Our dream: a resilient, ecologically connected A2A region that sustains a full range of native wildlife and enhances people’s quality of life for generations to come

http://www.a2acollaborative.org/
The Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Collaborative was founded in 2002 as a regional organization dedicated to the protection of the last intact forested biological corridor across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River System in eastern North America.

The Algonquin to Adirondacks corridor is the most extensive, least degraded north-south corridor east of Lake Superior, connecting the Appalachian forests of the southeastern US to the vast boreal forests of the Canadian Shield. It provides a critical pathway through which species can move and disperse in response to habitat needs and climate change. The heart of the A2A Region also represents one of the most biodiverse areas of Eastern North America as northern and southern forest zones mix.

While the A2A corridor has many significant natural features and functions it is under threat and requires concerted effort to ensure that those features and functions persist for generations to come. Habitat loss and fragmentation threatens wildlife and ecological integrity on many fronts. For example, ecological connectivity in the A2A narrows through the Frontenac Arch, a “bottleneck” where major transportation corridors also present connectivity challenges. Development and population growth continue to present challenges as wetlands are lost and forests degraded. Finally, climate change is leading to greater pressure on species as ranges shift and exotic species flourish. Intact ecosystems to support resilient and diverse species populations, and the ability for species to move, are key adaptation mechanisms for the natural world as the climate continues to shift.

The Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative is committed to facing these challenges directly by working with our partners to protect this critical and spectacular landscape for generations to come.

Our Vision: We envision a resilient, ecologically interconnected landscape that sustains a full range of native wildlife and enhances people's quality of life for generations to come.

Our Mission: We connect lands and people across the Algonquin to Adirondacks region to conserve and enhance a critical corridor for ecological integrity and resilience in eastern North America.

A2A makes a major contribution to conservation in the A2A Region by taking a landscape-wide view and looking for synergies and opportunities that build on the efforts of local groups and agencies. We use the individual pieces created at the local level to complete the conservation puzzle, a critical step in ensuring resilience and ecological integrity in the face of climate change and habitat loss.
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At A2A meetings we always talk about our beloved Alice the Moose. However, in 2001 a wolf was killed in the Adirondacks. Scientists determined the wolf was wild and came from the upper Great Lakes or Algonquin Park (see https://www.adirondack.net/wildlife/wolves/). This wolf also came across the Algonquin to Adirondack wildlife corridor. We envision an A2A region that “sustains a full range of native wildlife and enhances people’s quality of life for generations to come.” Last July we received GPS data of “fawn 018” from a PhD student at Cornell University. This whitetail deer was collared near Fort Drum in 2015 and harvested outside of Kingston in 2018 (see map below). Genetic studies of fishers show that populations on the either side of the St. Lawrence River are closely related, indicating regular crossings. These are just two examples of many stories that support the case for conserving the biological diversity and connectivity of A2A.

The energy and momentum for the A2A collaborative has been growing, as has our capacity as an organization. In April more than 100 stakeholders and scientists from throughout the region came together to share data, offer expertise, and celebrate the wildlife of our region during our first A2A symposium in Clayton, NY. Our conservation partners have begun integrating an A2A lens into their strategies as we continue our Conservation Action Planning process by completing a local plan in the Ontario Frontenac Arch area. Our road ecology work is moving from the research stage to understanding where animals are trying, and often failing, to navigate the Canadian road network in the bottleneck of the region, near the St Lawrence River. We are also mapping an A2A International Scenic Trail. This Pilgrimage for Nature has made significant progress, including the addition of a Kingston loop (near the path of fawn 018).

We’ve also worked on our relationships with stakeholders which is important as a collaborative organization. We improved our communications by hiring Sandra Iseman as a part time communications coordinator. Although Sandra has moved on to other opportunities, the work she did continues to be a blessing for A2A. We’ve also been working directly with partner groups. For example, we partnered with Ontario Nature and hosted the Fall Nature Network gathering, we participated with Nature Canada in the lobby day for protected areas with Canadian MPs, and we’ve been building a relationship with the Staying Connected Initiative.

