

# INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON PROTECTED AREAS

Setting the table for transformation







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March 2018

### Acknowledgments

The partner organizations, Ontario Nature, Plenty Canada, Walpole Island Land Trust and the Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences program at Trent University, respectfully acknowledge that the gathering held in Peterborough was on the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishnaabeg. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the following individuals who shared the information and insights presented in this summary paper: Rick Beaver, Chuck Commanda, Chris Craig, Eli Enns, Chief Patricia Faries, Theodore Flamand, Tim Johnson, Deb Pella Keen, Miptoon, Gary Pritchard, Smiling Water (Mackenzie Lespérance), Dorothy Taylor, Jason Travers, Luke Wassegijig and Doug Williams .

We would also like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of everyone who participated in the gathering in Peterborough in October 2017.

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Edwin Poon

# INTRODUCTION

**FROM OCTOBER 24 TO 26, 2017**, Ontario Nature, Plenty Canada, Walpole Island Land Trust and the Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences program at Trent University hosted a three-day gathering on Indigenous perspectives on protected areas. Generously supported by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) and the Ontario Biodiversity Council, the gathering brought together interested members of Indigenous communities and representatives of non-Indigenous organizations to share information, insights and experiences, and to discuss approaches to establishing protected areas that honour Indigenous responsibilities, rights and interests. More specifically, the gathering provided a forum for cross-cultural dialogue about commitments under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity to conserve biodiversity and enhance its benefits to all by 2020.

In 2010, the parties to the UN convention, including Canada, endorsed 20 targets, known as the Aichi targets (named after a prefecture in Japan), two of which framed discussions at the gathering. Aichi Target 11 focuses on conserving biodiversity through protected areas:

By 2020, at least 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.<sup>1</sup>

Aichi Target 18 emphasizes the need to respect and integrate the Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous and local communities and to fully engage these communities in decision making:

By 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.<sup>2</sup>

The Government of Canada responded to the UN commitment by establishing a suite of national targets in 2015: the 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada. Canada Target 1 matches the Aichi protected areas target and led to the creation of a national initiative known as Pathway to Canada Target 1 in 2016.<sup>3</sup> To guide implementation of the Pathway initiative, the federal government established the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE), the National Steering Committee and the National Advisory Panel, as well as six expert task teams.

The Ontario Biodiversity Council adopted the 17 percent protected areas target in the *Ontario Biodiversity Strategy* (Target 13) in 2011:

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and aquatic systems are conserved through well-connected networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.<sup>4</sup>

Although very little progress has been made to date toward achieving this target provincially, the Government of Ontario is participating in the national Pathway initiative and supports the federal targets. Currently only 10.7 percent of Ontario's lands and inland waters are protected.<sup>5</sup> Reaching the 17 percent target would require protecting over 6 million additional hectares. Therein lie the challenge and the opportunity.

Seventy people participated in the October 2017 gathering hosted by Ontario Nature, Plenty Canada, Walpole Island Land Trust and the Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences program at Trent University. Participants included 22 members of Indigenous communities, as well as representatives of 14 environmental organizations, six government agencies and nine other organizations (see table 1). In light of Aichi targets 11 and 18, these participants explored the potential to work together toward the common goal of protecting the natural world while advancing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. During presentations and discussions they shared information and insights; breaks for refreshments and meals offered opportunities to meet and engage in more intimate conversations.

The first day and a half of the gathering comprised a closed session for Indigenous participants and invited non-Indigenous observers. The last day and a half was open to those people and to a targeted audience of staff from government and non-government organizations, academics, students and other interested parties. Throughout the gathering, guest speakers raised awareness of the accomplishments, opportunities and challenges relating to establishing protected areas, with a particular focus on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). The gathering was co-facilitated by Dr. Dan Longboat, Rorohiakewen (He Clears the Sky), director of Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences at Trent University and member of Six Nations of the Grand River, and Larry McDermott, Oomsee (Big Night Owl), executive director of Plenty Canada and member of Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation.

This report, *Indigenous Perspectives on Protected Areas*, reflects the presentations, insights and knowledge shared at the gathering and aims to help inform future dialogue concerning IPCAs in Ontario. The supplement to this report includes summaries of two meetings held in December 2017 in Toronto as a follow-up to the October gathering. MNRF and Parks Canada provided financial support for these subsequent meetings.

The *Indigenous Perspectives on Protected Areas* video, which contains highlights of the gathering and other presentation clips, is available at [youtube.com/ONNature](https://youtube.com/ONNature).

**Members of these communities and organizations attended the October 2017 gathering.**

**TABLE 1**

<b>INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>CONSERVATION GROUPS</b>	<b>GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</b>
Aamjiwnaang First Nation	Carolinian Canada	Canadian Parks Council
Alderville First Nation	CPAWS – Ottawa Valley	Niagara Escarpment Commission
Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn (Golden Lake) First Nation	CPAWS – Wildlands League	Ontario Biodiversity Council
Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation	David Suzuki Foundation	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Curve Lake First Nation	Naadmaagit Ki Group	Ontario Parks
Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg	Nature Canada	Ontario Trillium Foundation
Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation	North American Native Plant Society	
Moose Cree First Nation	Ontario Land Trust Alliance	<b>OTHER</b>
Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation	Ontario Nature	ASI Heritage
Six Nations of the Grand River	Plenty Canada	Blazing Star Environmental
Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation	Point to Point PEC Foundation	International Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities
Walpole Island First Nation	<i>rare</i> Charitable Research Reserve	Shared Value Solutions
Wikwemikong First Nation	South Nation Conservation	Skelton Brumwell and Associates
	Walpole Island Land Trust	Trophic Design
		Trent University
		University of Guelph





Nicholas A. Tonelli

# SUMMARY OF CLOSED SESSION

*Note: Summaries of the presentations from the closed session are included with permission from the individual presenters.*

The first half of the three-day gathering (Tuesday to Wednesday morning) was a closed session for Indigenous participants and a few non-Indigenous observers. The purpose was to give Indigenous participants an opportunity to openly connect, share and discuss relevant issues with one another before bringing forward key questions and themes to the open session. The closed session was hosted at Camp Kawartha Environment Centre, considered one of Canada's most sustainable buildings, which is located on wildlife sanctuary lands and provided much inspiration for the discussion.

## Tuesday, October 24, 2017

Elder Dorothy Taylor of Curve Lake First Nation led the opening ceremony for the closed session of the gathering, with a smudge and words of thanks, assisted by Gary Pritchard, also of Curve Lake First Nation.

Facilitators Dan Longboat and Larry McDermott then began with a circle of introductions, inviting all present to say a few words about themselves and their interest in participating. After the circle of introductions, the facilitators introduced the first speaker, Eli Enns, co-chair of Canada's ICE.

### **Participants in the closed session on Tuesday:**

Rick Beaver, Chuck Commanda, Chris Craig, Eli Enns, Theodore Flamand, Julie Kapryka, Dan Longboat, Larry McDermott, Miptoon, Gary Pritchard, Smiling Water (Mackenzie Lespérance), Keir Tabachack, Dorothy Taylor, Luke Wassejjig, Doug Williams, Kyle Williams, Paige Williams

### **Observers:**

Gillian Austin, Anne Bell, Josh Cornfield, Sarah Hedges, Jarmo Jalava, Jennifer McKay

## **Presentation: Eli Enns**

*Eli Enns is a Nuu-chah-nulth Canadian political scientist and internationally recognized expert in bio-cultural heritage conservation. He is the regional coordinator of North America for the Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCA) Consortium, an international association headquartered in Switzerland. He is also co-founder of the Ha'uukmin Tribal Park in the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. He co-chairs Canada's ICE.*

Eli considers Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) to be acts of self-determination by the First Nations themselves. Although he acknowledges that the targets of protecting 17 percent of lands and inland waters and 10 percent of marine areas are contradictory to Indigenous world views, he sees the targets nevertheless as an opportunity to strengthen our relationships and bring Indigenous Traditional Knowledge systems and Western science together.

## **The Young Cedar Tree with 10,000-Year-Old Roots<sup>6</sup>**

Eli shared the story of the young cedar tree with 10,000-year-old roots. The story begins with the creation of Meares Island Tribal Park, British Columbia's first Tribal Park, established by the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht First Nations in 1984. At that time, clear-cut logging and clear-cut fishing were routine. Forestry company MacMillan Bloedel held the forestry licence to the area and was removing the forests at an accelerated rate. A MacMillan Bloedel staff person, horrified by the company's plans to clear-cut 90 percent of Meares Island, informed the First Nation and chief, Eli's uncle Moses. Chief Moses turned to Nuu-chah-nulth teachings of lisaak for guidance and an appropriate, respectful course of action emerged: it was decided that they would build a cabin at the landing spot for MacMillan Bloedel and prepare a feast of welcome for the loggers. The house was built in spring 1984, and the Indigenous community, with help from sympathetic supporters, prepared the feast. Chief Moses, emotionally and spiritually prepared to greet the loggers, invited them to the meal and asked them to leave their chainsaws outside. To convey the sacred value of the area, he told them that it was not a tree farm, but the community's "garden." He also described it as a "Tribal Park," conveying the meaning for non-Christians who might understand the concept of a park. Ultimately, Chief Moses understood that these were not bad people but rather were hard-working people operating within a particular legal framework. They were lacking in teachings and information; he recognized a responsibility to feed them with thoughts and knowledge to build understanding across cultures. Now, 33 years later, there are four Tribal Parks within the territory, as well as a diversified economy with small primary industry and a flourishing tertiary sector, including micro-hydro green energy projects and tourism. They are a model for IPCAs, focused on sustainable community development. As part of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative, the question to be asked is, what would new kinds of protected areas in Canada look like if led by Indigenous peoples? The question presents an opportunity.

