

The Pimachiowin Aki Management Plan: A case-study of collaborative planning in Canada's boreal forest.

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The Pimachiowin Aki Management Plan is part of the nomination package for UNESCO World Heritage Site designation and will constitute the official management plan if the nomination is successful.

Abstract

The willingness to go beyond normative planning practices requires radically different approaches to interpreting and representing the landscape. It requires exploring new ways of incorporating Indigenous landscape values into planning processes using a collaborative and co-operative framework for engagement. The Pimachiowin Aki Plan, created by Hilderman, Thomas Frank, Cram deserves recognition because of its outstanding approach to generating and representing Indigenous landscape values. The approach is rooted in upholding transparency, relationship building, knowledge sharing, trust and mutual learning. The collaborative and value-based approach used during the Pimachiowin Aki Management planning process resulted in a community-based plan that acts as a blueprint for future sustainable economic development for the territory. This planning approach is unique in that Indigenous thinking and perceptions shaped and guided the creation of the plan - the plan was built upon existing community land-use plans and serves a symbol of the co-operative and collaborative process.

This approach to planning successfully weaves Anishinaabe worldviews with submission requirements set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and is a contemporary example of cutting-edge co-operative planning practice in Manitoba.

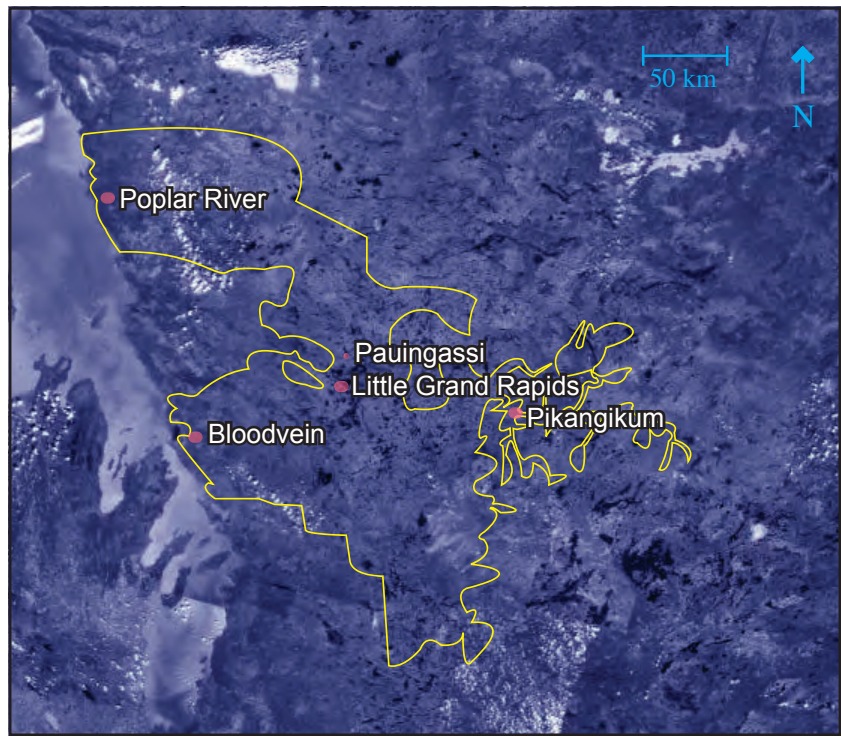
Background

The Pimachiowin Aki planning story originates from the vision of five Anishinaabe communities and their need to collectively and collaboratively protect and manage the cultural and ecological integrity of the planning areas: 33,400km² of boreal forest in Eastern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario.

Translated to the land that gives life, Pimachiowin Aki reflects the intimate associations of the natural and cultural worlds that make this vast tract of northern forest far more than a spectacular boreal “wilderness” landscape. Anishinaabe presence and activities, including customary land management practices, have had material effects on the land with which they have co-evolved.

The duty of the planner in this story was to compile and create the Management Plan for the proposed Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Site, which includes two provincial parks and a conservation reserve, as well as all or parts of the ancestral lands of the five Anishinaabe First Nations, including: Bloodvein River, Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi, Pikangikum and Poplar River.

Pimachiowin Aki is being nominated for World Heritage status by the Pimachiowin Aki Corporation, an unprecedented partnership of five Anishinaabe First



Map: *Approximated Pimachiowin Aki Management Area.*

Nation communities and two provincial governments. The Corporation aims to establish and manage the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Site according to shared principles of mutual respect and collaboration.

The plan is based on the Protected Areas and First Nation Resource Stewardship: A Cooperative Relationship Accord (the Accord), which was signed by the Pimachiowin Aki communities in 2002 under the common vision based on an acknowledgement that the Creator, the maker of all, has placed everyone on the same land. “The Creator has given us the responsibility to protect and care for the lands on which we were placed... the Creator has given us a trust and duty to future generations of our people.”

Actions and Effects

As a unifying document, the management plan reflects the policies and land-use categories established in each of the local land-use plans, integrating and coordinating their provisions across the nominated area, and focusing protection on safeguarding outstanding universal values of the territory.

The plan brings together and applies Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, technical sciences, customary stewardship practices, provincial government policy, and co-management accountability structures. The plan will be implemented through a combination of legislative, regulatory, and traditional stewardship

methods and systems.

Under the plan, any development opportunities within the nominated area will be pursued only if they contribute to economic viability of the communities and generate land-based livelihoods that are guided by Anishinaabe values. Cultural and ecological sustainability will take priority. Any commercial development would be subject to all applicable provincial and federal assessment and licensing processes.