Many organizations and individuals helped us make progress throughout 2019. For project specific funding The Ontario Trillium Foundation provided support for phase 1 completion of our Conservation Action Planning work, the Community Foundation for Kingston and Area generously helped us further realize the A2A Trail, and the 1000 Islands National Park provided significant support for our road ecology study that was finished in 2019. Our core funding for 2019 was provided by the Laidlaw Foundation, Lawson Foundation, the Echo Foundation, and a loyal network of individual donors that share our vision of A2A. The gala in November was a fundraising success and a wonderful time for partners and supporters from throughout the
region to come together. If you weren’t able to attend, I hope you’ll consider joining us this coming Fall.

I’d like to give a special thank you to my fellow board member, Emily Conger, who has put so much endless energy and attention into rallying support for the A2A Collaborative and making sure that events such as the Gala and Kingston Trail loop excursion are a success. Last, and most importantly, our Executive Director, David Miller is exceptional! He has been with A2A for 4 years now. His position requires him to wear many hats and he wears them all well - thank you for your expertise and dedication to all of this.

The A2A Collaborative is growing in both partners and capacity. Although we are gaining traction and momentum, there is still so much work to do to conserve the bottleneck of our region before development chokes it shut. I wonder if we are growing fast enough to meet the challenge. Every time I drive through the Thousand Islands Region, I see land recently parcelled out and put on the market, new construction, and new miles of road going down. The clock is ticking, and I feel a sense of urgency. The Thousand Islands are such a beautiful area that I’m afraid we will love it to death from both the New York and Ontario sides. The bottleneck is shrinking every year. Along with our partner organizations we need to more aggressively conserve land, restore riparian zones, advocate for smart growth zoning policies, and work with the transportation authorities to mitigate harm done on current and future roadways.

The A2A is experiencing some growing pains as an organization. There are grant opportunities that we have not been able to take advantage of because we are already asking so much of David. While acknowledging that, we are simultaneously working towards establishing 501(c)3 status in New York in order to have access to new funding sources and supporters there. We need to repeat for New York the good work in road ecology and conservation action planning that has already been done on the Ontario side. The main thing that would allow A2A to reach the next level as an organization is the financial security to cover our basic operating costs. In the next two years I hope to see the creation of an endowment for this purpose. This will allow us to have the impact that we need to have in order to meet the challenge we face: keeping the Algonquin to Adirondack axis whole and healthy for all our neighbors, wild and human.

Journey of Fawn 018
Trails Committee Report

Emily Conger (Chair), Richard Grover (chair U.S. sub-committee), Nicole Wooten, David Miller, Richard Phillips, Wayne Terryberry, John Davis, Doug Munro, Patrick O’Connor

Mandate:

- Connect travellers to the unique natural and cultural heritage of the A2A region through direct experience
- Protect critical ecosystems in A2A by fostering an understanding and appreciation for them among visitors and residents,
- Support the regional trail destination identity of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere,
- Support local businesses and livelihoods by attracting sustainable tourism,
- Build a sense of regional community through partnerships with local trail organizations, communities, businesses, and First Nations.

2019 Accomplishments

In 2019, A2A built upon the reconnaissance hike in 2017 that covered every kilometer of the trail by consolidating the results in our GIS trail map, and adjusting the route based on what we learned by actually hiking and biking the route. We used funding from Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) to contact stakeholders – those who own and/or manage the trails we’re using on the Canadian side, municipalities and other stakeholders on the Canada Side to confirm support and continue to get information to help us create a governance model.

Trail view outside Madawaska

A major new initiative was started with the identification of a link between the A2A Trail and the City of Kingston that we’re calling the Kingston Loop. It will use the Rideau and Cataraqui Trails to take hikers/bikers through the heart of the Frontenac Arch and communities such as
Sydenham and Chaffey’s Locks. In Spring 2019, a promotional hike event was in partnership with the Kingston Outdoor Adventure Club, and the Rideau Trail Club.