## **Living in Harmony with Nature's Jurisdiction**

With a background in constitutional law, geopolitics and ecological governance, Eli has put considerable thought into the layering of jurisdictions in Canada. On the basis of his work and conversations, he has created a visual representation, which he presented at the gathering. He began by explaining that the foundation is the Creator's jurisdiction, which lives in humans and the land. Indigenous jurisdiction and laws are in harmony with the Creator's jurisdiction and natural law, and are based on the observations of Indigenous peoples over thousands of years. Layered on top of this are Peace and Friendship Treaties, the building blocks of Canada. The treaties blanket the country and follow the contours and features of the land itself, not square lines. Because the treaties are in tune with what Mother Earth needs for sustainability, they can serve as codes of conduct to help the transition to a



sustainable society. Canada's Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the next layer, are still congruent with Indigenous and natural law.

The next jurisdictional layers (federal, provincial and municipal) are represented, however, by straight lines, indicating their lack of congruence with and respect for the Creator's jurisdiction and natural law. They express a world view of disconnectedness, where square-eyed thinking, or seeing things in pieces as opposed to the interconnections, dominates. Regardless, despite the straight lines, all humans are subject to natural law. The mission of Tribal Parks is seeing that interconnectedness; achieving it requires a paradigm shift.

## The Four-Moose Narrative

In Eli's first presentation to the National Steering Committee, he respectfully indicated that he would not be a good "token Indian" for the process and that he would not be participating in the watering-down of Tribal Parks. Following this presentation he was offered the inaugural chair position for Canada's ICE committee. He emphasized the importance of ensuring good faith and rebuilding trust to address the suspicion and apprehension of Indigenous peoples when dealing with government agencies. He has since continued to test the waters of good faith through open and honest dialogue. He initiated an "elephant in the room" exercise, which unfolded over three to four months, to identify obvious problems or risks that needed to be acknowledged and addressed. Four "elephants" were acknowledged, which became known as the "four moose in the room," a more appropriately Canadian symbol.

During the closed session of the gathering in Peterborough, Eli shared the Four-Moose Narrative as it has been recited at the regional ICE gatherings across Canada and is to be presented at a commencement ceremony in Ottawa on March 27, 2018. The four moose of the narrative are jurisdiction, financial solutions, capacity development and cultural keystone species. Additionally Eli shared some insights on how the Four-Moose Narrative developed during the regional gatherings (details to be publicized after the commencement ceremony).

## Discussion

Lively discussion touching on several topics followed Eli's presentation. His illustration of the multi-layered jurisdictions evoked questions about how some Canadians might respond (e.g., with fear, resistance) to the assertion of Indigenous rights and about the potential to bring other jurisdictions in line with Indigenous law. One participant identified private ("fee simple") land ownership as a significant barrier. Greed was another barrier identified. Recognizing the challenges, participants commented on the need to work through negative feelings, to partner with enlightened people and to acknowledge the positive changes that are occurring. They also stressed the importance of ceremony and oral traditions, and the need to respect the original instructions, restore human spiritual integrity and reconcile with the land itself.

Ultimately, Eli believes that people must bring the hard, straight lines of municipal, provincial and federal jurisdictions into alignment with natural law and respect for the land. They can co-exist. This is what reconciliation requires. And IPCAs can become beacons and role models for reconciliation and land use based on the original instructions. "It's not just an Indigenous reality," he reminded participants, "it's a human reality. We are all treaty people. We are all indigenous to planet Earth."

After the discussion, participants enjoyed a premiere viewing of the video *Indigenous Circle of Experts: Central Regional Gathering*, summarizing the event that took place in Winnipeg, Manitoba, from September 25 to 28, 2017.

## Insights from the Discussion

“Our job is to take care of our connections to Creation (the Natural World) and to the Creator, and through this process like minds will come together, and will converse.” – **Dan Longboat**

“Human beings evolved over millions of years to be communal. We are born into the world naked and reliant upon others to survive – it’s part of our makeup. Compassion and love are evolutionary innovations.” – **Eli Enns**

“You are creating an ambience in which right thinking and good seeing can evolve and become effective in growing and creating a better world.” – **Rick Beaver**

“Reconciliation with one another, the land and water is about transformation, not just sharing knowledge.” – **Larry McDermott**

## Presentation: Luke Wassegijig

*Luke Wassegijig is the tourism manager for Wikwemikong Tourism.*

Wikwemikong Unceded Territory is situated on the eastern end of Manitoulin Island and is one of the ten largest First Nation communities in Canada. Tourism is a large industry for the nation, which hosts events, festivals and school groups, and has developed tourism infrastructure and a trail-building program. The territory's vision is to build a foundation for sustainable tourism that will position Wikwemikong as a four-seasons destination.

In 2016, Wikwemikong Department of Lands and Resources opened Point Grondine Park with a vision to develop a First Nation owned and operated eco-resort and campground where traditional Anishnaabek culture would merge with a peaceful eco-retreat in one of Ontario's spectacular regions. The creation of the park, which encompasses 7,280 hectares, was intended to protect the land (Crown land) from resource extraction by having a presence on the ground. It was also to capitalize on the overflow from and popularity of neighbouring Killarney Provincial Park. Point Grondine Park includes an authentic Indigenous campsite, 26 backcountry campsites, a 47-kilometre coastal trail and an outdoor teaching space.

Wikwemikong Department of Lands and Resources has taken a holistic approach to park management, incorporating cultural mapping, species-at-risk assessments, guidance from community Elders and opportunities for partnerships with local businesses within the community. This has provided Wikwemikong with employment opportunities, community infrastructure and a means of transferring Traditional Knowledge. Park staff are working with Ontario Parks on management plans and also expanding their Tourism Ambassador Guide Program to include traditional plant-based medicines, history and Anishnaabek spirituality, in accordance with cultural integrity guidelines. The Ontario Parks system of training wardens is not a perfect fit, but there is nevertheless a desire to expose community members to training opportunities and an opportunity for the community to develop its own guidelines and regulations. The pathway ahead for Point Grondine Park will focus on creating greater community and council support. Discussions within the community have been difficult, as members using the area want to maintain those uses. Although there is support for stewardship, there is a need to reignite interest in protection and responsibilities to the land. Limited capacity is one of the greatest struggles. Operating funds have come from the community, as well as the federal and provincial governments. Once the eco-resort is fully operating, the revenue earned will be used to support ongoing park initiatives.

**IN 1836 THE BOND HEAD TREATY WAS SIGNED**, which reaffirmed Anishnaabek ownership of Manitoulin Island and 2,300 islands from Sault Ste. Marie to Penetanguishine. The McDougall Treaty was initiated in 1862 and targeted the surrender of unsold lands on Manitoulin Island. Wikwemikong did not sign the treaty, making it an Unceded Indian Reserve. In 1968, three bands amalgamated (Manitoulin Island Indian Reserve, Point Grondine and South Bay) to create Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve.

## Presentation: Theodore Flamand

*Theodore Flamand is the species-at-risk coordinator for the Wikwemikong Department of Lands and Resources.*

Wikwemikong encompasses 54,000 hectares where many rare and at-risk species live. The lands and resources department established a species-at-risk program in 2007 and has identified many diverse plant, reptile and bird species at risk. The community decided to create books to highlight the various species; so far two books have been completed and are available free of charge. The department also received funding for projects, including constructing a greenhouse for medicinal plants and conducting an assessment of traditional areas where wild rice is harvested. With the advice of Elders, the department has revitalized mnoomin (wild rice) areas and held workshops on how to collect it in the traditional way. Wikwemikong has also prepared pamphlets and signage about



medicinal plants found on the reserve featuring species such as American sweetflag, yarrow, Canada wild ginger and slender blazingstar as well as the mushroom chaga, with the understanding that if a plant is put here on Mother Earth for humans to use, it must not be sold. The department has also focused on community outreach and youth education, including about traditional practices such as filleting fish, healthy eating and food preparation, as well as species-at-risk-themed hikes. Theodore, working closely with community Elders, individuals and youth, will next be developing a protection plan for each species at risk.

After Theodore's presentation, participants discussed the potential to share species names, while addressing the concern of Elders that the names be closely guarded and not made available to the public. They thanked Wikwe-mikong for sharing knowledge, especially the language.

