

The new Anishinabe Algonquin Nation Protocol with the City of Ottawa

Civic Cultural Protocol and Implementation Plan is the result of more than 11 years of discussion

by Greg Macdougall, June 2022

There is a new formally-defined relationship between the city of Ottawa and the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation, upon whose unsundered territory the city is located.

The formal title is the “City of Ottawa – Anishinabe Algonquin Nation Civic Cultural Protocol and Implementation Plan” and it was approved by city council on April 13, 2022.

Understanding all the detail is best accomplished by reading the full document(s) on the city’s website ([SHORTLINK: www.tinyurl.com/ottprot](http://www.tinyurl.com/ottprot)).

There was also the city committee meeting of March 31 where a presentation by two of the involved city staff explained the creation and content of the protocol (see 14:00 - 27:30 in the video); the meeting also included perspectives from Anishinabe Algonquin Nation leadership as well as Elders and city councillors.

The protocol and its five-year plan has “concrete steps in 19 areas of cultural work,” explained Dan Chenier, General Manager of the city’s Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services, at the committee meeting.

The definition of what is or isn’t “culture” isn’t explicitly defined in the protocol, but is implicit in the areas, objectives, and steps it details.

Some of what it contains include changes to city policies and programs, like the following: using Anishinabemowin (the Anishinabe language) in city locations and statements; modification of cultural funding programs; an initiative to “Decolonize the City of Ottawa Archives”; and, including more Anishinabe Algonquin authors in the city library collections. It also extends outside of city departments, for instance: city support for Anishinabe Algonquin First Nations’ own archival work; creating networks between Anishinabe Algonquin cultural producers and local businesses; and, facilitating engagement on cultural / heritage

initiatives and management between the First Nations and local universities and colleges.

Other steps include the item most highlighted in news media coverage of the protocol: the establishment of a non-voting (‘ex-officio’) seat at Ottawa city council for an Anishinabe Algonquin Elder to hold.

Also planned is an annual meeting between Anishinabe Algonquin Nation leadership and city officials, and the creation of an Anishinabe Algonquin Nation Consultative Culture Circle consisting of Elders and knowledge keepers from all 11 federally-recognized Anishinabe Algonquin First Nations, that will meet at least twice a year with city departmental staff to discuss the protocol’s implementation and other issues.

The idea of one city councillor holding an official city position as ongoing liaison with the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation isn’t in the protocol but was raised at the committee meeting, and it will be formally considered after this fall’s municipal election.

The protocol also has background addressing the larger context, such as history and legal issues, and non-quantifiable principles and commitments for how the City of Ottawa and Anishinabe Algonquin Nation will relate.

Two noteworthy elements of the protocol weren’t given any special mention in any of the news media reports nor in the protocol itself: the changed name for the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation, and the omission of the controversial “Algonquins of Ontario” from the protocol.

A different name for the Nation

‘Anishinabe Algonquin Nation’ is a reverse-order phrasing from what has been previously in widespread use – most notably in the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal



Elder Aimee Bailey of Pikwàkanagàn opened the city council meeting where the protocol was approved. The full video on the protocol is at: youtu.be/_Q8KS5onPfQ

Council (AANTC) name itself, and also in the city’s 2018 Reconciliation Action Plan that refers throughout to the ‘Algonquin Anishinabe Nation.’

“Some of our communities only go by Anicinape,” AANTC Acting Grand Chief Savanna McGregor commented for this article, using one of the many mixtures of Anishinabe dialects. “Algonquin is a name that was imposed upon us by Samuel de Champlain.”

The new protocol has a section entitled, “Use of Words Anishinabe (Anishinaabe), Algonquin (Algonkin), and Algonquian (Algonkian)” that details possible origins of the French word ‘Algonquin,’ and explains other language issues – such as, how a ‘g’ or ‘k’ at the end of the word (i.e., Anishinabeg) indicates plural.

But it doesn’t elaborate on now putting ‘Anishinabe’ first before ‘Algonquin’ in the Nation’s name.

“In February 2022, the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation leadership sent a joint letter to the City of Ottawa recommending that ‘Anishinabe Algonquin Nation’ (English) and ‘Nation Anishinabe Algonquine’ (French) be used in all future City communications, official publications and on the City of Ottawa website,” elaborated Chenier.

He said the change originated with “Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and

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fluent Anishinaabemowin Algonquin language speakers and translators from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation.”

A traditional linguist involved in that process, explained that ‘Anishinabe Algonquin Nation’ aligns with “the traditional way of identifying one’s community or land base.”

Wolf Lake First Nation Chief Lisa Robinson – also Grand Chief of the Algonquin Nation Programs and Services Secretariat (ANS for short: Algonquin Nation Secretariat) – explained the change was unanimously supported by the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation leadership.

“We’re recognizing and respecting our language and placing it first – and we should always do that.”

She said the message from the Anishinabeg Elders was “[for] all of us – to always pay that homage to our language and our people first.”