A2A also began working with a group including Township of South Algonquin, Friends of Algonquin Park, and Park staff the idea of opening up the rail trail from the existing Trail in the Park to Whitney which will provide a much better connection into the park than the existing options of Hwy 60 or travelling to the Shall Lake access.

*Link to trail map: A2A Trail*

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**Trail Goals for 2020:**

1. Complete next Generation of Trail Guide with GIS
2. Develop Stakeholder governance models for each section
3. Fund and hire a new coordinator
4. Inaugural hike (funding and completion)
5. Work with partners on Algonquin Park connection
6. Continue to build partnerships and sponsors with ongoing outreach
7. Develop a passport divided by sections, with practical trekking information, points of interest and a list of businesses of interest to trekkers
Science Committee Report

Tom Langen (co-chair), Ryan Danby (co-chair), Gary Bell, Ken Buchan, Glenn Johnson, Kate Cleary

Mandate:

To advance the conservation and connectivity of the A2A region’s working landscape by providing research-based information to planning authorities, conservation groups, and A2A residents, while identifying the areas of focus for the A2A Collaborative.

2019 Accomplishments

The primary focus of the science committee in 2019 was stage II of the Conservation Action Planning Initiative and the first State of the A2A research symposium, which A2A is planning to make a regular event every two years. We also participated in regular science advocacy, primarily on the CA side of the border.

State of the A2A research symposium

The inaugural State of the A2A research symposium was held in April of 2019.

Over 90 participants gathered at the Harbor Hotel in Clayton, NY for a day of sharing research and perspectives on conservation in the A2A region. Attendees heard presentations documenting the significance of the A2A region, and learned about current research on subjects ranging from species status, to road ecology, to First Nations perspectives, to ecological mapping resources. Highlights included a keynote presentation from Dr. Roland Kays, who described his projects tracking animal movement in the A2A and beyond, a look back through the years of A2A research by Dr. Cathy Keddy, and descriptions of how agencies and groups are using ecological mapping to assess connectivity and establish land securement priorities.

We look forward to organizing this symposium again in the spring of 2021, funding permitting. We will be reaching out in 2020 to ask the membership for ideas on what themes or topics the symposium could focus on. Stay tuned and we hope you can join us in 2021!

Conservation Action Planning

Achievements

Conservation Action Planning also drew in stakeholders within the Frontenac Arch area for a series of workshops which used the Open Concept Conservation Planning Process to explore conservation targets, indicators threats and strategies within the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Area. Facilitated by CAP expert Jarmo Javala, over 30 participants representing 20 organizations worked through the CAP process with the help of an innovative conservation
planning tool that connects the threats and strategies and brings everything together into a road map for progress. Stay tuned as we digest the results and work with the participants on the next steps.

**Link to CAP results:** Conservation Action Planning

**Advocacy**

A2A continued to be active with advocacy activities and science comments in collaboration with partners including:

- Providing comments on proposed changes to Species at Risk legislation in Ontario
- Participating in workshops on revisions to the 1000 Island Park Master Plan
- Participating in two Nature Day on the Hill lobbying days to promote the Canadian 17% protected areas targets.
- Hosted Fall Ontario East Nature Network gathering
- Participating in Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve strategic planning sessions
- Participating in Eastern Ontario First Nations Working Group on the Environment

**Science Goals for 2020**

1) Enable Partner Organizations to access and use on-line mapping resource.
2) Follow-up on priority actions emerging from the Frontenac Arch CAP
3) Initiate State of the A2A reporting program
4) Establish ongoing information management and decision support system to capture resources and information as projects are completed.
5) Build US side science support
6) Ensure that indigenous traditional knowledge and citizen science is embedded into A2A science.
Road Ecology Report

Cameron Smith (Chair) John Urquhart, Mandy Karch, Ryan Danby, Fred Scheuler, Josh Van Wieren

Mandate:

To advance the conservation and connectivity of the A2A region’s working landscape by researching, recommending, and communicating how to reduce the adverse fragmenting effects of roads and highways.

Introduction

Three parallel highways on the Canadian side of the St. Lawrence River pose an almost impregnable barrier to wildlife movement across the river, thereby blocking connectivity that otherwise would extend between Algonquin Park in the north and Adirondack Park in the south.