Applications and Lessons

The lessons learned and applications for planners emanate from one of the major challenges that arose during the process. The challenge emerged because some of the necessary foundations were not completed prior to the commencement of the Management Plan, meaning that local land-use plans and background studies had not been completed when the management planning process was initiated. This conflict necessitated dialogue and interaction amongst the Pimachiowin Aki Partners and Study Teams. In the end, the management plan process helped the partners to focus and articulate the vision, goals and objectives for Pimachiowin Aki.

Overcoming this challenge required great patience and a keen ability to re-

interpret culturally held notions of time and space. Transparency was key, and a general willingness to listen and share perceptions and views of the project were pivotal in gaining trust and participation.

The success of the plan can be attributed to the ways in which the challenges were met – primarily by maintaining a collaborative and co-operative mindset throughout, and by viewing the process as an opportunity to articulate and define local practices. It took a relinquishing of pre-determined time-lines in exchange for a new way of seeing the landscape and the project. It also took time for the community members to realize that they were in control of the plan and that this was an opportunity to share their values and traditional stewardship practices – this was their opportunity to explore and define the living physical and cultural landscape upon which they call home.

From this, we can draw three transferable applications for planners working in an Indigenous context.

1. A Model for Collaborative Planning

The Pimachiowin Aki Management Plan is an exemplary model for collaborative planning amongst First Nation communities and two provincial governments. The Pimachiowin Aki partnership

was founded on the principles of collaboration and mutual respect that are articulated in the 2002 Protected Areas and First Nation Resource Stewardship: A Cooperative Relationship Accord.

These same principles apply to managing the World Heritage Site: each partner will be responsible for management within its area of jurisdiction, and will be accountable to its local First Nation membership or provincial constituency. As partners, the parties agree to coordinate their activities across the World Heritage Site through a shared governance structure and a World Heritage Site Management Plan. As a partnership, they will be jointly accountable to the World Heritage Committee, the global community, the two provincial administrations, the Chiefs and Councils of the respective First Nations, and future generations of Anishinaabeg.

2. Anishinaabe Stewardship and Management Role

The planning process provided the space and time for the articulation of traditional Pimachiowin Aki stewardship practices.



The Management Plan applies both Anishinaabe knowledge and technical science in the determination of goals, objectives, policies, principles, and in plan implementation. Anishinaabe beliefs, teachings, and practices are respected as central to sustaining the living cultural landscape and fulfilling the sacred duty to protect the lands for future generations.

3. A Living Cultural Landscape

The Plan and the planning process both account for non-western world-views by incorporating and exploring the physical expression of the complex and dynamic sets of relationships, processes and linkages between the culture and the environment. A common understanding of the landscape was held throughout the process - that communities remain intricately tied to the landscape, engaging in activities and livelihoods that are continuously evolving and adapting, but are rooted in traditional cultural values, relationships with the land and with the other beings on the land.



Conclusion

The Pimachiowin Aki Management Plan is an example of a plan that was created using a cutting-edge planning approach in Manitoba. The collaborative and co-operative approach was guided by Anishinaabe beliefs and values - as such, the plan is respected and serves as a written record of accountability for sustaining the living cultural landscape and fulfilling the sacred duty to protect the lands for future generations.

The foundations for the plan are based on the shared vision and core ecological and cultural values of the Anishinaabe people. The representations of Anishinaabe worldviews are embedded within the plan and ensure future land use and development is consistent with Anishinaabe values. The plan was built upon existing community based planning processes and plans, and serves as example of an unprecedented collaboration between five first nation communities and two provincial governments.

As planners working in an Indigenous context, it is important to work collaboratively and co-operatively under the values and beliefs of the local people. It is important for planners to relinquish culturally held-notions of time and space, and be open to more fluid and dynamic tenets of thinking.

This transformative approach to planning allows communities to take the driver's seat on a road towards sovereignty and sustainable economic development. The Pimachiowin Aki Management Plan not only serves as an official World Heritage document but it also stands as a guide for conversations about past, present and future stewardship practices in the Boreal forest.

Pimachiowin Aki is a holistic landscape in which the health of all beings is intricately interconnected. To safeguard the tradition of Anishinaabe land use in the cultural landscape of the boreal shield means to sustain Pimachiowin Aki as an interconnected whole.

Project Update

The Pimachiowin Aki nomination bid has progressed since it was submitted to the World Heritage Organization in early January, 2012. The plan has reached Stage 3 of the nomination process and requires external experts from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and from the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to visit Pimachiowin Aki to evaluate the “nominated property” on the ground and discuss the nomination with the relevant national, provincial and local authorities, and the Pimachiowin Aki partners and advisors. The visit will occur during the last week of August 2012 and will provide an opportunity for the management planning team to experience the landscape and review the management plan with international World Heritage experts.



References

1. *(Accord) Poplar River First Nation, Pauingassi First Nation, Little Grand Rapids First Nation, Pikangikum First Nation. (2002). Protected Areas and First Nation Resource Stewardship: A Cooperative Relationship. Pikangikum.*
2. *Pedersen, Arthur. Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites: a Practical Manual for World Heritage Site Managers. UNESCO, Paris, 2002.*
3. *Hilderman, Thomas, Frank, Cram. (2011). Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project Management Plan.*

Images and Map

Page 1: UNESCO logo. Source, <http://www.moveoneinc.com>

Page 2: Map. Source, google maps

Page 3: Moose image. Source, <http://www.nrdc.org/>

Page 4: Canoe image. Source, <http://beaverbarkcanoes.wordpress.com/home/>

Page 5: Aurora Boreal Forest image: <http://www.karljohnston.com/photo/taiga/>