the Creator give us more caribou when we don't harvest so

much anymore?
Elder Solomon Turtle (in translation)

Our Elders say we must show respect for all living ones in the way we harvest from the land. For example, we are taught to regulate our harvest in a way that ensures the living ones will continue to thrive. Sometimes this gets translated as taking only what we need from the land. At other times this gets translated as making sure we leave enough of the living ones so they can reproduce. We are also taught to respect all living ones by making use of everything we harvest from them. Nothing is to be hoarded and nothing is to be wasted. This approach is guiding our planning for new economic activities in the Whitefeather Forest.



My grand father, Neekeekohneenee, taught to me about the traditional process we should always remember: cheewahkwahkuhnuhwahch. This means that if you are hunting three animals you will let one live, let that one continue to make its tracks on the earth. That way you will always leave animals on the earth, for them to continue on.
Elder Jake P. Quill (in translation)



We don't want the term cheemahnahcheetooyaun to be misunderstood as wanting to keep something because it is valuable to you. It will just sit there and sit there like something valuable in your living room. We want to work with the animals and benefit from what is on the land.
Elder Matthew Strang (in translation)

Interest in our stewardship vision for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is international in scope. For example, the Swiss organization [Economic Development for Amerindians](#) has created an information clearing-house web site on aboriginal economic issues which includes information on the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.

We are networking with organizations like EDAI to promote understanding of indigenous approaches to economic, cultural well-being, and stewardship of the land. These networks also help us to expand our business linkages and partnerships.

Our Stewardship Planning Process



Background

[Keeping the Land](#) is the result of a planning process that began in 1996 when Pikangikum First Nation Elders gave our leaders a mandate to pursue a commercial forestry opportunity in the Whitefeather Forest. They wanted this opportunity to be led by our First Nation. Even before this time, our Elders had already wisely anticipated the interest that would grow in relation to our ancestral forest. For example, Pikangikum Elders taught a prophecy that had been handed down to them by our ancestors that there would come a time when a person walking through our forest would see money hanging from the trees.

In 1999, members of the Forest Industry, the environmental organizations belonging to the Partnership for Public Lands, and the Ministry of Natural Resources successfully negotiated an historic [Accord](#) identifying 2.4 million hectares of parks and protected areas within the commercial forest region of Ontario to the south of us. The Ontario Forest Accord set out the conditions supporting this development. They included agreement by the parties to support the orderly development of commercial forest management in far northern Ontario, where the Whitefeather Forest is located. Our early work on the Whitefeather Forest Initiative allowed us to set the direction for establishing a commercial forestry opportunity in the Whitefeather Forest in accordance with our Keeping the Land stewardship tradition. The approval of the strategy represents the achievement of a major milestone leading to the acquisition by Pikangikum of forest management tenure for the Whitefeather Forest.

Roles and Responsibilities



Our planning work continues as we go forward to implement the Keeping the Land Strategy. Pikangikum Elders, through the Whitefeather Forest Steering Group, guide all of our planning. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources is Pikangikum's main planning partner for the Whitefeather Forest. In particular, support is provided by the Red Lake District Office and through the [Northern Boreal Initiative supporting policy framework](#).

Planning for the Land Use Strategy

The planning activities to develop the Land Use Strategy included development of the planning partnership with



the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, dialogue with many interested parties, development of an extensive digital Indigenous Knowledge data set, and development of a comprehensive Vegetation Resource Inventory.

Development of the digital Indigenous Knowledge data set was undertaken by Pikangikum community members. It involved research with Elders and others knowledgeable of the land, along with GIS data management. Geodatabase software was developed specifically for our IK dataset. This in turn involved training and education of youth who participated in this work. This work has resulted in maps which are now widely acclaimed. Our maps have been featured in regional media and in the ESRI Map Book gallery.



The Vegetation Resource Inventory included training and education of youth who were involved in the field programs associated with development of the VRI.

Together with the Ministry of Natural Resources we hosted three Open House dialogues, held in Pikangikum and Red Lake, for the general public.

Our dialogue and partnership building with interested parties included neighbouring First Nations, representatives of the regional resource industry (forestry, tourism, minerals), the environmental community, and the municipality of Red Lake.

In 2003 we signed a [partnership agreement with the Partnership for Public Lands](#). The agreement was signed in Pikangikum at the end of a Boreal Rendezvous trip. The Whitefeather Forest Initiative was featured in a book about this and other trips called "Rendezvous with the Wild".

Being “in the driver’s seat” – Community-Based Land Use Planning

Our Community-Based Planning process means that Pikangikum First Nation is “in the driver’s seat” for planning for the Whitefeather Forest.

There is no single term in Ojibway that easily expresses the phrase “in the driver’s seat” that we have adopted from English. Following our traditional leadership norms, when a head trapper (kahohkiimahwich) walks on the land the other people follow behind. By following in this way they are deferring to that Elder’s knowledge of the land, their personal experience with the land.