## **Presentation: Doug Williams**

*Doug Williams is an Elder from Curve Lake First Nation and an associate professor and director of studies for the PhD program at Trent University's Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies. Doug was one of the first graduates of Indigenous Studies at Trent in 1972.*

Doug Williams has taught at Trent University for 16 years. He tries to teach students the same way the Anishnaabe would learn – through storytelling. Doug noted the difficulty of seeing things in a new way, when you are schooled to look at a globe or a map. He explained that the Mississaugas are people of the river mouths of Lake Ontario ("Big Water"). It was once full of salmon, which disappeared due to overfishing by settlers at the river mouths. The passenger pigeon was also once abundant here, and for thousands of years would roost in Kentucky and feed along Lake Ontario, until the species was overhunted to obtain oil for lanterns. So the Mississaugas not only suffered the loss of staples like salmon and the passenger pigeon, but many also lost their oral tradition about such species. Doug was brought up in a rice family on Curve Lake, which is the main wild rice area in Ontario. The reason why wild rice started to disappear in the 1950s is unknown, but Curve Lake First Nation has been successful in reintroducing it and has shared it with Algonquins to the east. Doug has written a book about stories such as these, which a publisher has recently accepted.

The Mississauga people were one of the first to be "gridded" in Canada, when surveyors came and divided the land along straight lines. The Mississaugas asked for the maples, rice beds, beaver houses and wetlands, but the surveyors did not save anything the people asked for and instead began giving away the land. The federal government now has to answer to the courts, which are saying the stories and the Elders must be heard and considered. Doug explains that, for the Mississauga, getting pieces of the land and making them theirs have been difficult. He is trying to protect the land, but because of bureaucracy and taxation on fee simple land, doing so is difficult. Doug is now working with the Kawartha Land Trust to raise money to purchase a big island on Pigeon Lake. Community members, however, still have to sneak onto the island to harvest, an activity that some non-Indigenous people deem to be inappropriate.

A recent example of the issues associated with fee simple land ownership is a 200-hectare piece of undeveloped land on Stony Lake with a beautiful shoreline. A developer in British Columbia bought it and wanted to put townhouses on it. Doug and others decided to fight this and were able to get the local mayor and council to agree. The developer then brought the issue to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). Doug and other specialists testified at the hearing, and the OMB decided against the development. The land trust is now trying to purchase the land to protect it from future development. Doug maintains that this seems to be the only way to save fee simple land right now. He believes there is great alignment between land trusts and the thinking of First Nations, both of which aim to save the land for future generations. The lack of development, however, drives the price of the land

down, creating an incentive for people from outside the community to buy the land, thereby driving prices up and making it more difficult for land trusts to acquire. Doug emphasized the need to think outside the box and find an alternative way of owning land, stating that “land is crucial to the rejuvenation of our people.”

## **Presentation: Rick Beaver**

*Rick Beaver belongs to the Mississauga Ojibway of the Rice Lake area in Ontario. He has been painting and exhibiting his artwork internationally for 40 years. He brings his formal training as a wildlife biologist into the studio. His fusion of art with science works to honour and protect the earth.*

“How long can landscapes which no longer sustain wildlife populations sustain humanity?” – **Rick Beaver**

Before beginning his presentation, Rick acknowledged the presence of the Great Spirit – the birchbark canoe in the room, created by Chuck Commanda. Made from the earth itself, the canoe, Rick said, is a great symbol for reconciliation and the concept of coming together and heading in the same direction.

Black oak savanna, which exists at Alderville First Nation, is one of the most endangered ecosystems on earth. Only between two and five percent remains of the savanna that used to be at Alderville, and it has one of the largest remnants of tallgrass prairie in the Rice Lake Plains. There was once 800 to 2,000 square kilometres of savanna in southern Ontario.

The mission of the Alderville Black Oak Savanna initiative is “to preserve, restore and expand this rare habitat with Alderville First Nation and the larger community and to support the values which encourage wise stewardship of the land.” Alderville First Nation has partnered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and others on the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative, with a common vision to collaborate and share resources and activities. Rick believes that “conservation works better when we all work together. As long as we agree that the lands are for conservation, there is nothing adversarial in terms of our own values. It’s another way of addressing that and satisfying our mutual goals.”

The threats to the black oak savanna include succession to forest, invasive species and recreational activities e.g., use of motorized vehicles. The partners have worked together to accomplish a significant amount of outreach and data sharing, and have cooperated in prescribed burns. In 2007, the collaborative revised its work to address wetland and forested areas of the Rice Lake Plains, and the partnership has since expanded to include more partners and greater collaboration with volunteers. The partnership is also collaborating on land securement and identifying priority areas, as well as joint fundraising efforts. The benefits have been greater sharing of advice, guidance and species inventory information, as well as assistance with land acquisition and outreach.

To obtain Traditional Knowledge, which has been at the core of the collaborative effort, surveys with Elders were conducted to provide the generational context that a six-month environmental impact survey would not. Gardens were established with signage in Ojibwa, the native language. Connection to the language has been an integral and necessary part of the path forward. Rick believes a meshing and moulding of world views and ways of knowing may be possible, and that a more productive way of living could result.

A discussion regarding the cultural importance of wild rice emerged, emphasizing the need to find ways to manage wild rice cooperatively. Along the Rice Lake shorelines, incidences of conflict with landowners, who view wild rice as “weeds” interfering with recreational activities, have occurred. “We are following prophecy,” Rick explained. “Wild rice is our sustenance and an integral part of how we are underpinned by the land and water resources. Wild rice is a habitat which provides many benefits, and it’s time to start treating it that way.”

“We share the same canoe, and it’s time for the paddles to hit the water. We are in fast water now, and we need all the wisdom we have to guide us through.” – **Rick Beaver**

One of the benefits of aging, concluded Rick, is being able to see the progress that has been made over the years. He described it as an “exponential growth curve” from the days of being chased by game wardens and having to sneak around on one’s own land to today’s recognition of Indigenous rights at the United Nations, supported by governments. Society is arriving at a place of trust where progress can be made.

The day concluded with a traditional feast, provided by Grandfather’s Kitchen, an Anishnaabe owned and operated catering company. Dan Longboat gave a closing Thanksgiving Address on behalf of all Creation.



## Wednesday, October 25, 2017 – Morning

The gathering began with a circle of introductions in which participants talked about their background and their interests and hopes in attending the gathering.

These are some highlights from the circle of introductions:

“Government agencies don’t know how to approach First Nations, so we need to show them how. We have to work collaboratively on protected spaces, and then take this up to the government agencies. Sometimes we need to knock on their doors.” – **Chris Craig**

“I work with hunters and trappers and universities on species at risk and marsh restoration. I gather information on traditional uses of plants and changes in the water. The marsh was the grocery store; we used what was on the land. But I’ve seen the decline of many, many species since I was a little boy. Hopefully we can work together, come together.” – **Torey Day**

“I’m happy to see the young people here, people to take this forward. You can be an inspiration in your community. There’s no better work than to do the Creator’s work, working for the continuation of all Life.” – **Dan Longboat**

“We have to learn to trust each other as Anishnaabe people. We have to learn to walk together. ‘I, Me and Mine,’ that’s not in our language. It’s ‘We, Us and Our.’ I am thankful for the Elders who speak the language. The wampum teaches us about holding hands together in circles, joined not only by the hands, but by the heart. We must learn this again.” – **Miptoon**

“The federal government wants to hear from us about what protected areas should achieve. Canada is trying to comply with its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, to protect 17 percent of our lands and waters and to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge. So we’re at the stage where we can shape this. There are leaders who will listen to what we have to say.” – **Larry McDermott**

### Presentation: Clint Jacobs

*Clint Jacobs, from Bkejwanong (Walpole Island First Nation), is the natural heritage coordinator and interim supervisor for Walpole Island Heritage Centre and the president of Walpole Island Land Trust, the first First Nations land trust registered as a charity in Canada. It is a community-based charitable organization that secures lands and waters for the benefit of current and future generations.*

Clint Jacobs once asked an Elder how to get children to love the land as much as the Elder did, and the Elder’s answer was to “take them outside.” Bkejwanong is located near Wallaceburg, Ontario, at the mouth of the St. Clair River. Encompassing six islands, the nation was never set apart as a reserve, giving it the distinction of being unceded territory. It contains some of the most diverse habitats and species in southern Ontario. The Walpole Island Heritage Centre has created habitat and species working groups, composed of community members who

#### Participants in the closed session on Wednesday morning:

Chuck Commanda, Chris Craig, Torey Day, Clint Jacobs, Dan Longboat, Larry McDermott, Miptoon, Smiling Water (Mackenzie Lespérance), Carl Smith, Keir Tabachack, Kyle Williams, Paige Williams

#### Observers:

Gillian Austin, Anne Bell, Sarah Hedges, Jarmo Jalava, Aidan Kenny, Jennifer McKay

“We need to make sure that we put information back in the hands of the people who shared it, and in the hands of our young people. Our challenge is to find funding to make it accessible.” – **Clint Jacobs**

have a strong interest and varied backgrounds. They began moving forward with a Customary Ways project and approached people in the community to help collect as much information as possible. The working groups encouraged young people to get involved too, and, for example, held a drawing contest to help illustrate local community issues, such as the invasive emerald ash borer. The community was involved in creating recovery strategies for species at risk, working closely with ecologist Dr. Jane Bowles. They

conducted surveys and looked at how to take care of species, but in the end decided they needed to save who they are as a people in order to save the habitats and species because they are so intricately linked.