2019 Accomplishments

There were two main activities in 2019: Monitoring the fencing that was installed on Highway 401 just east of the international bridge to keep turtles off the highway, and working to complete the committee’s final report, which will recommend remedial projects that will enable wildlife to cross the three highways.

Fence monitoring

The first year of monitoring the fencing has been completed, and the second and final year will soon be under way. The fencing is working, although an analysis of how well won’t be possible until after the second year of monitoring. Current data indicates that fewer turtles and other creatures were killed on the highway where the fencing is located than in adjacent areas without fencing. The other good news is that the fencing survived snowplowing this past winter (except for one minor mishap). There is about a kilometre of fencing, and it is located in the most active hotspot along the highway between Gananoque and Brockville. The photograph (opposite) shows Gillian Dagg beside a section of the fencing that dips down to a wetland. She is head of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation’s environment section for Eastern Ontario.
Remediation Report

In mid-October, the Road Ecology Committee met to consider scientific data that had been assembled and concluded that three mortality hotspots along Highway 401 require major remedial work — which could include widening of bridge spans, enlarging of culverts, construction of overpasses or underpasses, and additional fencing. All the hotspots border on property owned by Parks Canada on the south side of Highway 401.

The data assembled includes eight years of road mortality research: four on Highway 401 and two concurrently on County Road 2 — all of which were undertaken by the committee — and four years of research completed by Evelyn Garrah on the Thousand Islands Parkway for which she received her MA from Queen’s University. It also includes incorporating the results of four other reports and rendering their data compatible with the work of the committee and with Evelyn Garrah’s report. The four other reports were:

Sustaining What We Value, A Natural Heritage System which was a collaborative, multi-partner project that used Marxan, a decision-support tool that minimizes the extent of land needed to achieve natural heritage goals

Landscape Connectivity in the Great Lakes Basin (“Circuitscape Analysis”) prepared by MNRF’s Wildlife Research and Monitoring Section. The software produces a cumulative current (or current density) map analogous to the probability of use by random walking animals.

A2A Regional Connectivity Mapping and Natural Heritage System. It used a “core and linkage” approach modified from the Sustaining What We Value methodology. The key divergence from the SWVV methodology was that “all blocks of natural cover were identified for potential connections in the A2A study area, rather than generating priority areas from Marxan, first as cores and then connecting them across the landscape.”

The Porosity Study of Highway 401, prepared for A2A by Don Ross in 2004, which involved walking the east and west lanes of Highway 401 from mid-April to mid-May of that year.

Also useful is a 2014 report by Ryan Danby to the then Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources entitled Spatial Modelling of Mortality Hotspots Along Highway 401 (Gananoque to Brockville). It concludes that “although the final sets of models and assessment completed for this project will undoubtedly be useful, they will also have limitations that are important to recognize.”

The three locations being considered for major remedial work are:
1. **Jones Creek**, which would permit wildlife to move westward, south of the highway, toward crossings over the St. Lawrence River at Grenadier Island or Hill Island;

2. **East of the International Bridge to the United States**, where the Ontario Ministry of Transportation has erected the fencing to protect turtles. If widening a bridge span is chosen as the remedial work, it would mean widening the underpass for Rockport Road. The remedial work would permit wildlife to cross at Grenadier Island or to move westward to Hill Island.

3. **Fitzsimmons Mountain**, which is at the eastern extremity of the Landon Bay property owned by the Thousand Islands National Park. This location might not have as direct an effect on facilitating wildlife movement across the St. Lawrence River, but could have an important effect on movement across Highway 401 to connect significant habitat.

Circled in black, on the map below, are locations of the three major hotspots. The committee also concluded that major consideration will be given to determining which culverts along Highway 401 require remedial work as well as fence-culvert systems on other regional roads. This is an ongoing task.