Being kahohkiimahwich was an important position since that person did all the planning for the group living in that area. The families in that area would look up to that individual, usually an elder man, and would be under his guidance. Kahohkiimahwich not only leads the trapping and hunting but provides spiritual guidance and advice, including medicinal knowledge. Kahohkiimahwich has all these responsibilities as spokesperson for the group.

It is in this way that we see Pikangikum being “in the driver’s seat.” We are taking the lead for decision making on the lands that we have been raised on, that we know most intimately; these are the ancestral lands that we are responsible for ensuring continue to provide for our people.

[[Keeping the Land – A Land Use Strategy](#), p. 4]

Our planning process takes account of the need to harmonize community-based land use considerations with the larger landscape scale responsibilities of Ontario.

...community-scale planning recommendations make substantial contributions to landscape-scale objectives. This process respects that further landscape scale planning must take place in other processes, undertaken by other First Nations and OMNR. Reference to landscape-scale interest, geography, considerations and results can be found throughout the Strategy.

[[Keeping the Land – A Land Use Strategy](#), p. 15]

MNR Pride Award

In 2007 the Steering Group of Elders, staff of Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation, and members of our Technical Team, together with staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources who worked with us on our planning were awarded the MNR Gold P.R.I.D.E. award for outstanding achievement in our Community-Based Land Use Planning Process.

Next Steps in Achieving Our Stewardship Objectives

We continue to work in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and others to achieve our stewardship goals for the Whitefeather Forest.

Currently this work involves:

- Forest Management Planning
- Protected Areas Management Planning
- Related business planning
- Developing arrangements to implement these plans

We intend to complete these tasks by the end of 2012.

Enterprise Vision



We don't want to just keep the land, we want to be able to use what is on the land, to our benefit. That is why we are in this planning process, to plan what we intend to do on the land.
Elder Whitehead Moose (in translation)

At its heart, the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is seeking to create new livelihood opportunities for the youth of Pikangikum based on the abundant resources in the Whitefeather Forest. We are doing this within our customary stewardship framework guided by the vision and practices of Pikangikum people.

[Keeping the Land](#) identified the following principles that will govern how livelihood opportunities will be developed in the Whitefeather Forest.

- Resource based livelihood opportunities will be pursued in a manner that respects the teachings and wisdom of our ancestors that ensure the continued abundance of life on our ancestral lands.
- Pikangikum's pursuit of new livelihood opportunities will be harmonized with customary and existing uses through the implementation of strategic direction and subsequent resource management planning.

- New land uses described in this Land Use Strategy will provide primary benefits to Beekahncheekahmeeng paymahteeseewahch, thereby contributing to the maintenance of a strong culture and renewing a healthy economy.

[[Keeping the Land](#), page 18]

The Keeping the Land strategy provides direction to support the following specific objectives related to creation of livelihood opportunities.

- To support existing and identify new livelihood opportunities (ohtahcgeeeetesooweenahn) in commercial forestry, non-timber forest products, commercial fisheries, recreation and tourism, protected areas management, and the mineral sector.
- To identify land use areas for economic development opportunities that provide primary benefits for Pikangikum First Nation members.
- To secure the best-end and highest value use of resources.

[[Keeping the Land](#), page 19]

Enterprise



We started this Initiative because of the land. The people of Pikangikum have lived for a long time and this is how we survived ... We started this for our youth. For my part, I am now old so I need to plan for their future.
Elder Solomon Turtle (in translation)

Since time immemorial, the Whitefeather Forest has provided economic opportunities for the people of Pikangikum. We have always sought to add value to what the forest has given to us. We have had economic partnerships for generations. The Ojibway word for trading is Odaawaywin and the name of the City of Ottawa comes from this word.



Over the generations, Pikangikum people have adapted to challenges as changes have occurred in the larger economy and within our community. In doing this we have remained faithful to our responsibilities as Keepers of the Whitefeather Forest.

Once again Pikangikum people are facing new challenges for our people. Our population is rebounding and is growing dramatically. Our on-reserve population is over 2,400, with a large majority under the age of 30. At the same time, many of our customary land-based livelihood opportunities have been declining with changing economic times. For example, in the late 1980's our fur economy collapsed as the market for furs virtually disappeared. The commercial market for freshwater fish, another important source of livelihood, also declined at this time.



In response to our changing economic circumstances we began the work of creating new economic opportunities for our people from the forest. Our Elders say our youth need hope through new livelihood opportunities. This is why they say they are working so hard on the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.

Working in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources we developed a land use strategy – [Keeping the Land](#) – which was completed and jointly approved by Pikangikum and Ontario in 2006. This Strategy provides direction and guidance for developing new enterprise opportunities in forestry, tourism, minerals, and Non-Timber Forest Products. We have established strong business partnerships and we are undertaking business planning to develop these new enterprise opportunities.

At this time, planning for both stewardship and enterprise opportunities is being undertaken by [Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority](#), owned by Pikangikum First Nation.

