

Timiskaming, Wolf Lake and Eagle Village First Nations announce Statement of Assertion of Aboriginal Rights and Title

January 23, 2013

(*Ottawa, ON*) - The Algonquin communities of Timiskaming, Wolf Lake, and Eagle Village today announce their assertion of Aboriginal rights and title to their traditional territories. The purpose of the announcement is to put other governments on notice, and to establish a firm basis for an effective consultation and accommodation process regarding developments that impact on their rights.

The territory covered under this Assertion of Rights and Title, measuring over 34,000 square kilometres, straddles the Quebec-Ontario border along the Upper Ottawa River (see attached map), with a large portion of it located in Ontario. The evidence, which has been in preparation for almost 20 years, shows that these communities are descended from the Algonquin bands that traditionally used and occupied the territory, and that they meet the legal tests for establishing rights and title. Because the rights being asserted are transboundary, this will require the attention and commitment of the government of Canada, as well as the governments of Quebec and Ontario. There are also some significant areas of overlap with the “Algonquins of Ontario” claim, which will need particular consideration in the short term.

“Our communities retain unextinguished aboriginal title. We have never surrendered our rights, by treaty or otherwise. What we need today is a recognition of those rights, and we are presenting this evidence to ensure effective consultation on matters affecting our interests,” said Chief Terence McBride of Timiskaming. “We want to participate as true partners in the regional economy.”

“Today our communities present strong evidence to establish our rights to our traditional territories,” said Chief St. Denis of Wolf Lake. “All parties will have to work together to address our rights in a timely fashion,” stated Chief St. Denis, adding, “We are encouraged by the events earlier this month, when Prime Minister Harper committed to the reform of the Comprehensive claims policy, because that is what is needed, and that is what we expect. The current federal policy framework is broken because it is based on the extinguishment and denial of our rights. We believe that now is the time to chart a new course, based on the recognition and affirmation of our rights.”

The Chiefs expressed the desire to work in a mutually respectful way with their neighbours and third parties. “By establishing the Crown’s duty to acknowledge our rights and accommodate our interests,” explained Chief Paul of Eagle Village, “we will have greater certainty as we move forward to build a sustainable future for our First Nation communities. We will continue to work with our neighbours towards true partnership in the future.”

For further information contact: www.algonquinnation.ca

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