Queen’s University Prof. Ryan Danby and Parks Canada ecologist Josh van Wieren, both of whom are members of the Road Ecology Committee, will survey the three sites in late spring to assess landscape possibilities. The committee’s draft report is expected to be completed this summer, although it is unknown how the COVID19 pandemic will impact expectations.
Road Ecology Goals for 2020

The (non-binding) schedule for completing all activities prior to writing the committee’s final recommendations include,

1. Preparing a technical brief and submitting it to a number of scientists who will be asked to advise on any improvements.
2. Obtaining engineering advice on the feasibility of undertaking the recommended remedial structures.
3. Identifying culverts that need remedial work.
4. Holding a facilitated meeting with the Board, its Communications Committee, and selected partners to discuss strategy, communication procedures, and the writing of the final reports and recommendations.
5. Presenting the report to the appropriate highway authority.

See more at Road Ecology

Communications Report

Emily Conger (Chair), David Miller, John Allport, Nicole Bird, Richard Deering, Lisa Erdle, Elizabeth Vandenkerkhof

Mandate:

To create and distribute content in a strategic manner to a variety of audiences; to increase the number of A2A’s partners and individual members and provide service to them

2019 was a very active and successful year as A2A continued to expand its communication tools and reach.

2019 accomplishments

In Fall 2019, we had the benefit of a part time outreach coordinator, Dr. Sandra Iseman. Accomplishments during her time with A2A included a redesigned website and the start of monthly e-blasts.

We completed Spring and Fall newsletters

Presentations/exhibits on A2A were made at the Lyndhurst Turkey Fair, CPAWS Café Scientific, The National Capital Environmental Network (where A2A received one of their 2019 sustainability awards) and the Eastern Ontario Nature Network Gathering.
Communication Goals for 2020

1. Produce initial video products (road ecology, trail, A2A overview)
2. Complete strategic communication strategy
3. Explore the opportunity and requirements for membership campaign and branding (ongoing)
4. Provide one-page communication guides for key projects (ongoing)
5. Widen A2A’s social media profile
6. Publish Twice yearly newsletters and monthly e-blasts
7. Continue making presentations as requested
8. Develop and initiate A2A recognition strategy (donors and stewards)
9. Expand partner communication and recruitment

Funding and Finance Report

Alex French (Chair), Gary Bell, Emily Conger, Mike Kehoe, David Miller, Peter Milliken

Mandate: To advance the conservation and connectivity of the A2A region’s working landscape by overseeing and assisting with fundraising to support A2A’s activities, and managing, tracking and reporting on A2A’s financial status.

2019 Accomplishments

2019 was a year to focus on projects and progress. As a result, less resources were put into fundraising and this will once again become a priority in 2020.

We continued to support our core funding through individual donations and regular foundation contributions including the Laidlaw Foundation.

A2A held our third annual A2A Gala at the Tete Centre in Kingston, with music from Chris Brown and friends. More than 70 A2A supporters came out for a wonderful evening celebrating A2A and participating in a live auction with special auctioneer Roger James.
Other 2019 work included:

- Working to shift more donations onto the Canada Helps donation platform including a campaign for Monthly donations.
- Supporting successful project grant applications to the Kingston Community Foundation, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for the second stage of the Conservation Action Planning Project.
- Tracked budgets, funds and financial transactions
- Reported financial matters to the board
- Advised the Board on fundraising matters
- Continued to identify and maintain a list of existing and potential sponsors and funders