The development of relationships and partnerships is central to our enterprise strategy. Currently we are working with [FPInnovations](#), Canada's premier forestry research and innovation organization. We also continue to pursue strategic partnerships which will advance our enterprise strategy.

Interest in our economic vision for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is international in scope. For example, the Swiss organization [Economic Development for Amerindians](#) has created an information clearing-house web site on aboriginal economic issues which includes a feature page on the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.

We are networking with organizations like EDAI to promote understanding of indigenous approaches to economic, cultural well-being, and stewardship of the land. These networks also help us to expand our business linkages and partnerships.

To learn more about our enterprise vision and goals for the Whitefeather Forest and related enterprise opportunities, follow the links below.

Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority



In 1996 the Pikangikum Elders made the decision to pursue the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. After two years of working through the Economic Development office at the First Nation, it was decided to establish a separate corporation to undertake the Initiative planning work. In 1998, Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation was established to support the sustained focus that would be required to acquire a Sustainable Forest License. As the late Chief Louis Quill noted at the time: ‘Band Councils come and go. Our Elders are our decision-makers. They will guide the planning of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.’ This separation of day-to-day politics from planning related to the Initiative and the intense guiding role played by Pikangikum Elders was critical to sustaining momentum during the seventeen years that was required to acquire the Sustainable Forest License for the Whitefeather Forest.

The forestry planning mandate of Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation was fulfilled in May 2013 with the issuance of a Sustainable Forest License (SFL) for the Whitefeather Forest. The SFL was issued to a new corporation, the Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority.

During the period of the development of the inaugural Forest Management Plan for the Whitefeather Forest, a process to restructure the Initiative for enterprise and ongoing resource management planning (to implement the Keeping the Land approach) was carried out. A Limited Partnership corporate structure has been established for enterprise. The Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority was established as a non-profit corporation to hold the Sustainable Forest License on behalf of the people of Pikangikum and to enter into future resource stewardship partnerships with the Government of Ontario and other potential partners. Pikangikum Elders are maintaining their core governance role in this new arrangement.

Pursuant to its Articles of Incorporation, the Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority is already active in fulfilling planning responsibilities in a number of areas including:

- Forest Management Planning (including GIS)
- Dedicated Protected Areas Management Planning
- Leading Research and Development projects to achieve the best-end and highest-value uses of resources including forest products Value Chain Optimization Research and Development projects
- Strategic Access planning to support resource-based enterprise in the Whitefeather Forest
- Dialogue with outside parties
- Management of technical services related to planning

Although the Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority is primarily focused on tasks related to the Whitefeather Forest Initiative, it can provide services to others in the following areas:

- Sharing skills, knowledge and expertise related to Community-Based Land Use Planning
- Translation and transcription related to resource issues
- Co-ordination and support for research activities related to the Whitefeather Forest Initiative

Contact Information

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Commercial Forestry



This is my desire, to work in the area of forestry, because we have good timber in our forest. If we go through with our planning process to do forestry we can create employment for our people in the making of lumber. If we are successful in obtaining our forestry [forestry tenure] we will achieve a landmark that will help us in our future forestry endeavours.
The late Elder George K. Strang (in translation)

Vision for Commercial Forestry:

Internationally acclaimed community-based forest management supporting commercial forestry partnerships led by our First Nation and guided by our Elders, where the forest as an indigenous cultural landscape with its cover, biodiversity, and remoteness, is maintained over time to sustain Pikangikum culture and environment and renew our economy. Forestry in the Planning Area will provide primary economic benefits to Beekahncheekahmeeng paymahteeseewahch and will contribute to the forest economy of Ontario.

Determining New Enterprise Opportunities in Commercial Forestry:

It is our intention to sustain the Whitefeather Forest and to harmonize customary land uses with new opportunities such as commercial forestry. Our resource stewardship tradition is providing the foundation for this

as we have always harmonized our customary activities in the Whitefeather to the cycles of the forest. For example, when our conifer forests become old and ready for renewal, lightning comes to the land to bring fire.



The old forest is killed and the new forest is born. When the renewed forest is young, many animals like pine marten and caribou go away. We have always harmonized our trapping to account for this renewal. This is what we will do when we start new livelihood activities including forestry in the Whitefeather Forest.

It is also our intention to design new uses, such as commercial forestry, in a way that is consistent with our resource stewardship tradition. This applies from access to harvesting to renewing the forest. Our Elders teach that they have techniques which we will be able to use to achieve this. They will guide us to renew the forest respecting the way the Creator made the timber to live. Our Elders have many important teachings about the relationship of Thunderbird Fire to the life cycle of the Whitefeather Forest that we will be able to use in our forest management practices. Our customary resource stewardship practices will be joined with the best of non-native forest management practices to achieve this.



Our planning for forestry has involved visits to forestry operations of other First Nations to learn about their approaches. This included visits to Noopimiiing Anokeewin, a woodlands company in our region located at Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation; Tanizul Timber, operated by the Tl'azt'en Nation in British Columbia; and [Menominee Tribal Enterprises](#), owned and operated by the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. An award winning article on this trip was published in Wawatay News.

