

# Kichesipirini Algonquin First Nation

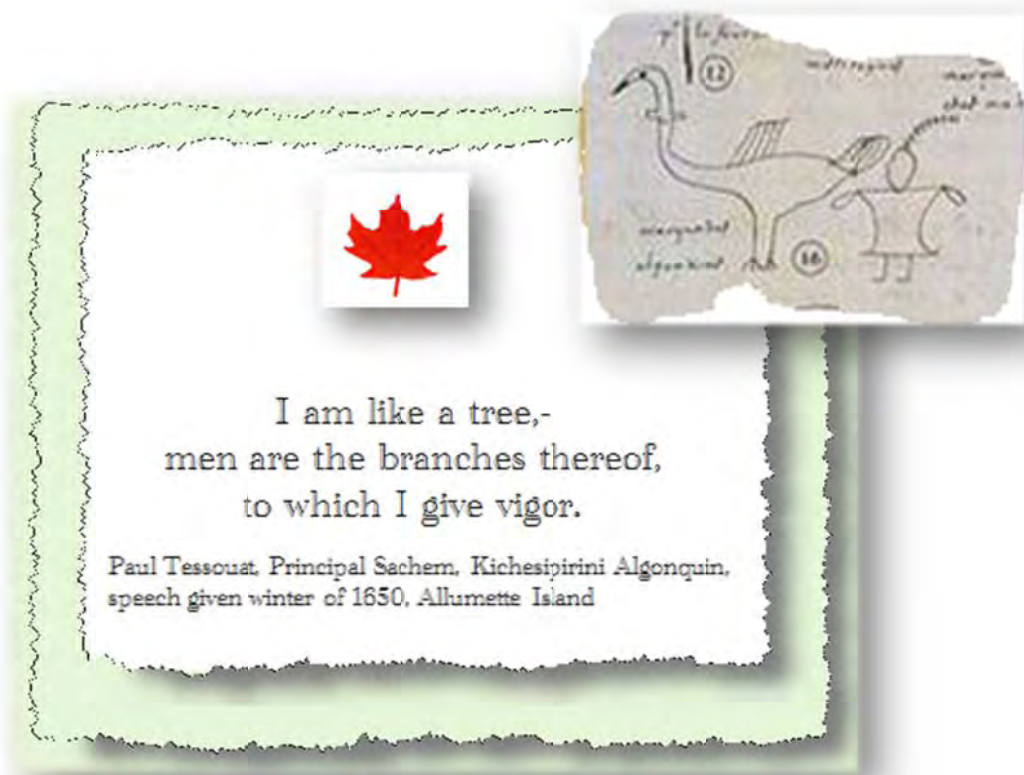
Kichi Sibi Anishnabe / Algonquin Nation

Canada



By Honouring Our Past We Determine Our Future  
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I am like a tree,-  
men are the branches thereof,  
to which I give vigor.

Paul Tessouat, Principal Sachem, Kichesipirini Algonquin,  
speech given winter of 1650, Allumette Island

**Protecting Ottawa's Great Forest...**

**Preserving Canada's Natural and Cultural Heritage for the World**

“Strike, Strike, Heavy Blows of the Axe.....”

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What dost thou think Pigarouich is? He is a great tree, strongly rooted in the ground; dost thou think to throw it down all at once? Strike, strike heavy blows of the axe, and continue a long time, and at last thou wilt overthrow it.

*Jesuit Relations, xvi (1639) 159*

Here, in unceded Algonquin territory, almost four hundred years ago, first written by observers, we find articulated in the words of our ancestor Etienne Pigarouich, the long tradition of trees as a symbol of Canadian political allegory.

Who knows? Pigarouich may have walked here, may have come here to visit this special place to contemplate the many changes he was witnessing, to gather his thoughts, and find his words to express to the newcomers the deep concerns and anxieties he felt about those times.

It is clear that he realized that as strong and great a tree may be, it is vulnerable. Something that can withstand the storms and natural tests of time cannot survive persistent, systemic, anthropogenic violence.

Pigarouich was a Medicine-man associated with the Kichesipirini at the time of first contact, and he was originally speaking about the pressures to covert his spirituality, but perhaps there is far reaching wisdom to his interpretation of the challenges of those times that can have relevance for us today.

Great trees, strongly rooted in the ground, provide a sense of grounded-ness for us all. They stand as sturdy testaments to the years gone by, having gone through their own radical transformations, and then decidedly reaching upward, with a determination that began from within a seed. But that seed could not reach its great potential alone. It must depend on the proper conditions to not just survive, but hopefully to thrive. And so we find natural forests having claimed their place on this earth, and they have long been a symbol of nations, being communities of interdependent but diverse life, somehow woven together into a mosaic of inspiring activity.

The Algonquin people have loved their forests and their trees, recognizing them to be teachers and providers.

“Strike, Strike, Heavy Blows of the Axe.....”

Those aspects of the tree, as life giving, were then allegorically used to describe sovereignty by Tessouat, the well-known Kichesipirini leader during the first contact period.

I had some intention of spending the winter here, but I am told that neither your Captain loves me nor do you. Perhaps you do not know that I have ruled from my youth, that I was born to rule. As soon as I open my mouth, every one listens to me; it is also true that I bear up and maintain the whole country during the life of my grandchildren and my nephews, it is thus he calls his people. Even the Hurons give ear to me, and I command among them; I rule them, as if I were Captain. I say not a word over there, – the rest speak; but there is nothing done except that which I have in my mind. I am like a tree, – men are the branches thereof, to which I give vigor.