A conversation about protecting and purchasing lands resulted in the formation of the Walpole Island Land Trust and the securement of the Potawatomi Prairie. A legal review of community bylaws and unwritten laws was initiated, but eventually the community decided not to proceed and to look internally at what needed to be done. Clint expressed misgivings about the land trust approach, a modern mechanism shaped by government laws and policies. He is saddened because the approach puts the responsibility of protecting lands on one group in isolation, instead of being everyone’s responsibility. The heritage centre is now considering ways to reclaim and rekindle traditional teachings, and ensure that young people are learning them. Education has been a big focus, including efforts to integrate culture and language into science and biodiversity education.

During his presentation, Clint invited Carl Smith and Torey Day, who also work at the Walpole Island Heritage Centre, to say a few words about their work. Carl spoke about his efforts to deal with the poaching of at-risk turtles at Bkejwanong. After discovering live traps and a camp, he worked with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to identify the perpetrators of the illegal activities. Their investigations led to charges against and convictions of about 30 people.

Torey spoke about his rewarding work with people who come to Bkejwanong to share knowledge and learn from one another. Torey himself had learned how to make black ash baskets from his grandmother and found that this skill was an eye-opener for most people he taught. He described the rewarding experience of teaching about culture and language through science and tangible things. “We are scientists already,” he said. “How did our people know how to do things? We just knew.”

## **Presentation: Chuck Commanda**

*Chuck Commanda is an Algonquin birchbark canoe maker. He was introduced to canoe making at the age of 10 by his grandparents, Mary and William Commanda.*

Chuck reflected on harvesting in protected areas and seeing first-hand that the materials he uses for his canoes are in jeopardy in one way or another. He looks for a very particular kind of birchbark, which is very hard to find now (though he found some from Siberia online). He also noted that he has great difficulty finding long, knot-free cedar, and that a new parasite is attacking the roots of spruce trees and the colour of the wood itself has changed. As well, the emerald ash borer is taking its toll on ash trees.

It takes Chuck months to gather and prepare the materials needed for making a canoe and about eight days to build one. He believes it is very important to educate people of all ages about canoe building and culture. “Whom-ever I teach, they get a sense of responsibility,” he explained. They want to take care of the forest. Not only Native people, people from all races. You never know where these kids will end up; they could make it better for all.”

A discussion then followed about forest management and the need to consider Indigenous harvesting and cultural values. Chris Craig explained that landowners need to be made aware that Indigenous people have inherent rights to access resources. They need to understand what those resources are, including culturally important species (e.g., birchbark for canoes), and manage accordingly. Under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, for example, resources must be available to the community. While the FSC certification process is not perfect, it is a step in the right direction to address core concerns and include Indigenous values in forest management. "FSC is by far the most advanced certification system in terms of biodiversity and Indigenous rights," said Chris.

"Private landowners are worried that they are going to lose their land to Indigenous peoples, but this is not the case, Everyone has us so divided, and divided we fall. United we're strong. Look at the canoe, combining all the different materials – it's strong. If one piece is weak, the whole canoe is weaker. We lost a lot in the last seven decades or so, but the canoe is one thing they can't take from us." – **Chuck Commanda**



## Key Themes from the Closed Session

**Natural law:** Settlers imposed linear thinking on the land and Indigenous peoples, affecting the unfolding of Creation and ignoring the natural fluidity of the ways Creation works. All levels of government (federal, provincial, municipal) have created rigidity, trying to replace natural law. We need to examine this and get back to what it means to be a real human being, taking care of one another and taking care of what the Creator has provided.

**Responsibilities:** We need to focus on our responsibilities. Our rights are our ability to exercise our responsibilities.

**Ceremonies:** We need to get back to fundamentals, engage with life and eat together. We need recognition of our cultures, languages, practices – not just written, but living principles.

**Indigenous languages:** Revitalizing Indigenous languages is one way of protecting biodiversity.

**Traditional teachings:** Embedded within Indigenous traditional teachings is a map outlining our relationships and our responsibilities.

**Governance:** We need to create an ethical space for engagement that respects Indigenous governance systems. It is time to bring back wampum and medicines; reconciliation is about transformation, not just sharing knowledge.

**Indigenous Knowledge:** Indigenous Knowledge adds 10,000 years of baseline information to our understanding. It must be respected and not come second to Western science.

**Education:** We are all treaty people, All of us, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, need to become aware of our responsibilities as treaty people. Education is part of the solution. There is a special role for everyone.

**Protecting Mother Earth:** Protected areas can be living examples of our cultures and what it means to be a human being. We have to find a way to protect it all. If the 17 and 10 percent targets provide a way for us to come together to get started, then that is what is needed.

**Restoration:** Canadians have never had the opportunity to reconcile with the land, and they do not know what it means to live in place, so restoration becomes a necessary part of the education process. How do we rebuild? What does it mean to be Canadian, a human being? We must restore human spiritual integrity as well as the land.

**Fee simple land:** We need a way to deal with the system of land ownership in Ontario. How can it be handled to enable protection? What is the role for land trusts and partnerships?

**Ontario Indigenous Circle of Experts:** Is there a desire to organize an Ontario ICE to guide protection efforts? In British Columbia, for example, efforts are underway to create a provincial ICE.



# SUMMARY OF OPEN SESSION

## Wednesday, October 25, 2017 – Afternoon

Facilitators Larry McDermott and Dan Longboat began the open session by welcoming new attendees and reporting back on what had been discussed in the closed session (see key themes, p. 18). Larry and Chuck Commanda then led a smudging ceremony for all attendees.

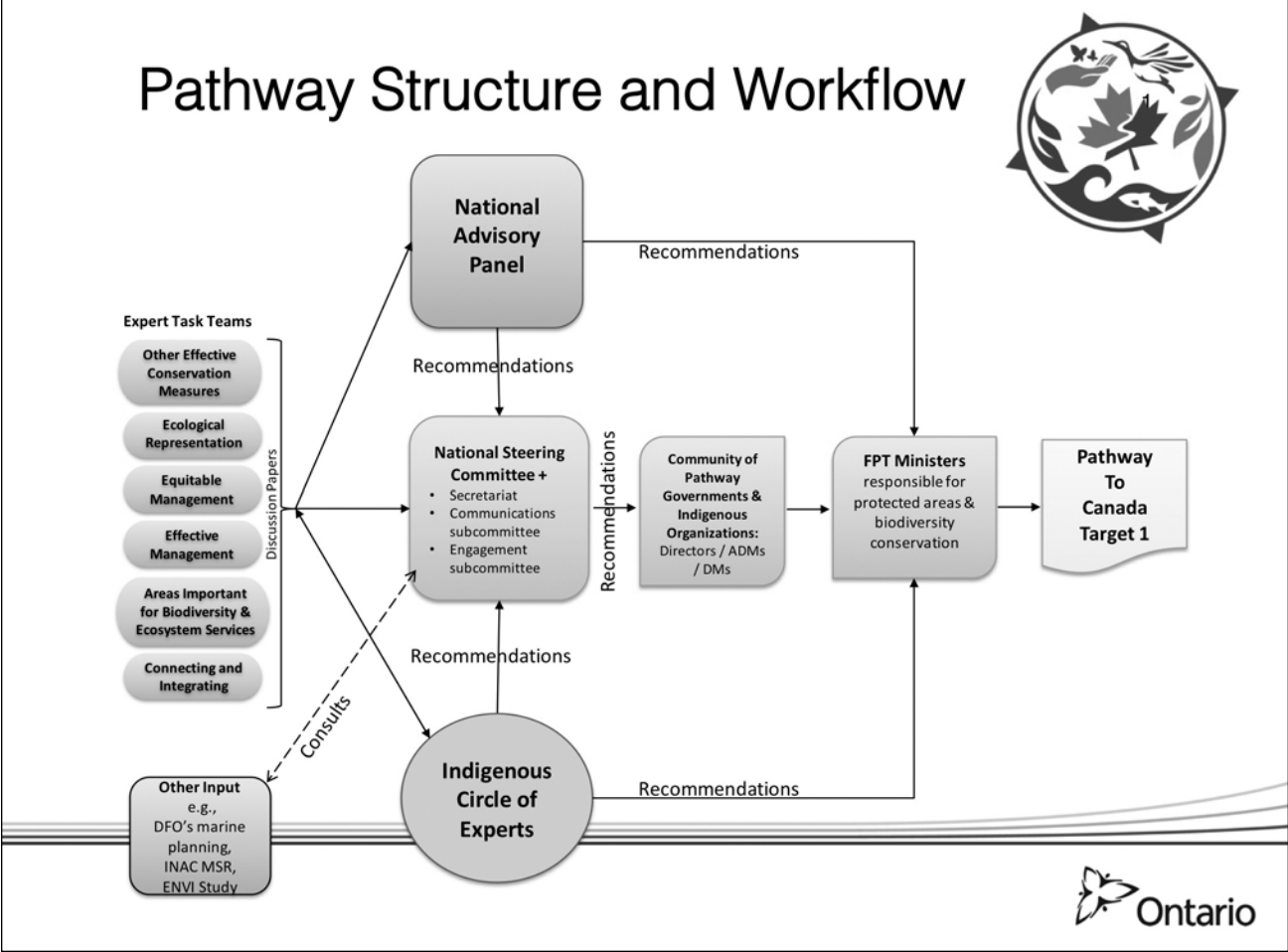
### **Presentation: Jason Travers**

*Jason Travers is the director for the Natural Resources Conservation Policy Branch of MNRF. He represents Ontario as part of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative and attended the ICE central regional gathering in Winnipeg.*

Jason Travers presented the provincial government’s perspective on achieving the 17 percent protected areas target and the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative. Jason recognized that the Pathway process has been very different from other government initiatives, entailing what he described as a “paradigm shift,” due to the involvement and leadership of Indigenous people. Principles guiding the process include collaboration and inclusiveness, reconciliation and nation-to-nation relationships, transparency, innovation and creativity, and evidence-based decision making grounded in science and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge. Jason described the structure of the Pathway initiative and the three committees – ICE, the National Advisory Panel and the National Steering Committee. All groups are in the process of developing recommendations that will inform the Pathway initiative moving forward (see figure 1, p. 20).