In planning for specific forestry-based manufacturing opportunities in the Whitefeather Forest we have taken account of three factors. First is our goal and urgent need to provide livelihood opportunities for our youth. Second is our direction from Pikangikum Elders to secure the highest value and best-end use of the timber in the Whitefeather Forest. Third is the current forestry business climate in the larger region where traditional forestry activities such as pulp and paper are in a state of transition. This transition provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate the potential of value-added forestry in the Whitefeather Forest.

In this context we have decided to develop forestry enterprises based on the production of specialized value-added goods which take advantage of the unique strengths of the timber growing in our northern Whitefeather Forest.

Non-Timber Forest Products



Pikangikum people have a long tradition of harvesting Non-Timber Forest Products for food, medicine and construction of domestic and trade goods.

Vision for Non-Timber Forest Products:

The renewal of the economic value of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for Beekahncheekahmeeng paymahteeseewahch, supported by a rich Indigenous Knowledge tradition concerning the significance and appropriate uses of NTFPs, where the forest, its diversity, cover and resource abundance is maintained over time. NTFPs harvested and processed from the Whitefeather Forest will provide primary economic benefits to Beekahncheekahmeeng paymahteeseewahch and will contribute to the forest economy of Ontario in a manner that respects the northern boreal forest character of the landscape.

Determining New Enterprise Opportunities in Non-timber Forest Products:

Foods like blueberries, which are abundant in the Whitefeather Forest, have healing powers. They can nourish not only Pikangikum people but also people who live in large cities.



For many years, Elders from Pikangikum such as the late Maggie Black made a good livelihood selling birch bark baskets in Red Lake. The evidence of her harvesting can still be seen in the

Whitefeather Forest. There are other members in Pikangikum who can still make birch bark canoes. We believe that many of the tourists who will visit the Whitefeather Forest in the future will be very eager to purchase these value-added NTFP's.

It is the intention of Pikangikum to harvest and process value-added Non-Timber Forest Products in a way that is rooted in our customary uses of these products and adds the value of these customary uses to the products. The community will consider commercialization of products already produced by the community (e.g. berries, teas, wild rice, leathers and furs) and new products not customarily produced.

Minerals



At present there is no exploration for minerals in the Whitefeather Forest and there have never been any operating mines in the Forest. Pikangikum is in dialogue regarding mineral sector opportunities with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines which is responsible for regulation of mineral exploration in Ontario. At this time Pikangikum does not have an established relationship with the mineral industry.

Vision for Minerals:

Activities in the mineral sector carried out within the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area will be acclaimed for: their protection of the boreal forest; the spirit of collaboration in which they are carried out; the environmental benefits that are realized through partnerships between the Indigenous Knowledge tradition of Pikangikum and the larger society; the respect for the culture of Beekahncheekahmeeng paymahteeseewahch; their contribution to the economic renewal of Pikangikum and the economic health of Ontario.

Determining New Enterprise Opportunities in Minerals:



We believe that mineral sector activities can provide substantial enterprise opportunities for Pikangikum First Nation and job opportunities for our youth. Pikangikum Elders have stated that there are mineral opportunities in the Whitefeather Forest in addition to the neighbouring region, and that these can be developed in a manner that sustains the forest.

Pikangikum First Nation is taking a pro-active approach to involvement in the mineral sector. We will continue our dialogue with Ontario and the mineral industry to gain benefits and contribute to a vibrant minerals industry in Ontario.

Best Practices guidelines for mineral exploration in the Whitefeather Forest are being developed through a dialogue between the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Pikangikum. These guidelines will stress the cultural and ecological integrity of the Whitefeather Forest and the need for collaboration between the community of Pikangikum and the mineral exploration industry.

Tourism



There are currently fifty-three tourism operations in the Whitefeather Forest. Most of these operations are remote and designed to appeal to the sport fishing and hunting market. These operations include ten outpost camps and a campground operated by Pikangikum members.

Vision for Tourism:

World-class tourism opportunities, including the development of new internationally attractive eco-cultural tourism opportunities and partnerships, that feature and support the protection of the Planning Area as an indigenous cultural landscape and are part of the northern boreal forest, which sustain the culture of Beekahncheekahmeeng aymahteeseewahch and contribute to their economic renewal.

Determining New Enterprise Opportunities in Tourism:

We believe that our cultural landscape and our culture provide the best basis for new tourism opportunities. As an example, the Whitefeather Forest has many landforms that are seen as provincially significant to Ontario.



These landforms, such as the Backbone of the Land, also have deep significance to our people. There are ancient and powerful teachings and stories about their significance which have value

today, including for people who live in large cities. These stories can help visitors gain a profound appreciation for the Whitefeather Forest. Pikangikum Elders believe that there are many potential visitors near and far who would be very interested to receive these teachings.

It is our intention to develop renowned eco-cultural touring in the Whitefeather Forest.

