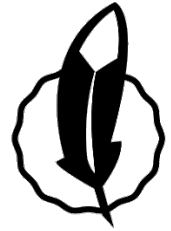


# AOO Canoe-grade White Birch Communication and Harvesting Protocol

Approved by the Resource Project Working Group, September 7, 2022

**Note:** *This is a living protocol, and it may be reviewed and revised over time.*



## 1. Purpose

This protocol has been developed in response to the needs within the AOO communities to have fair access to opportunities to harvest birch bark for canoe building purposes. This protocol will be the working agreement between the AOO Consultation Office, the AOO communities, and the Sustainable Forest Licensees (SFLs) operating within the AOO Settlement Area.

As part of regular Forest Management Plan (FMP) operations, SFLs are required to protect Algonquin values such as canoe-grade white birch trees (canoe birch) during operations, as per the Areas of Concern (AOCs) or Conditions on Regular Operations (CROs) contained within each Forest Management Plan (FMP).

The SFLs are required to provide the locations of canoe birch to the Consultation Office. It is the Consultation Office's responsibility to ensure that the information is then communicated to all communities. It is the Consultation Office's responsibility to initialize the communication between the interested community and the SFL directly in order to achieve further assessment and harvest of the bark if possible.

This protocol will ensure that canoe birch are identified, protected, and communicated in order to provide communities with the opportunities to harvest canoe bark in a timely manner whenever possible. This protocol will also help to ensure the proper management of this sensitive values data.

## 2. SFL Identification Process and Data Recording for Canoe Grade White Birch

- a. During harvest operations Tree Markers and Operators will utilize AOC or CRO for "*Canoe Grade White Birch*" depending on the SFL, to properly identify and protect canoe trees in the Settlement Area.
- b. Candidate canoe birch will be marked "AOO" by Tree Markers with blue paint vertically on opposite sides of the tree at chest level to provide protection from operations
- c. Each canoe birch will be given a GPS coordinate.
- d. Photos of the first 20 feet of the bole will be taken.
- e. Each canoe birch location will be indicated on the Forestry Operation Plan (FOP) map by symbol and GPS coordinate.

- f. Canoe birch values data will be retained and managed by the SFL and MNRF so that the data can inform future operations in the event that a canoe birch is not able to be harvested during a current operation cycle, or to protect the new value (Cultural Modified Tree – CMT) where the bark has harvested from the canoe birch without felling the birch tree.

### **3. SFL and AOO Consultation Office Communication Steps**

- a. After the tree is identified and recorded as per the above steps, the SFL lead will send an email to the AOO Consultation Office: [algonquins@tanakwiwin.com](mailto:algonquins@tanakwiwin.com) with the subject line; *“Potential Canoe Birch Location”*. The email will include the following information:
  - i. Description of the tree (bole and bark characteristics, DBH, tree vigor, etc.)
  - ii. Description of the location with GPS coordinates
  - iii. Description of road network to access tree location
  - iv. Operations information to consider when harvesting bark (timing etc.)
  - v. Photo of the trees (first 20 feet of the bole)
  - vi. Map of FOP with the tree’s GPS location indicated
  - vii. Map/Imagery of the location with the tree’s GPS location indicated, road network for site access with road names, waterbody names etc.
- b. Upon receipt of the SFL’s email, Consultation Office staff lead will reply to the SFL lead to confirm receipt and to provide the summary of the steps that are to be taken by the AOO (as defined in Section 4 below).
- c. Consultation Office staff lead will notify the SFL of the AOO community’s interest in harvesting the canoe birch (when confirmed internally), and the approximate timing when the harvesting will occur by the community.
- d. Consultation Office staff lead will provide a confirmation email to the SFL when the Consultation Office is informed that tree/bark has been harvested by the community.
- e. Regardless of harvest of the bark, the tree must be retained as a protected value.

### **4. AOO Consultation Office and ANR Communications Steps**

- a. Consultation Office staff managing the general inbox will forward the canoe birch information from the SFL to the appropriate staff lead.
- b. Consultation Office staff lead will enter the relevant information about the canoe birch into the canoe birch database. If not the same staff member, the staff lead will provide the GPS locations to another staff member who is responsible for inputting the master canoe birch map.
- c. Consultation Office staff lead will then draft an email outreach to all ANRs to communicate the available opportunity to harvest canoe bark and will include general canoe birch location information that was provided by the SFL.