Themes that have emerged from the initiative to date include the importance of Indigenous participation in all aspects of the Pathway initiative, the recognition and importance of IPCAs, and the need for a collaborative approach to strategically grow Canada’s protected and conserved areas. Outcomes of the process anticipated by March 2018 include the following:

- a joint statement endorsed by federal, provincial and territorial Ministers, Indigenous governments and local governments



**Figure 1. Pathway to Canada Target 1 structure and workflow, provided by MNRF.**

- a framework document for jurisdictions and partners
- a toolbox for practitioners
- identification of potential new and ongoing bodies and processes

Ontario, like all the other provinces and territories, has committed to respond to the Pathway to Canada Target 1 recommendations in 2018. Jason acknowledged that the 17 percent target is lower than many people deem necessary. A focus of MNRF’s efforts has been an accounting exercise to take stock of protected areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) across all forms of governance that may be eligible to be counted toward Canada Target 1/Aichi Target 11. These areas could include, for example, private nature reserves, Conservation Authority lands and municipal parks.

Part of this accounting exercise requires determining what would count as a protected area or OECM. For protected areas, Canada has upheld very high standards, including only the top three categories set by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (see the “IUCN Protected Area Categories” text box below). In January 2018, the IUCN defined OECMs as

a geographically defined space, not recognized as a protected area, which is governed and managed over the long-term in ways that deliver the effective and enduring in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem services and cultural and spiritual values.<sup>7</sup>

Jason argued that OECMs and other IUCN protected area categories that have different governance structures could be considered to count toward achievement of the 17 percent target if protection is managed for the long term and proven to be effective. While inclusion of things like private nature reserves may not “move the needle” much, they are very important in regions like southern Ontario where most land is in private hands and very little has been protected. Only 10.7 percent of the province’s lands and waters are currently considered protected, and in his opinion Ontarians have been very “tough” on themselves and should consider what else might count. Accordingly, MNRF has begun piloting assessment of potential protected areas and OECMs under various forms of governance (e.g., municipal, private) to identify opportunities and barriers to inclusion. One issue the ministry is examining is subsurface rights (i.e., for mining). Jason noted that Australia has not removed any of the subsurface rights for any of its protected areas and that only one site has lost its protected areas designation in the past 15 years.

## IUCN Protected Area Categories

- la. **Strict Nature Reserve:** Category Ia [protected areas] are strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity and also possibly geological/geomorphical features, where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values.
- lb. **Wilderness Area:** Category Ib protected areas are usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence without permanent or significant human habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.
- II **National Park:** Category II protected areas are large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible, spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational, and visitor opportunities.
- III **Natural Monument or Feature:** Category III protected areas are set aside to protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, submarine cavern, geological feature such as a cave or even a living feature such as an ancient grove. They are generally quite small protected areas and often have high visitor value.
- IV. **Habitat/Species Management Area:** Category IV protected areas aim to protect particular species or habitats and management reflects this priority. Many Category IV protected areas will need regular, active interventions to address the requirements of particular species or to maintain habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category.
- V. **Protected Landscape/Seascape:** A [Category V] protected area [is one] where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant, ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.
- VI. **Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources:** Category VI protected areas conserve ecosystems and habitats together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

“There have been massive declines in biodiversity. If we just count what we have now, we are just measuring failure, because we are failing. Yes, we need to count, but quickly, and put our effort into achieving more.” – **Michael Wynia, Skelton Brumwell and Associates**

In the discussion that followed Jason’s presentation, several questions and comments arose, including these:

- Governments are still allowing development in areas identified for conservation purposes; for example, forestry is continuing to be allowed within the critical habitat of at-risk caribou. Such disingenuous policy decisions will preclude achievement of conservation outcomes.
- Governments need to put their efforts into protecting more than what is currently protected, instead of broadening the scope of what currently counts as protected.
- Competing with other jurisdictions to meet or surpass the target is not the right reason for proceeding; biodiversity does not exist to serve people.

After the discussion the participants viewed the video *Indigenous Circle of Experts: Central Regional Gathering*.

## Presentation: Deb Pella Keen

*Deb Pella Keen is the former director of the Niagara Escarpment Commission and as such was responsible for convening the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve.*

Deb Pella Keen spoke about experience with protected areas while working for the Niagara Escarpment Commission. In 1990, UNESCO named the Niagara Escarpment landform as a World Biosphere Reserve because of its international significance and unique land-use planning framework designed to balance protection, conservation and sustainable development. Biosphere reserves also serve to support dialogue and knowledge sharing across an international network. At the 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Lima, Peru, in 2016, UNESCO updated its action plan for biosphere reserves. As a Canadian delegate, Deb was struck by a common challenge: how to communicate the meaning and significance of international agreements (e.g., those relating to climate change, biodiversity conservation, rights of Indigenous Peoples) that guide biosphere reserves at the local level. The Canadian delegation, led by Larry McDermott, requested a revision of the action plan to reflect an equal level of respect for Indigenous Knowledge, as there was great desire for reconciliation between Western science and Indigenous Knowledge, informed by the Ojibwa Seven Fires Prophecy. In Canada this dialogue continues regarding the potential for biosphere reserves to contribute to reconciliation. Deb stated, “We are poised to make positive change, with each biosphere reserve providing a platform to model and inspire the work needed to build a new and stronger relationship with Indigenous peoples and recognition of Indigenous Knowledge. A spirit of cooperation is critical to success.”

## Open discussion

The afternoon ended with an open discussion, which Larry McDermott facilitated. Below are some of the themes and issues that emerged.

**Jurisdiction and meaningful engagement:** Smiling Water, of the *rare* Charitable Research Reserve, commented on the issue of jurisdiction and the need for a paradigm shift in line with natural law. “It’s time to take a leap of faith,” she noted. “Otherwise we will go down with the ship. There needs to be more action.” Her advice to participants was to include the voices of Indigenous people, young and old, and to engage them and really listen



without trying to make them fit into existing systems. She reminded participants that humans are the young ones of Creation and do not have all the answers.

**Desire for action and accountability:** Keir Tabachack, of the group Naadmaagit Ki, asked about the plan for action and what steps could be taken to hold corporations accountable for the destruction across the country and the environmental racism at Grassy Narrows.

**Honesty and good faith:** Clint Jacobs advised that in trying to achieve 17 percent protection by 2020, we must do the hard work necessary, not lie, cheat or water things down just to say we got there. This is not about counting things so we can compete with other jurisdictions.

**Industry leaders:** Steve Hounsell, chair of the Ontario Biodiversity Council, commented on the importance of involving industry leaders who recognize the need to live within the limits of nature and who can drive restorative action and sustainable use.

**Reaching out across cultures:** Chris Craig observed that we all want the same thing: to protect the environment. So he advised non-Indigenous participants to take that first step and reach out: “Be brave and don’t be afraid to start a conversation. Sit with somebody new and just start chatting.” Chris also noted the importance of First Nations stepping forward to offer a hand to communities. He said that even groups that have been working together for years still need more cultural training to bridge the gaps.

“This is so important to us – that’s why we have a serious face. We are contemplating, not scowling. We understand you’re here to work with us – so take that step and work with a community that is close to you.” – **Chris Craig**

**Listening to nature:** Miptoon, a Neyaashiiningmiing Elder, spoke about the need to put aside our policies and procedures and truly listen to the natural world: “One of the things that nature is telling us is that it needs help. If we wake up in the morning and don’t hear birds singing, then we’ve lost out as human beings. The birds sing for us and for Creation, and we must listen, for without nature, we have nothing. We must look at generations to come.”

“I love nature with all my heart. My wallet may be empty but my heart is filled with the joy of walking together. Let us fight for what we have. Close your eyes and listen to the birds.” – **Miptoon**

**Reconciliation from a settler perspective:** Janice Keil commented on the positive outpouring across the country in response to the call for reconciliation: “People want to do something as an act of reconciliation, and they want to do something for the land. How do we go down this path?” Her personal response has been to repatriate her land to Alderville First Nation. “As a farmer, naturalist and human being I have to learn a new language, the language of what is on the land and what is in the water. It’s a different language than what I have to speak when I have to fill out the long forms to apply for grants from MNRF.”