Research



Like any other valuable body of knowledge, the Indigenous Knowledge of Pikangikum embodies its own research tradition. From ancient times to the present, research has supported the development of knowledge among Pikangikum people. It is the discovered knowledge of the forest that made the birch bark canoe possible. It is the discovered knowledge of the forest that has given us our Ojibway medicines.

The Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation initiates and undertakes applied research, bringing together our research tradition with that of our partners, to support planning in the areas of stewardship and enterprise



development. We also attend conferences to present and discuss ideas of forest stewardship and cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation.

In addition, Pikangikum First Nation has entered into a Research Co-operative agreement with various educational institutions wishing to undertake research related to the Forest and the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.

To learn more about research in the Whitefeather Forest, follow the links below.

Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation



In the Whitefeather Forest Initiative we are bringing our research tradition together with the research traditions of western science to develop new knowledge in support of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. We undertook extensive community-based research for the Indigenous Knowledge data set used in the development of [Keeping the Land](#), our land use strategy. The Ministry of Natural Resources joined with our Elders in a consensus that our planning process should be information led bringing together the best of our respective knowledge traditions. As well we have undertaken community-based research related to specific topics to support our planning efforts. This has included, for example, research related to species at risk.

Continuing research projects will extend from the use of fire in forest management, to developing more knowledge of how caribou live in the Whitefeather Forest, to learning more about the commercial potential of our forest. This knowledge will be used to continue our tradition of sustaining the Forest.



We also are interested sharing our research and knowledge at conferences and other meetings. For example, in 2004 the Whitefeather Forest Initiative was presented at the inaugural Sharing Indigenous Wisdom conference of the [Sustainable Development Institute](#) of the [College of the Menominee Nation](#). The paper we presented was published in the volume of the proceedings of the 2004 conference. In 2007, this time with research partners, we presented new research from the Whitefeather Forest Initiative at the Second Sharing Indigenous Wisdom conference.

The following research products from Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation are available on this site:

- [Background – Caribou Conservation](#)
 - [Indigenous Knowledge & Research on Woodland Caribou](#)
-

Whitefeather Forest Research Co-operative



We approach our research partnerships using the principle of balance. Our Indigenous Knowledge tradition should be recognized and support research to the same extent as the knowledge and research traditions of our partners.



There is much power in our Ojibway knowledge tradition that is only now becoming acknowledged by the larger society. While many of our ways of gaining understanding and perception are unique to our Ojibway culture, what they allow us to learn can be understood by people of other cultures. Recently, we carried out a research project with archaeologists from Lakehead University in the Whitefeather Forest. Our Elders knowledge of the location heritage sites led to a successful joint project. The researchers were impressed with the knowledge of our Elders about these sites.

This heritage research was undertaken within the framework established by the Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative. In this project Pikangikum partnered with Lakehead University and Ontario Parks.



The [Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative agreement](#) was signed in 2004 when Pikangikum Elders, leaders and other community members gathered for a feast and celebration with our research partners. The WFRCA Agreement embodies the bringing together of different knowledge traditions to support research that in turn supports sustaining the land and the development of new knowledge for the benefit of humanity. Membership in the Whitefeather Forest Research Co-operative is based on agreement on protocols for research in the Whitefeather Forest.

Signatories to the agreement who have recently undertaken or are actively involved in research in the Whitefeather Forest include:

- [The Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba](#) – various projects
- [Department of Anthropology, Lakehead University](#) – heritage research
- [Ontario Parks](#)

In addition to heritage research, members of the Co-operative have been involved in research on a variety of topics including species at risk and traditional fire and forest management.

The following research products from Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation are available on this site:

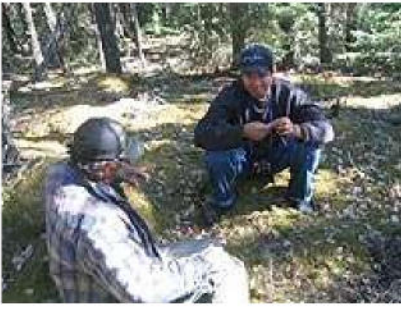
- a [research note](#) published by the Sustainable Forest Management Network
 - two short video clips – [Caribou in Winter](#) and [Caribou Calving Bed](#)
-

Our Teaching and Training Vision



The Indigenous Knowledge tradition of Pikangikum is a living tradition. It is supported by our Ojibway language which is still strong among our people. Our Elders want our youth to keep their ancestral language. The Elders are also keen to have our youth stay connected to the vital link between our language and our ancestral lands through the livelihood opportunities that are being created through the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.

As we develop new opportunities in the Whitefeather Forest and develop and adopt new tools to support these opportunities, the effective training of our youth will become critical. We intend to ensure that our Ojibway training and teaching customs will be harmonized with Western methods to nurture the best possible learning contexts for Pikangikum youth. Our tradition of applied experiential learning will be harmonized with the contemporary use of the classroom. Our Elders and land experts will continue to teach young apprentices our knowledge of the land through going out on the land. This will include passing on our tradition of Keeping the Land. Through these efforts, our youth will continue to be able to have the opportunity to gain deep understandings of the land rooted in our Ojibway way of life.