This tradition, this reliance on trees as a social reference, was carried over to the honoured Maple Leaf totemic identity being given the earliest Canadians, to even our own contemporary “Living Tree” Constitution.



This tradition of contemplating the spiritual significance and deepest value of trees and forests is a deeply rooted part of our shared Canadian heritage.

Would it be a surprise that there would be found in this location ancient milestones of our earliest beginnings here?

Should we not exercise every precaution to ensure that we make certain to protect them?

After all, we know that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind.

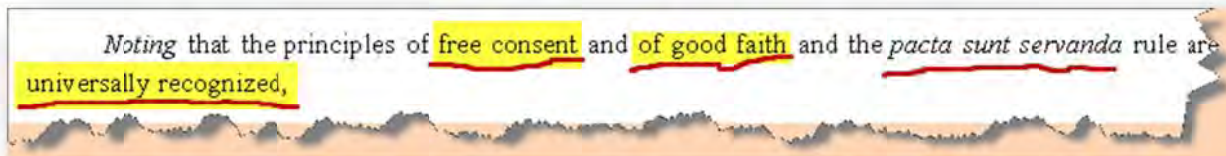
And even if there aren't ancient findings, there is nothing to prevent us from now beginning a new tradition here, and placing our own monument, acknowledging a new era.

This area, this land of the Algonquin, has long been a meeting place of diverse people and innovative ideas. It is here that the very notion of Canada began.

Is it a surprise then, that here, in the nation's capital region, in the land of the Algonquins, that there are many different people intentionally united in a common interest, wanting to preserve what they consider to be a forest of special importance to them?

What else can I do but support them?

“Strike, Strike, Heavy Blows of the Axe.....”

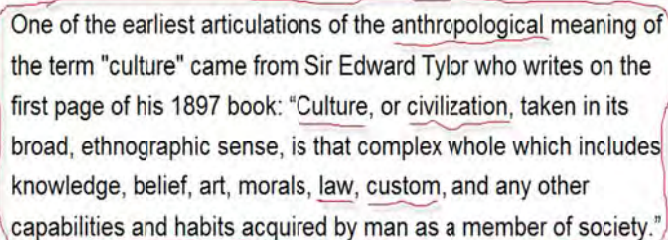


Noting that the principles of free consent and of good faith and the pacta sunt servanda rule are universally recognized,

Those that know the law, will know the full law affecting the situation. They will know that the Kichesipirini Algonquin First Nation meet the criteria required for proving claims of title, and pre-existing governance. Those that know the law will know that these rights are existing, and despite encroachments and entrenched administrations, that according to the rule of law, these will not have altered the continued rights.

They will know that these laws are not dependent on statute or certain interpretations of common law. They will know that there are laws protecting the specific claims of the Kichesipirini integrated into our Constitution.

Anyone that does not know about these laws, or the history of Canada that includes the genuine history of the Kichesipirini and Algonquin Nation, should wonder about that.



One of the earliest articulations of the anthropological meaning of the term "culture" came from Sir Edward Tylor who writes on the first page of his 1897 book: "Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

The Kichesipirini Algonquin First Nation fully supports the efforts of all those committed to preserving the Beaver Pond and the South March Highlands, Ottawa's Great Forest, as an irreplaceable part of Algonquin, Canadian, and Ottawa natural and cultural heritage, which has nurtured and inspired us.

Shouldn't this challenge be recognized as a great opportunity?

Here we have a collaborative initiative looking to find innovative ways of reconciling our lost Algonquin heritage with the future aspirations of Canada, for generations to come. Here in Ottawa we have an intentional community agreeing to include the Kichesipirini Algonquin First Nation in their plans to establish an internationally visible commitment demonstrating that Ottawa can be a city that is socially, economically and ecologically responsible and sustainable.

The Kichesipirini Algonquin First Nation asserts that Ottawa's Great Forest be integrated as an element of an expanded National Capital Commission's Greenbelt plan, and that such plans would merit the assistance of the Kichesipirini Algonquin First Nation in ensuring it become a protected part of Canadian natural and cultural heritage to be recognized worldwide.

“Strike, Strike, Heavy Blows of the Axe.....”

This year has been declared the Year of Forests by the United Nations, recognizing the importance of forests and that the contributions of forested ecosystems to human well-being cannot be overstated or replaced once destroyed.

It is only fitting as well then, that in this important year, this city preserves such a forest as a tribute to our original national beginnings, our original philosophical influences, our continued shared aspirations, and as a place of continued progressive ideas in the world.

Here again, centuries after our first encounters, we now find ourselves meeting as peoples, this time united by hope and openly acknowledged shared ecological, social-economic and cultural-spiritual values. This forest has become a common ground for the continuance of the “great notion” of Canada.

Can we afford to miss this opportunity?

Sincerely,

Paula LaPierre  
Principal Sachem  
Kichesipirini Algonquin First Nation  
Kichi Sibi Anishnabe  
Canada

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“Strike, Strike, Heavy Blows of the Axe.....”

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“Strike, Strike, Heavy Blows of the Axe.....”

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“Strike, Strike, Heavy Blows of the Axe.....”

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