Grandfather’s Kitchen again provided a traditional Anishnaabe feast, a customary way to bring people together to connect. Larry McDermott gave a Thanksgiving Address on behalf of all Creation. After the meal, participants gathered again to listen to the keynote speaker, Tim Johnson.

## Keynote presentation: Tim Johnson

*Tim Johnson is the co-chair of the Landscape of Nations: Six Nations and Native Allies Commemorative Memorial, the artistic producer of Celebration of Nations, senior advisor to Friends of Laura Secord, and former associate director for museum programs at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian.*

Tim began his presentation by acknowledging the importance of education and congratulating Dan Longboat on the success of Trent University's Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences program. From an Indigenous perspective, he said, "if you don't know your history, you don't know who you are."

Tim works on programs that have a lasting impact. He was invited to help with a project to commemorate the War of 1812 and the contributions of First Nations to the founding of Canada. The mayor and council of Niagara-on-the-Lake had engaged Indigenous peoples in the process but had hit a wall, and as a result came to Tim for advice. The result, achieved through a seven-year process, was the Landscape of Nations commemorative memorial. Despite the initial difficulty, once they established a proper public art process and worked collectively on a shared objective, everyone came together. Truth and reconciliation were key to the thinking behind the memorial for both the non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples involved. Although General Isaac Brock died almost instantly at the battle of Queenston Heights, history has glorified him and makes virtually no mention of the Indigenous warriors who turned the tide of the war. Their role was essentially lost to history. The symbols and structures represented throughout the memorial take visitors on a cultural and historical journey, and appropriately recognize the contributions of the Indigenous people involved in the Battle of Queenston Heights and the War of 1812.

Tim also worked on a project with the Niagara Parks Commission, which was looking to deepen its relationships with Indigenous communities by increasing Indigenous content in park exhibits and programs, and supporting innovative demonstrations of truth and reconciliation. Rumble at the Falls, a live concert event, was held in summer 2017 and featured award-winning Indigenous musicians who told the story of Indigenous contributions to roots, blues, jazz, folk and rock music genres. A special performance, Drums Across Niagara, featured two Indigenous drum groups on either side of Niagara Falls alternately playing traditional songs across the Niagara Gorge and international border. Tim said that partnerships and friendships are what it takes to bridge the gaps in the spirit of reconciliation.

Tim concluded by sharing some insights on what he has learned, and the challenges and opportunities that groups working on protected areas face. He referred to the words of architect and Anishnaabe Elder Douglas Cardinal, spoken at the unveiling ceremony for the First Nations Peace Monument at Decew House Heritage Park in Thorold, Ontario:

There's only good, and a crooked good that needs to be straightened out. We never looked at the world in a dualistic way, good and bad, right or wrong, you and me. I am you. You are me. We're all one.

Tim's advice is to conceptualize projects that are achievable and require Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to work together. We need to build from diplomatic and historic relationships when Indigenous peoples had agency to restore or strengthen relations, and to override powerful and ingrained assumptions. Dialogue is needed to examine and deconstruct entitlement, which is the driving force behind greed, racism and injustice. We have to incorporate and apply empathic traditions without which biodiversity and the earth's atmosphere will continue to diminish at an alarming rate. The real problem is cultural. This is where Indigenous peoples have so much to offer. Including a seventh-generation perspective and sustainability issues in dialogue about reconciliation is very important.

## Thursday, October 26, 2017

The final day of the gathering began with words of welcome from Larry McDermott, who then introduced the morning's first speaker, Chief Patricia Faries.

### **Presentation: Chief Patricia Faries**

*Chief Patricia Faries is from Moose Cree First Nation. Moose Cree Traditional Territory extends from Hearst, Ontario, in the west to the Quebec border in the east, and from south of Highway 11 to points north toward the Albany River.*

Chief Patricia Faries attended Trent University in 1989 and wanted to come to this meeting to bring everything full circle. She grew up in the community of Moose Cree, and education was important to her family. While at Trent, Professor Newhouse advised her to write the Law School Admission Test, and later that fall she began law school at Osgoode Hall. She opened a criminal law practice in 1998 and did this work for 18 years up and down the coast of Hudson Bay, from Peawanuck to Attawapiskat. As a mother and grandmother, she did a lot of child protection work, and this has translated into trying to protect the language, culture and children's rights to their communities.

The presentation Chief Faries gave focused on protecting the North French River watershed, in her homeland territory. The Moose Cree are a large and growing nation, with a young population. The nation is still able to enjoy the freedom of the land, including harvesting geese, moose and beaver, and is looking at developing its own governance system, which is what the younger generation is asking for – a future that recognizes their systems and goals. This has been exciting for Chief Faries but also presents challenges.

"If we take care of our homeland, it will take care of us. We consider ourselves water people, and believe everything on earth is alive. Water is alive, it hears us, feels us, sees us."

– **Chief Patricia Faries**

The Moose Cree traditional territory encompasses about 60,000 square kilometres. In 2016, the nation released its Homeland Declaration about the area, the teachings, the stories and the family groupings that the community has taken care of since time immemorial. The homeland includes surface and subsurface rights, water and air. Chief Faries highlighted the community's concerns about the impacts of industrial development:

We are the original peoples of this land. The Creator put us here, gave us our languages, our culture. Our ancestors have lived on this land since time immemorial. We were charged by the Creator to protect this land, and for the last 80 years have observed the impacts on our land, water and wildlife. There is significant mineral extraction, forestry and hydroelectric development in the southern part of Ontario. We are willing to work with industry, but economic development must be sustainable and pursued in a manner that protects our cultural identity.

The 6,660-square-kilometre North French River watershed is of great cultural significance to the community and remains free from any industrial impacts. The area is pristine, and people can drink water directly from the river. Chief Faries explained why protection is so vital:

The river is a beautiful living organ. The land is alive and thriving, it opens us up. There are cabins, camping areas, and Elders go there, it must be protected for future generations. It is a source of clean water, habitat for caribou and fisheries, a storehouse for carbon, and a place to exercise harvesting rights and ceremony to enjoy the purity of the land. This hits our core – our heart – to make sure that the world knows how important this is. To protect this is protecting our survival as a people.

"I'm always looking for support to create awareness in the world. What it means possibly is saving all of us, so that we all survive, your kids, my kids." – **Chief Patricia Faries**

The Moose Cree are fighting to have these lands removed from any mineral prospecting, leasing and exploration, but the Government of Ontario has yet to respect their Indigenous protected areas. Chief Faries believes this is critical to working toward reconciliation, and that a formal mechanism is needed to respect Indigenous practices. She met with Premier Kathleen Wynne and told her that the North French is not for sale. It's not about economics and money; it's about her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The Moose Cree want to work toward permanent protection of the area, and to do that jointly with the laws of this country and province. The nation is eager to show leadership to the world and be proactive about protecting their homeland and people. Indigenous protected areas are an important tool in protecting the resilience of ecosystems under the threat of climate change. Chief Faries concluded by inviting all participants at the gathering to work in partnership to help protect the North French River watershed.

There was lengthy discussion with Chief Faries following her presentation. When asked about the community's capacity to fight for protection, she responded: "We are the only ones up there. We have always encouraged people to use the land, to continue to nurture the land, to continue to occupy the land as a people. It's a challenge, and it is not cheap [financially] to fight back." She emphasized the importance of a community planning process to determine which areas need to be watched and how they are being used. In response to a question about the meaning of "protected area," she said that she wished her entire territory were protected.

## **Presentation: Chris Craig**

*Chris Craig is a member of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn (Golden Lake) First Nation, a member of the Eastern Ontario First Nation Working Group and senior forestry technician with South Nation Conservation.*

"We are connected to everything that has ever been here and everything that will ever be here. Understanding the connectedness is not First Nation, it is human." – **Chris Craig**

Chris Craig opened his presentation with information about the substantial amount of forested land in eastern Ontario and the overlapping levels of jurisdiction, including Indigenous territories (Algonquin and Haudenosaunee), the provincial government, municipalities and conservation authorities. Some hands are tied when it comes to protecting, for example, archeological sites. He encouraged attendees to stand up and say no to development:

I've heard of the economic value of the boreal forest; it's not even close – it's worth more than our lives. You all have that connection, it flows in you. The energy is part of us, it's through us; we are connected to everything that has ever been here and everything that will ever be here. Understanding the connectedness is not First Nation, it is human.

Chris is trying to get foresters to understand and so tries to get them talking about what they love, about what makes them feel good inside, like hemlock stands (beautiful, quiet, perfect humidity level). "If you want to write a great policy," he suggested, "do it outside." Chris urged attendees not be daunted by the 17 percent target:

This is the opportunity of a lifetime. Seventeen percent is a drop in the bucket. We just have to do it. There is no economic return for destroying our world. There is none. We have to stand up. We are humans; we are all part of this world. Each of us has the ability to do what's right and we have the responsibility to point out bad decisions. We know what is right here. We can do this, but we have to put our minds together, open our hearts, use our connection with the earth to create these policies, no matter what our bosses tell us.

With reference to the healing powers of Mother Earth, Chris noted the importance of ceremony in opening minds and hearts: “I love the Haudenosaunee Words Before All Else. They make me think of the water, the animals, the plants. It takes you in your heart and mind and makes you realize who we are as people.”