For example, all of our youth who train in forestry skills and management – from harvesting to renewal – will spend much time in the forest with our Elders and acknowledged forest experts. Their forest-based learning context will include learning our knowledge tradition using our language. This will be harmonized with teaching of the best of Western Knowledge.

Our goal is embodied in what Elder Norman Quill told a gathering of non-native academics and researchers at a conference in 2004. Norman said that our young people will continue to learn all of our customary knowledge tradition. At the same time, they will also learn everything that the scholars at the conference knew. In time, Pikangikum young people will become the teachers who will teach the following generations the knowledge of both of these traditions.

Training



I want to emphasise the teachings that our parents have taught us. This is a continuing knowledge passed down from one generation to the next. We are elders now and continue to teach. This is what 'keeping the land' is all about. This is why we want to build the teaching centre — to continue to teach our youth at that centre. Elder Lucy Strang (in translation)

The primary goal of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is to provide a range of enterprise and employment opportunities for the members of Pikangikum within the framework of our way of Keeping the Land.



Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation has provided on the job training opportunities to its staff since its inception in the areas of GIS and related mapping skills, community research, fieldwork, and office administration.

In 2005 Pikangikum developed a comprehensive training strategy to prepare our youth to meet the opportunities that will result from the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. In 2007/08 Pikangikum received approval from Human Resources and Social Development Canada under the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Program to support the Whitefeather Forest Training Program. In 2008 the Whitefeather Forest Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships Corporation was created to bring all of the training partners together to govern the training program. The program itself was launched in January 2009 and ended in March 2012. To learn more about this program and its achievements visit the [Whitefeather Forest Training Program – ASEP](#).

In 2009 Pikangikum received support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for a project to incorporate the Indigenous Knowledge and customary stewardship tradition of Pikangikum people into the Forest Eco-System Management diploma program being delivered in the Whitefeather Forest Training Program. This project means that Elders' and other bush experts' teachings are now being incorporated into training our young people to be forest resource managers. This program ended in December 2013. To learn more about this program and its achievements visit the [Indigenous Knowledge Curriculum Project](#).

Efforts also continue to develop the Teaching Centre envisioned by Elder Lucy Strang as a way of responding to what is, even now, a pressing need for teaching and training infrastructure. This Centre will be a place where youth from Pikangikum and other First Nations communities can learn about keeping the land from the Elders who are the keepers of our knowledge tradition and from the western tradition of our partners.

To learn more about our teaching and training efforts, follow the links below.

Whitefeather Forest Training Program – ASEP



Present Graduates

Planning for capacity development to prepare for opportunities in the Whitefeather Forest Initiative has been integral to the Initiative from the beginning. Plans for training to prepare for opportunities in the Whitefeather Forest Initiative started in earnest in 2004, with the development of the first Five Year Training Plan for the Initiative. This plan was subsequently updated in 2007.

In 2008 the Human Resource and Social Development Canada Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Program agreed to fund a major training program to prepare individuals for jobs in or near to the Whitefeather

Forest – the Whitefeather Forest Training Initiative. In September of 2008 the Whitefeather Forest Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships Corporation was formed to manage the program.

The Training Initiative was launched at a Career Fair held in Pikangikum First Nation in January 2009. Confederation College provided assessment and training delivery services to the Initiative. Goldcorp also provided training delivery services. In February of 2009 staff was hired to run the program, and in March of 2009 program delivery commenced with intake and assessments. The Initiative formally ended in March 2012.

The program provided skills, education, and work opportunities for a significant number of trainees in Pikangikum First Nation. A total of 167 individuals entered the program and received various types of training and skills development support. Even those who did not complete the programs they entered will have achieved skills and be better aware of job opportunities in the context of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative as well as locally and regionally. A total of 48 individuals completed upgrading and/or training programs. This includes five of the students who have completed the requirements to receive a diploma in the Forest Ecosystem Management program and two who received certificates in the Office Administration Program.



Future Graduate

In April 2012 there was a formal convocation ceremony for individuals who completed a college certificate or diploma program, namely the College Access and the Office Administration courses. This was the first ever convocation held by Confederation College at a First Nation. As well, there will be a convocation ceremony for individuals who complete the Forest Eco-System Management program.

We would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the partners in the Training Initiative:

- [Canadian Forest Service](#)
- [Confederation College](#)
- [Goldcorp, Red Lake Gold Mines](#)
- [Human Resources and Social Development Canada](#)
- [Northern Nishnawbe Education Council](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources](#)
- [Ontario Parks](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities](#)
- [Ontario Provincial Police](#)
- Pikangikum First Nation
- [Pikangikum Education Authority](#)
- Pikangikum Welfare Office
- Pikangikum Health Authority
- [Sioux Lookout Area Aboriginal Management Board](#)
- Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation

- Whitefeather Forest Initiative Steering Group

Kitchi Miigwetch!