Funding and Finance Goals for 2020

1. Refresh fundraising plan to deal with the post COVID-19 funding landscape
2. Fund and hire a part time Outreach/Communications position
3. Apply to 10 foundations for core funding: 5 in Canada, 5 in US
4. Obtain 501(c)3 status on the U.S. side
5. Evaluate Membership giving strategy/options
6. Realize $12,000 in private donations / memberships
7. Plan fundraising event
8. Ongoing support for project funding applications
9. 100% of board engaged in the culture of philanthropy
10. Apply for reconciliation funding
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<tr>
<th><strong>A2A Board of Directors – 2019</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gary Bell:</strong> Ph.D., biologist, conservation planner, land securement specialist. Recently retired from the Nature Conservancy of Canada where he negotiated the purchase of over 8,000 acres of priority conservation lands in Eastern Ontario. He is building a house on Wolfe Island where is also serves on the board of Wolfe Island Commons, a non-profit organization focused on regenerative agriculture and cultural development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ken Buchan:</strong> Ph.D. Geophysics, Board member of Ontario Rivers Alliance and Quetico Foundation, and a Past President of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Ottawa Valley Chapter. He helped develop the original A2A Conservation Initiative in the 1990’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kate Cleary:</strong> Kate earned her masters in Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology in 2010 from Colorado State University and her PhD I Fish and Wildlife Sciences in 2016 from the University of Idaho. Her research focused on evaluating the impacts of agriculture on biodiversity in topical biological corridor systems. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Environmental Studies at SUNY Potsdam.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emily Conger:</strong> B.Sc., Upper Canada District Board of Education, consultant and teacher (Ret.) Past President Gananoque River Waterways Association, Communications Consultant. Emily moved to the A2A area in 1970 and became keenly interested in conserving the area’s wildlife. She has been working on environmental and sustainability issues since the 1970s and has worked over the years with a variety of organizations.</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>John Davis:</strong> John is executive director of The Rewilding Institute and editor of Rewilding Earth. He also serves as volunteer land steward in Split Rock Wildway for Eddy Foundation, securing Wildlands linking Lake Champlain with Adirondack High Peaks. He is the author or editor of many publications on wildlands conservation, including BIG, WILD AND CONNECTED: Scouting and Eastern Wildway from Florida to Quebec.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alex French:</strong> MSc. Environmental Policy, Sustainability Coordinator, Clarkson University. – is a conservation and sustainability advocate from Potsdam New York.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mike Kehoe:</strong> CPA, CMA, Q_Peior, Toronto, ON, Consultant – Practice Management. Mike is a program manager specializing in organizational transformation and governance. He has a Bachelor of Computer Science degree from Concordia University and is a Chartered Professional Accountant, Certified Management Accountant (CPA, CMA). Mike has served on various not for profit organizations and has a keen interest in conservation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peter Milliken:</strong> Fellow of Queen’s University School of Policy Studies. The Honourable Peter Milliken served as speaker of the House under several governments. Since retiring, he has become involved in numerous community and charitable works, with a focus on Conservation. Peter also sits on the Board of the Nature Conservancy of Canada.</td>
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<td><strong>Doug Munro:</strong> is land Stewardship Manager for Adirondack Land Trust and long-time hiker and skier of Adirondack Park. Doug also knows the Thousand Islands Area well, as his family has a multi-generation camp and philanthropic interests there. Additionally, Doug has worked with Thousand Islands Land Trust.</td>
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<td><strong>David Miller, M.Sc, RPP, Executive Director:</strong> David has a Planning Degree from Waterloo and an M.Sc. from UBC and has spent much of his working life as an environmental planner for municipalities and conservation authorities in Ontario.</td>
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<td><strong>Resigned in 2019 – Paul Tuck</strong></td>
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# Financials

**ALGONQUIN TO ADIRODACKS COLLABORATIVE**

**STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS BY FUND**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2019**

(unaudited)

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Notes: (1) Office & Admin:

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<td><strong>Total Office &amp; Admin</strong></td>
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# ALGONQUIN TO ADIRONACKS COLLABORATIVE

## Statement of Financial Position

**As at December 31, 2019**

*(unaudited)*

### Assets

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### Liabilities

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<td>Source Deductions Payable</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred Contributions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>53,169.23</td>
<td>(53,169.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,349.13</strong></td>
<td><strong>$56,650.80</strong></td>
<td><strong>($53,301.67)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Statement of Changes in Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance, Beginning of Year</strong></td>
<td>84,583.69</td>
<td>58,545.61</td>
<td>26,038.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excess Revenue over Expenses</strong></td>
<td>(25,711.94)</td>
<td>26,038.08</td>
<td>(51,750.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance, End of Year</strong></td>
<td><strong>$58,871.75</strong></td>
<td><strong>$84,583.69</strong></td>
<td><strong>($25,711.94)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>