“This is the opportunity of a lifetime. Seventeen percent is a drop in the bucket. We just have to do it. There is no economic return for destroying our world. There is none.” – **Chris Craig**

## **Panel 1 discussion – A spectrum of hope and possibility: Clint Jacobs, Gary Pritchard, Smiling Water**

### **Clint Jacobs**

Walpole Island, where Clint is from, is surrounded by agriculture. The Municipality of Chatham-Kent owns five percent of the remaining natural habitat of the area and Essex County owns another six percent. Clint said he challenges those representing the government to close the loopholes in existing tools that are supposed to protect the land. He provided the example of a local wetland that was drained when the property changed hands because it was zoned as agricultural land by the municipality. The protection mechanisms in place are ineffective. Clint added that if governments do not recognize areas that are important in First Nation communities, moving forward is very difficult:

Our territories, they're beautiful, important to us. If governments are not recognizing areas that are important in our communities, that we want to protect, it's difficult for us, as for the Moose Cree. We First Nations need to get together, band together, unite.

Clint suggested they can start by working with municipalities, which are often very cooperative. Another option, if both provincial and federal levels cannot recognize the areas important to Indigenous communities, is to take concerns to the United Nations and the international level. He added that his community is still in the process of healing and is busy bringing up the younger generation and carrying on with things that were almost lost: “Our teacher is in the woods, wetlands... the land. We have to learn to listen, and the teachings will be revealed; it's in our prophecies.” While Indigenous communities are working on their healing journey, he proposed that non-Indigenous groups work together with Indigenous communities to build the tools needed to recognize important Indigenous areas: “You are here because your spirit brought you here. We encourage you to help us. We have to learn to walk in both worlds, and sometimes we only know your world at this point.”

### **Gary Pritchard**

Gary, a member of Curve Lake First Nation, is a consultant for Skelton Brumwell and Associates. He has worked for about 300 First Nation communities across Canada and the United States. He expressed support for the creation of an Ontario ICE as part of the Pathway process. He also recommended that regulators take part in ceremonies and share meals, as doing so is a key element of the learning process: “Yes, you can do that, have a meal with us. We are just people too – you need to learn from us.”

### **Smiling Water (Mackenzie Lespérance)**

Smiling Water works for **rare** Charitable Research Reserve, a land trust, and, as an Indigenous woman, has to walk in two worlds. She noted, “We have to know your language to engage with you, and that's double the effort for us.” At the research reserve she works as the Indigenous program coordinator and facilitator and has helped



open the door and remove barriers for the land trust. For people looking to engage Indigenous people, she advised that asking how to help them is important, as different communities have different levels of capacity. If an organization has resources and its intention is to help, she suggested that having Indigenous staff and engaging local communities are important. Organizations have to accept that there might be some change and to not fatigue the Indigenous people that participate. “It isn’t the job of Indigenous people to teach you what reconciliation is,” she said. “You need to do this yourselves.” Smiling Water emphasized the importance of creating a safe, appropriate space for Indigenous people to come together, without the colonial approach. In terms of cultural competency training, Smiling Water added that it is not a checkbox; rather it is a lifelong process, just like reconciliation, and it begins at the individual level and does not end after an eight-hour session. At the core, it’s about community, engagement and relationships.

A lively discussion followed the panel session. Here are some of the highlights:

“If you are wondering whether you have to talk with a First Nation community, then you need more cultural awareness.” – **Chris Craig**

“I had asked an Elder in our community, how can we get our younger generation to love the land like you? The answer was, get them outside; they’ll connect in their own way. Sometimes we have to help them. When I get them out there, they’re chatting and disconnected, so I spread them out and ask them to close their eyes. It’s about being mindful, using other senses and connecting with their spirit to the land.”  
– **Clint Jacobs**

“Language and words like ‘resource’ aren’t inclusive of Indigenous peoples, because we see trees and animals as family. We don’t ask each other (other people) if they can be a resource so we can use them. It comes down to different world views.” – **Smiling Water**

“There cannot be reconciliation without justice, environmental justice, social justice. The clarity that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – it’s our responsibility as individuals. It’s not enough to just apologize for historical crimes that have been committed against your communities; we have to make sure that those injustices don’t continue.” – **Faisal Moola, David Suzuki Foundation**

“Reconciliation starts in the heart. We all have things we have to heal from. Being truthful about that, how can you help others if you are in a state that requires healing? Moving toward truthful, honest reconciliation ... it begins with self.” – **Smiling Water**

“We created Walpole Island Land Trust and are using that mechanism, though the approach isn’t ours, because we have gotten away from our own traditional practices. We were losing habitats to farming, people coming out to Walpole, waving cheques under people’s noses. We have to be vigilant, and a land trust is a conventional tool that we need in certain situations. But for the long haul, we need to rekindle our language and traditional forms of education and need to make sure that our young people are connected to the land. It’s everybody’s responsibility; we need to mentor and guide the next generation.” – **Clint Jacobs**

“A lot of municipalities are banking on First Nations having zero development of reserve lands, to offset municipal development. But don’t look to us not to have economic development opportunities. We will probably just do them in a more sustainable fashion.” – **Gary Pritchard**

## **Panel 2 discussion – Setting the table for transformation: Dorothy Taylor, Miptoon, Tim Johnson**

### **Dorothy Taylor**

Dorothy Taylor is an Elder from Curve Lake First Nation and a graduate of Trent University in Indigenous studies and administration, and she worked for the community in economic development for many years. She stated that “we were put on this earth to do service for the people and the land – we have to live for others. Women are recognized in our culture and are the leaders in looking after the water. We are the creators of the people.”

Dorothy referenced a spiritual gathering of leaders in the Catskill Mountains, New York, including the Dalai Lama. They expressed concern about what they were seeing in their homelands and issued a statement about bringing balance back into the world, urging all nations to recognize their gift and their obligations. This statement inspired Dorothy to think about what she could do, which led to the formation of a volunteer community group, the Sacred Water Circle. The group works toward a renewed relationship between humanity and water, and focuses on the traditional, cultural and spiritual aspects of working with water. “Water is a sacred entity,” explained Dorothy. “It is alive. It is more than H<sub>2</sub>O, more than a commodity that is bought and sold. The lakes, the oceans, the creeks, the very water that falls from the sky is the lifeblood of Mother Earth. It is sacred. Elders say simply and profoundly, ‘Thank you for the water.’ This is what they do in the morning as they drink water, brush teeth with water and make tea with water.” Dorothy recommended that we thank the water before we drink in the morning: “It changes the relationship. The most powerful word in any language is thank you.”

The Sacred Water Circle, which was established in 2011 and involves many nations, has one prayer and a shared message for governments, corporations and scientists. The circle has held several gatherings, the biggest in 2014 at Trent University. It brought together people from around the world. Conversations have always come back to the importance of engaging youth, so the circle formed another group, Youth for Water, where Indigenous youth learn how to develop water programming in their own communities. This work led to the formation of yet another group, the Peterborough-Kawartha-Haliburton Regional Centre of Expertise for Sustainability Education, recognized by UNESCO. It is working diligently to bring all partners together in this region and integrating Indigenous Knowledge into schools, as well as into activities out of the classroom and on the land. Dorothy adds that “the time has come that we can’t work separately. We have to open up our doors, regardless what part of the land you belong to.”

### **Miptoon**

Miptoon is an Elder and resident of Neyaashiiningmiing in the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation and a former band councillor for that nation. Miptoon agreed with Dorothy’s observations and added that we need the wisdom and knowledge of the Elders. Miptoon was a hunter and trapper and then got involved in a species-at-risk program; his desire to hunt waned a little, though he still hunts today. He has enjoyed working on species at risk, but the sad reality is that more animals and plants are being lost every year. We need to look at Mother Earth as a community, not a commodity. He shared his view that we have lost the language of understanding:

When a chickadee sings, can we understand what it’s saying? The song, the whistling? We are all spiritual people and we need to awaken it. We need to open our eyes. The big thing is we are not listening. What we need to do is listen to what wildlife is saying – “help me, help me.”

Miptoon add that we must keep the generations to come in the forefront of our minds and ask what are we going to leave them. Ultimately he believes if you love nature, it will love you back.

## **Tim Johnson**

Tim Johnson began by saying that the best he could do was confirm what Dorothy and Miptoon had said. He explained that the philosophy of gratitude, the Thanksgiving Address and the ceremonies that have developed out of this thankfulness and gratitude are powerful philosophical statements, not just quaint stories. Beginning with recognition and thankfulness is where he believes setting the table for transformation begins. From an Indigenous perspective, that spiritual connection occurs every day and is very different from the notion of dominion, control and ownership. Personal responsibilities, community responsibilities, and national and international responsibilities have to be considered.

Tim has taken a lot of inspiration from Larry McDermott and his wife, Nancy, who have conscientiously managed a 200-hectare Algonquin nature reserve on the Mississippi River in Ontario. Tim has tried to do the same by reforesting acreage he has at Six Nations and replanting Carolinian forest. He believes “it’s important to be involved in your community to articulate and express the knowledge you have on issues, as you never know how the seeds you plant will come back and plant something else.”