Indigenous Knowledge Curriculum Project



Forest Tour July 2012, Standing left to right, Jimmy Keeper (head trapper and WFI Steering Group member), Elder Tom Quill Sr., Timmy K Strang (Community Facilitator), Murray Quill (student), Aaron Palmer (Instructor and WFI Forester). Kneeling left to right, students Robert King, Max King, and Darrell Keeper.

Since its inception the Whitefeather Forest Initiative has stayed focused on a path towards economic renewal rooted in customary stewardship of the land. This approach is reflected in the precedent-setting *Keeping the*

Land strategy (completed in 2006), the inaugural Forest Management Plan (approved in 2012), the Dedicated Protected Areas Management Plan (to be completed in 2014), and in revisions to Ontario's Forest Management Planning Manual that now includes direction (Part F) regarding the role of Pikangikum Elders and Indigenous Knowledge in planning specific to the Whitefeather Forest.

All of these precedent-setting planning achievements lay the basis for the incorporation of Pikangikum customary Indigenous Knowledge and resource stewardship into economic developments in the Whitefeather Forest. At the same time, it was always understood that a way would have to be found to ensure that future generations involved in enterprise undertakings based on the Whitefeather Forest, understand and are able to implement the Indigenous Knowledge and customary stewardship approach of their Elders and other bush experts.

The delivery of the Forest Ecosystem Management diploma program in the Whitefeather Forest Training Initiative presented the first opportunity to both train the next generation of resource managers for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative and to ensure that they learned both the Western Science approach to resource management and the Pikangikum customary approach to resource management based on the Indigenous Knowledge of Pikangikum people.



Students Valerie King, and Max King

A project was developed with [Confederation College](#) to enable the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in the Forest Ecosystem Management program based on the [Generative Curriculum](#) approach developed by Drs. Jessica Ball and Alan Pence of the University of Victoria in partnership with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council for training childcare workers. In 2009 the [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#) agreed to provide support for the project under its Future Fund program. Additional support was provided by Pikangikum First Nation, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, and Ontario Parks.

Implementation of the project began with delivery of the Forest Ecosystem Management program in Pikangikum in August 2011. It included involvement of Elders and other bush experts in the classroom, in forest seminars, and in the co-op placements of the students following classroom delivery.

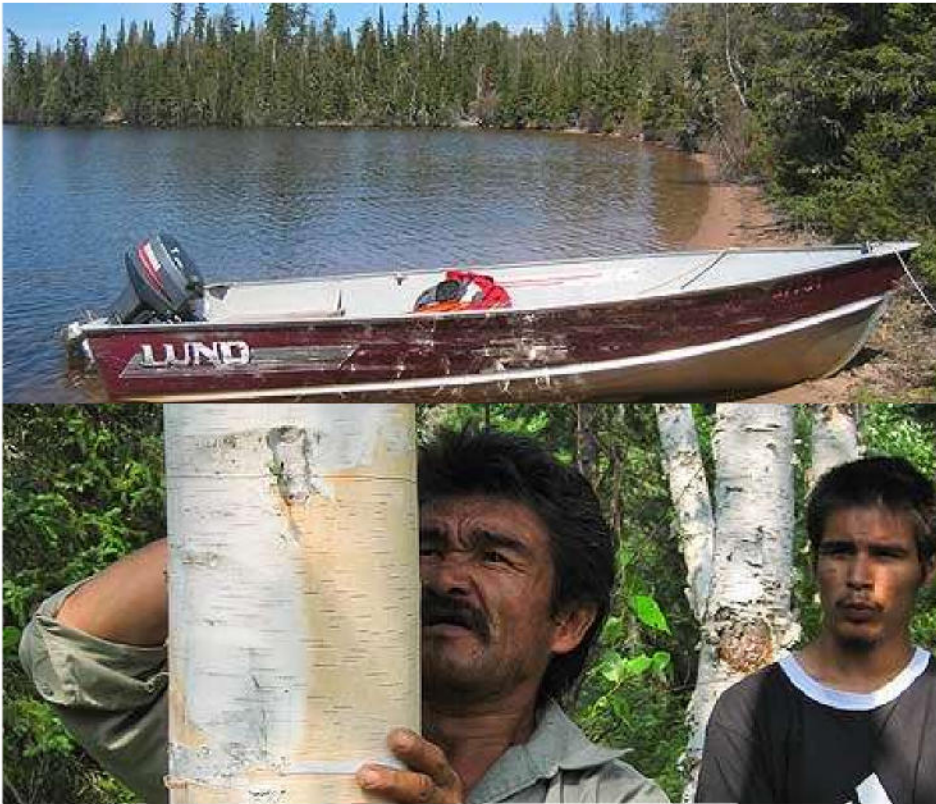
For more information about this program see the attached [Indigenous Knowledge Curriculum Project Report](#). For further information please [contact Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority](#).