But there was a part of the protocol that wasn’t unanimously supported, it turns out.

The “Algonquins of Ontario” issue

Despite major controversy even within the past year about the city’s relationship with the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) organization, there is no mention nor clarification of their relationship to the city anywhere in the protocol.

“This good work that we’re doing, it’s our work and we’re owning it. It is the work of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation. We do not recognize the AOO,” commented ANS Grand Chief Robinson.

That sentiment echoes the opposition elaborated last spring by the ANS and AANTC and some individual Chiefs against the Tewn project, a large-scale development partnership between the AOO and Taggart development company, that the city approved in an urban boundary expansion as part of the city’s 25-year New Official Plan.

The ANS represents three Anishinabe Algonquin First Nations (Barriere Lake – Mitcikinabik Inik; Timiskaming; and Wolf Lake), while the AANTC represents seven (Abitibiwinini; Kebaowek; Kitcisakik; Kitigan Zibi; Lac Simon; Long Point; and Wahgoshig).

The city developed the protocol in collaboration with four primary leaderships of the “11 Anishinabe Algonquin First Nations that are federally recognized under the Indian Act”: the ANS; the AANTC; Kitigan Zibi

individually; and also the one Anishinabe Algonquin First Nation not represented by either the ANS or AANTC, the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation.

It is only Wahgoshig and Pikwàkanagàn that are based in Ontario; Wahgoshig is part of the AANTC as well as of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (formerly known as Grand Council Treaty #9), while Pikwàkanagàn is the only Algonquin member of the Anishinabek Nation.

But Pikwàkanagàn is also the only federally-recognized First Nation that is part of the AOO, an organization formed for negotiating the Eastern Ontario land claim, an area that includes Ottawa. Pikwakanagan Chief Wendy Jocko stated that the protocol’s omission of the AOO “is most unfortunate and given the long, collaborative, and fruitful partnership with the City of Ottawa, very puzzling.”

She explained the background that in 1991, Pikwàkanagàn – then known as the Algonquins of Golden Lake – “in concert with the Status and Non-Status Algonquins residing in communities within Ontario, entered into modern day Treaty negotiations with Canada and Ontario,” and they did this “to rightfully assert their Indigenous rights and title in this Province” and “to rebuild the Algonquin Nation, which has been divided and marginalized through federal policies such as the Indian Act and the failure of the Crown to protect Algonquin land rights as required by the Royal Proclamation of 1763.”

Chief Jocko concluded that the omission perpetuates these problems and “as the rights bearing people in Ontario, the Algonquins of Ontario ought to have been consulted on this project and should be included as full participants in this Protocol.”

Chenier stated the city’s position from the protocol process: “Early on in the development of the Protocol, the Chiefs and Grand Chiefs requested the City collaborate directly with the 11 federally recognized First Nations themselves ... As such, the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) organization was not a participant in the protocol development.”

However, the city “continues to consult with the Algonquins of Ontario, the Anishinabe Algonquin Nations, and Urban Indigenous Communities on development applications, environmental assessments, archaeological studies, and wildlife conservation efforts,” added Charmaine Forgie, the city’s Manager of Business and Technical Support Services. [To note: *archaeology is one of the areas covered in the protocol.*]

The AANTC’s McGregor stated, “The

federal government and the provincial government of Ontario did the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation a big disservice by recognizing the AOO.”

Noting that the AOO is a corporation, she added, “A corporation is not a First Nation People,” and asserts that “all levels of government from city, provincial, federal to Anishinabe Algonquin need to figure out how to rectify this division tactic and set things right by not continuing with the current land claim process on the southside of our ancestral highway, the Kichi Sippi [the Ottawa River].”

Moving forward

Last year, city council ignored the requests of 10 of the 11 Anishinabe Algonquin First Nation Chiefs and made the major decision in support of the AOO’s Tewn development – with Mayor Jim Watson declaring it an “innovative pioneering way” to “be serious about reconciliation” at a press conference – and now this protocol, over 11 years in the making, is approved by the same city council.

“Of course, we are hoping it lays the groundwork for collaboration in many more areas, but this particular protocol is focused on culture,” stated Chenier in his presentation at the committee meeting.

At the same committee meeting, a progress report on the city’s Reconciliation Action Plan was tabled, using the definition of reconciliation from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Principles of Reconciliation that begins by labeling it “a process of healing relationships, that requires constructive actions [...]”

This will be most importantly defined by actions and results, but the formal adoption of this protocol and its five-year implementation plan is a major step in that process.

LINKS: This article: AnishinabekNews.ca
Protocol documents: tinyurl.com/ottprot
Protocol video: youtu.be/_Q8KS5onPfQ

City 2018 Reconciliation Action Plan:
tinyurl.com/ott2018rap

2022 Reconciliation Action Plan update:
tinyurl.com/ott2022rap

Anishinabe Algonquin history resource list:
tinyurl.com/eqed-algonquinhistory

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