Tim shared details about a renewable energy project that Six Nations has begun in partnership with Samsung. When it is up and running, the wind and solar energy farm will power 60,000 homes and generate \$9 million over 20 years, and also produce clean, renewable energy, job training and a scholarship fund for the community. When the chief talks about the project, she talks about the values and begins with the Thanksgiving Address, and how this project will assist and preserve the environment. The context of treaties has also been important, as a land claim process is in play. Tim believes that when it comes to community work, it is important that community values and teachings be transmitted to all operations and agencies. His advice for Indigenous communities is to “act from the agency that you possess as an independent sovereign First Nation and make your own decisions. Work with partners who are compatible with your values and ethics. You have developed the knowledge that really works.”

## **Closing comments**

After the second panel all attendees had an opportunity to offer closing comments. There were many heart-felt words of thanks to the speakers and the other participants.

In closing, Dan Longboat said the following:

As my good friend and teacher Norma Jacobs General shared with me, when you go to a beautiful forest, the trees are different and working together, and different things have come to live in the forest. When we see that, it makes us feel good and we can appreciate that and extend our gratitude. Their roots are intermingled; it’s like they’re holding hands which work together to sustain Life. Human beings are like this too – all different, all working together for the continuation of Life and toward fruition of great beauty. It’s up to us to be able to hold hands and work together for the continuation of all Life. This is the knowledge that our Elders have and the power of their knowledge and teachings. One story is about the creation of human beings and when the Creator made us He loved us so much He put part of himself into us to love one another, help one another, share and be generous. He told us to love one another, learn how to live within nature, let nature be your teacher and be thankful to all those things that work to sustain and perpetuate Life. Prophecy tells us that the four sacred colours have come back together, so our work is clear: we must have the courage and the capacity to collaborate and to roll up our sleeves to get the work done.



# SUPPLEMENT: SUMMARY OF DECEMBER 2017 MEETINGS

To continue the momentum from the Peterborough gathering, Ontario Nature helped to organize meetings that took place in Toronto from December 4 to 5, 2017. The purpose was to bring together allies with a strong interest in learning about and advancing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in Ontario. The table below lists the communities and organizations with members who participated in the December 2017 meetings.

<b>INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>CONSERVATION GROUPS</b>	<b>GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</b>
Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg	Carolinian Canada	Environmental Commissioner of Ontario
Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation	CPAWS – Ottawa Valley	Ontario Biodiversity Council
Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation	Credit Valley Conservation	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Six Nations of the Grand River	David Suzuki Foundation	
Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation	Nature Conservancy of Canada	<b>OTHER</b>
	Ontario Land Trust Alliance	Skelton Brumwell and Associates
	Ontario Nature	Trent University
	Plenty Canada	University of Guelph
	<i>rare</i> Charitable Research Reserve	
	STORM Coalition	
	Sustainability Network	
	Wildlife Conservation Society Canada	
	WWF Canada	

Larry McDermott, Algonquin Elder and executive director of Plenty Canada, and Eli Enns, the co-chair of ICE and member of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation in British Columbia, led the discussion.

The meetings were an opportunity for participants to meet and hear about the conversations at the October 2017 gathering in Peterborough, and to discuss how conservation groups, academic institutions and other allies can support conservation and reconciliation efforts in Ontario. Elder Garry Sault, from Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, opened the meetings.

On December 4, 15 staff and/or members of conservation organizations, Indigenous groups and academic institutions met at Ontario Nature's office. Larry and Eli shared updates on the latest conversations from the Pathway to Canada Target 1 meetings. Ceremonies and cross-cultural relationship building were the focus of the meetings, which all began and closed with a smudge ceremony. Members involved with ICE, the National Advisory Panel and National Steering Committee believe that integrating ceremony and building cross-cultural literacy is some of the most important work they are doing. As an example of what is happening in other provinces, Eli told the attendees that Parks Canada and the Government of Alberta came forward with an open slate and asked the Elders for help. The Elders' response was to honour the treaties, as within the treaties are an ethic of respect and spirit of generosity. By adopting this ethic, we will be able to meet and surpass the 17 percent target. At the end of the day we are all treaty people.

A discussion surrounding rights ensued, as Elder Garry Sault spoke about the inter-nation tension that exists around treaty rights between the Mississaugas of the New Credit and Six Nations of the Grand River, and the importance of having treaty people work alongside nations to get governments to listen. Eli reflected on Garry's words and added that Elders at all of the regional ICE gatherings were consistent in saying, "The rights have been fought for and won, and now it is time to work on our responsibilities." Eli shared his view that rights and responsibilities are two sides of the same coin and that success will come from the ground up and not the top down. Larry added his observation that the Pathway process is not intended to be an absolute blueprint for every community or to embrace all Indigenous cultures. He said that "reconciliation includes finding ways to honour the pledge of the Crown. People are trying to figure out how to work together, and what is happening to Mother Earth is of concern to all of us. It's an urgency that we all know."

Eli asked whether an Ontario ICE would be in order, composed of Indigenous representation from across the province and government representatives. Is there a need or want? The idea is that each element of the mosaic of Canada can be a leader in its own way and that lessons learned would be shared with other parts of the country.

Questions arose in the discussion, including these:

- With issues around sovereignty in Ontario, how can people proceed? Can politics be left at the door?
- Is Ontario too big as a subregion?
- What are the costs and benefits of having government representatives around the table?

Larry reflected that people sometimes confuse the responsibilities and roles of civil society and governments. He stated, "The treaty commitments are different from fixing government relations. Our shared responsibilities are to the treaty commitments." Eli added that IPCAs are meant to show that the economy can be built in a good way and demonstrate how to bring things back in harmony with the Creator's jurisdiction. Elder Garry Sault then closed the meeting, and participants had dinner together.

On December 5, at a Centre for Social Innovation, the conversation was opened to a wider audience of 25 attendees, staff or members of the groups in the table above. Elder Garry Sault led the opening ceremony and Eli



introduced the focus for the day, which was to share information about the Pathway to Canada Target 1 and IPCAs, and discuss actions and how to support these initiatives. As many attendees had not previously heard about ICE directly from Eli, he provided the most recent updates and described its formation and early conversations.

Discussion that morning included these topics:

- Efforts being made so that Indigenous youth know their rights, including the importance of bringing youth on the land to create the emotional sense of connection to place, the land and history
- The potential of Indigenous Guardian programs to educate people and hold governments and companies accountable for their actions
- The importance of collaboration and building cross-cultural literacy so conservation groups can support IPCAs through the work they do (e.g., dealing with the challenges of privately owned land in southern Ontario)
- The need to build cross-cultural literacy about the Indigenous understanding of natural law and the many things that helped to shape Indigenous identity before the treaties were created

Participants then viewed the four videos from the regional ICE gatherings and heard the Four-Moose Narrative from Eli. Discussion focused on the creation of an Ontario ICE and what allies could do to support next steps if Indigenous people in Ontario are willing to take the lead. Partnerships with academic institutions and research institutes were discussed, as well as the need for co-created knowledge gathering in which scientific and Indigenous communities work together. The discussion also covered how to count existing conservation areas in meeting the 17 percent target, which several people in the room argued must be held to a high standard. Eli brought forward the notion of “reconciliation zones,” or co-workspaces where Indigenous organizations, environmental groups, academics, government representatives and others can meet to work on projects that advance reconciliation. The discussion concluded with attendees sharing their thoughts on what they would like to see happen next. The meetings resulted in a strong desire among participants to continue collaborating and engaging in these important discussions.

## Endnotes

1. United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Target 11. [cbd.int/sp/targets/rationale/target-11](http://cbd.int/sp/targets/rationale/target-11).
2. United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Target 18. [cbd.int/sp/targets/rationale/target-18/default.shtml](http://cbd.int/sp/targets/rationale/target-18/default.shtml).
3. Indigenous Circle of Experts, National Steering Committee and National Advisory Panel. Pathway to Canada Target 1. [conservation2020canada.ca/the-pathway](http://conservation2020canada.ca/the-pathway).
4. Ontario Biodiversity Council. Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy, 2011 – Targets. [sobr.ca/\\_biosite/wp-content/uploads/OBS\\_Targets.pdf](http://sobr.ca/_biosite/wp-content/uploads/OBS_Targets.pdf).
5. Government of Ontario. Ontario's Parks and Protected Areas. [ontario.ca/page/ontarios-parks-and-protected-areas](http://ontario.ca/page/ontarios-parks-and-protected-areas).
6. Named by Patrick Canning at 2016 Tribal Parks Gathering
7. IUCN WCPA, 2018. (Draft) Guidelines for Recognising and Reporting Other Effective 28 Area-based Conservation Measures. IUCN, Switzerland. Version 1. [https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/guidelines\\_for\\_recognising\\_and\\_reporting\\_oecms\\_-\\_january\\_2018.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/guidelines_for_recognising_and_reporting_oecms_-_january_2018.pdf)



Mac Armstrong

**ONTARIO NATURE** protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing more than 30,000 members and supporters and more than 150 member groups across Ontario.



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**WALPOLE ISLAND LAND TRUST** is the first First Nations land trust incorporated and registered as a charity in Canada. Its goal is to enhance the ability to conserve and protect ecologically significant habitats and species at risk within the Bkejwanong territory.



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