The Whitefeather Forest Initiative, and in particular the Elders and bush experts of the Whitefeather Forest Steering Group would like to thank the following for their contribution to our project :

- Pikangikum First Nation
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Confederation College
- [Dr. Jessica Ball](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

- Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs
 - Whitefeather Forest ASEP Corporation
 - Dr. Anita Olsen Harper
 - [Johnston Research Inc.](#)
-

UNESCO World Heritage Site Project



Manomin planted in the Whitefeather Forest by the late Moses Keeper

Early on in the Whitefeather Forest Initiative planning process Pikangikum Elders considered how they might be able to secure livelihood from areas in the Whitefeather Forest that would be excluded from commercial forestry, minerals and hydroelectric development and set aside as Cheemuhnuhcheecheekuhtaykeen (Dedicated Protected Areas) through an innovative, culturally appropriate partnership with Ontario. This consideration took place in light of the historical experience of the Elders in relation to park development. The Elders considered various designations that could increase the potential to celebrate and benefit from the relationships of Pikangikum people to the Whitefeather Forest. Our Elders were especially keen to support celebrating generations of work

on the land to nurture resource abundance and diversity by Pikangikum people such as the propagation of Manomin (wild rice).



As a result of their deliberations our Elders embraced a strategy to initiate and pursue a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) designation with Whitefeather Forest Cheemuhnuhcheecheekuhtaykeen. Understanding that a designation at a larger scale could increase the potential of achieving UNESCO designation, our Elders then guided us as we went downstream to our First Nation relatives and neighbours to ask them if they were interested in such a project. The Elders then guided the dialogue about this opportunity with our neighbouring First Nations.

At a ceremony held in Pikangikum in April 2002 our First Nation signed an [Accord with three other First Nations](#) – Little Grand Rapids First Nation, Pauingassi First Nation and Poplar River First Nation – to guide our partnership to pursue World Heritage Site designation. Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation sponsored the development and drafting of the Accord. This partnership grew to include the Governments of Ontario and Manitoba. Our participation in the larger partnership continues to be guided by our Elders.

In April of 2004 the Government of Canada placed our partnership Planning Area on its [Updated Tentative List of World Heritage Sites](#). The partnership involved subsequently named the project, [Pimachiowin Aki](#), and created a non-profit corporation to coordinate the effort to achieve World Heritage designation.

Regrettably, subsequent developments necessitated the withdrawal of Pikangikum First Nation from the project and the partnership. This followed urgent deliberations in Pikangikum after the public release of documents in the UNESCO World Heritage web site.

Contact



We are an arms-length corporation headquartered in Pikangikum. Outreach to Whitefeather should be directed to our Red Lake sub office.

- **Head Office**
Pikangikum First Nation
Pikangikum, ON POV 2L0
- **Red Lake Office**
P.O.Box 422
138 Howey St.
Red Lake, ON POV 2M0
Tel: (807) 727-3320
- Email: office [at] whitefeatherforest.ca

Supporting Partners



We have developed strong partnerships with a number of agencies and organizations that have provided extensive support to our efforts. They include:

- [Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada](#)
- [Canadian Forest Service, Aboriginal Forestry Initiative](#)
- [Environment Canada, Aboriginal Funds for Species at Risk](#)
- [FedNor, Industry Canada](#)
- [Fisheries and Oceans Canada](#)
- [Human Resources and Skills Development Canada](#)
- [Independent First Nations Alliance](#)
- [Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation](#)
- [Ministry of Natural Resources](#)
- [Ministry of Northern Development and Mines](#)
- [Natural Resources Canada](#)
- [Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation](#)
- [Ontario Living Legacy Trust](#)
- [Ontario Parks](#)
- [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#)
- [Sioux Lookout Area Aboriginal Management Board](#)

Without their support, our work would not have been possible.

Kitchi miigwetch

Photo Gallery



WHITEFEATHER FOREST



[Training](#)

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The Whitefeather Forest lies within ancestral lands of the people of [Pikangikum First Nation](#) in Northwestern Ontario, Canada.

- Read more about [The Whitefeather Forest](#)

Archive Documents



[Building Cross-Cultural Understanding of the Pikangikum Cultural Landscape](#)

Wednesday, February 19th, 2014

[Forest Management Plan](#)

Monday, December 23rd, 2013

The 2012 Forest Management Plan for the Whitefeather Forest represents the culmination of 16 years of dialogue, planning, and collaboration between Pikangikum First Nation, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation.

[Indigenous Knowledge and Research on Woodland Caribou](#)

Friday, August 29th, 2008

[Background Document on Woodland Caribou Conservation](#)

Friday, August 29th, 2008

[Letter of Agreement between Pikangikum and the Partnership for Public Lands](#)

Friday, August 29th, 2008

[Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative](#)

Wednesday, August 20th, 2008

Letter of Agreement.

[Protected Areas Accord](#)

Wednesday, August 20th, 2008

To Establish a World Heritage Site.

The Whitefeather Forest lies within ancestral lands of the people of [Pikangikum First Nation](#) in Northwestern Ontario, Canada.

- Read more about [The Whitefeather Forest](#)
-