- d. The exact details of the canoe birch location will not be provided in the first ANR outreach email. The exact location details will be provided to the individual AOO community who confirms their intent to harvest the canoe bark via the ANR.
- e. The opportunity is provided to all communities generally on a first come first serve basis.
- f. If the canoe birch is in closest proximity to any one AOO community, and that community has canoe builders, then that community should receive priority. This respect will be extended by the other ANRs. It is not Consultation Office staff's responsibility to determine a community's priority.
- g. The ANR of the interested community must provide an email confirming their community's intent to harvest, or to decline the opportunity, within five (5) business days from the date the ANR email outreach was sent.
- h. Where two or more community ANRs express their community's interest within the same day the Consultation Office staff lead will email both ANRs together to inform them of this situation. The following considerations will then be applied:
  - i. Both ANRs, not the Consultation Office staff lead, are responsible to determine the community that receives the priority.
  - ii. This internal community-to-community communication process must be concluded within five (5) business days.
  - iii. The ANR of the community who has priority will provide an email confirmation to the Consultation Office staff lead and copy the other ANR.
- g. If five (5) business days pass, and the Consultation Office staff lead has not received any confirmation of community's intent to harvest, the Consultation Office staff lead will provide a second ANR email outreach to all ANRs. ANRs will have an additional five (5) business days to confirm their community's intent to harvest.
- h. Once an ANR has confirmed their community's intent to harvest the canoe bark, Consultation Office Staff will follow up with the ANR directly to provide all of the canoe birch information from the SFL.
- i. The Consultation Office staff lead will email the specific SFL lead to inform the SFL of the specific AOO community's intent to harvest the canoe bark, and the approximate timeframe of when the bark will be harvested by the community. The ANR will be copied on this email to the SFL.
- j. The Consultation Office staff lead will make the initial connection between the ANR/community staff lead and the SFL directly via email. It will be the responsibility of the ANR and SFL to communicate and coordinate together from that point going forward.
- k. In the spirit of building positive working relationships with the SFL, the ANR and SFL will communicate and coordinate logistics, access, operational safety considerations etc.

- l. AOO communities are strongly encouraged to invite the SFL staff to participate in assessing and harvesting the canoe bark to increase awareness and two-way learning.
- m. The ANR will inform the Consultation Office staff lead when the canoe bark has been harvested or if further field assessment determined that the bark was not suitable for canoe bark, the Consultation Office staff lead will update the Canoe Birch Database accordingly.
- n. If there has been no community interest expressed by ANRs via email within ten (10) business days, the Consultation Office staff lead will then inform the SFL that AOO is unable to determine a community's intent to harvest the canoe bark.
- o. Unharvested canoe birch will be retained by the SFL as a protected mapped value and the tree's status will be updated to "Unharvested" in the Canoe Birch Database

#### **5. AOO Consultation Office Management of Canoe Birch Data**

- a. All canoe birch data is treated as culturally sensitive values information and will be communicated and shared only in accordance with this protocol.
- b. The Canoe Birch Database is to be treated as sensitive data requiring certain levels of confidentiality to protect the management of the data and the value itself.
- c. The Canoe Birch Database is to be accessed and managed only by the Consultation Office staff lead, and other designated office staff (e.g., GIS and Business Systems Analyst). These staff require entry to the database to complete data inputs and update existing data as per the protocol steps.
- d. At any time, an ANR may request an opportunity to harvest an existing unharvested canoe birch location. These are locations that may have been provided by SFLs and other credible sources over the years, and while they exist in the database they have not yet been harvested (according to Consultation Office records).
- e. The Consultation Office staff lead can also provide the following general information if it is available:
  - i. Number of existing canoe birch locations that have been harvested
  - ii. Number of existing canoe birch locations that have not been harvested
  - iii. Communities who have harvested previous locations
  - iv. Specific information for an existing unharvested canoe birch location
- f. The Consultation Office staff lead cannot provide the canoe birch database itself and will not provide all existing unharvested locations to one community or ANR.
- g. If the requesting ANR accesses the canoe location for further assessment, the ANR will confirm the status of any road access changes, tree condition, bark assessment, and if the canoe bark was successfully harvested. This information will be updated in the Canoe Birch Database.

## 6. Canoe Grade Bark Harvesting Ethic and Stewardship

- a. The priority for the AOO implementing this protocol is to ensure that canoe birch are protected, that the bark can be harvested by and Algonquin canoe builder, and that Algonquin cultural traditions of harvesting canoe bark and building canoes is continued.
- b. In some cases, it may be possible to arrange that the industry can still derive its commercial products from the birch sawlog after the bark is harvested, but that is the exception and not the expectation.
- c. The harvesting of birch bark will be undertaken with the upmost respect for the birch tree. Harvesting will be performed in a manner that is sustainable for the life of the tree whenever possible, and not simply by the easiest method (e.g., felling the tree).
- d. Algonquin Harvesters will use the upmost care in testing and removing bark to not cut into the cambium. This is especially important when scoring bark around the circumference of the tree.
- e. In locations where it is safe to do so, all attempts should be made to harvest the bark without harvesting (felling) the tree.
- f. Standing birch will survive and heal from the careful canoe bark harvesting process. The healed bark is dark grey and rough and creates a unique cultural value within the forest known as a Culturally Modified Tree (CMT).
- g. The resulting CMT birch tree, like other CMTs, are finite values that will perish sometime in the future. While they exist on the landscape, they provide important physical records of Algonquin traditional knowledge and land use. They are a signature of Algonquin people perpetuating their traditions.
- h. Harvesting bark from a standing birch in this manner will also provide invaluable cultural and scientific monitoring and assessment opportunities of the short-term and long-term survival of birch trees post bark-harvest and will also generate new traditional knowledge.
- i. CMT birch receive permanent protection under the existing FMP through an AOC prescription while the tree persists.
- j. If the canoe bark is only able to be harvested by felling the tree first, and it can be felled in conjunction with the timing of forestry operations at the location, then all reasonable efforts should be made to make the tree available for commercial harvesting.
- k. If the felled birch cannot be utilized as a commercial product by the industry (e.g., the timing of the bark harvest is post-operations), then all reasonable efforts should be made by the Algonquin harvester to utilize as much of the tree as possible (e.g., cut and trucked out for personal or communal firewood needs).