



# A2A

Algonquin to  
Adirondacks  
Collaborative

## Strategic Plan

June 16, 2016

### **Introduction**

This Strategic Plan provides the Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative (A2A) with a guide for the next five-year period (2016–2021). The A2A Strategic Planning Committee and the Board of Directors have developed this Plan and will consult with partners. The document includes our Vision, Values, Mission, Goals, and Objectives<sup>1</sup>. This plan will be used to guide our efforts and as a framework for the development of annual operating plans.

### **The A2A Region**

The A2A region encompasses Adirondack Park, in New York State, and Algonquin Park, in Ontario, and the lands and waters connecting them. It is one of the last major intact north-south forest and wetland corridors in Eastern North America. It provides essential habitats for a vast number of species: mammals, migratory birds, and many other organisms. Scientists have recognized for decades what First Nations peoples have known for generations: that the A2A region has a unique and essential role to play in wildlife conservation in North America.

### **The A2A Collaborative (A2A)**

A2A is a multi-national (U.S., Canadian and First Nations) organization of partners dedicated to conserving and connecting lands and people across the Algonquin to Adirondacks region. We promote a healthy environment for wildlife and people. Connected habitat allows animals and plants to fulfill their

needs and survive adversities such as climate change.

A2A evolved from the understanding that to conserve and connect the series of ecosystems anchored by Algonquin and Adirondack parks would require multinational efforts and expertise. A2A facilitates collaboration among our partners. Together we engage in projects to enhance and connect wildlife habitat and build public support for conservation and wise planning.

The Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative is comprised of a Board of Directors, committees, staff, volunteers, and a multi-national network of partner organizations from the United States, Canada, and First Nations. A2A is federally incorporated in Canada (2002) and has status as a registered charity (2007) in Canada and is also a partner of the American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts.

**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.

We envision an A2A region in which people:

1. Fulfill their responsibilities to the earth
2. Have a strong sense of "home place"
3. Live in harmony with the rest of nature

We envision an A2A landscape which:

4. Provides a critical corridor for wildlife movement in eastern North America
5. Consists of a rich mosaic of wildlife habitats
6. Exhibits ecological integrity
7. Provides resilience to climate change and other human disturbances
8. Supports vibrant, working landscapes and ecologically-sustainable human land uses within the limits of natural law
9. Contributes to the physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual well-being of human communities in the region

**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.

## Values

**Harmony** – We believe that humans are part of nature and our first responsibility is to live in harmony within it. To do so also means to work and live in harmony with the people who live in the A2A region.

**Indigenous Responsibilities and Rights** – We shall be guided by the United Nations Declaration of Rights on Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the “the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world” (UNDRIP, article 43)<sup>ii</sup>. We acknowledge the A2A Region is land for which the Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe peoples have been, and continue to be, responsible since time immemorial.

**Multi-National Engagement** – We engage Indigenous peoples, conservation organizations, governments, landowners, educational institutions, and the general public in the A2A region.

**Participatory and Evidence-Based Planning and Management** – We promote participatory planning and management, and activities that are inclusive and evidence-based. We rely upon Indigenous traditional knowledge, other local community knowledge, and western science.

**Consensus Decision Making:** We reach decisions in the A2A Collaborative through finding the consensus decision-making process whenever possible in all our meetings. We use Robert's Rules of Order to reach decisions *only* when consensus cannot be reached.

**Recognizing Differences:** We recognize that within the A2A “Big Tent” members and partners may have divergent and even conflicting views. We endeavour to identify and work for the shared values among partners and members as identified in our mission and vision. Through mutual esteem, we find common ground. We celebrate the strength we acquire through our diversity.

**Building Resilience** – We enhance landscape connectivity and ecological integrity to increase ecosystem and human community resilience to the increasingly adverse effects of climate change and other disturbances.

**Collaborative Partnerships** – We support and connect the efforts of our partner organizations with research, traditional knowledge, and other resources to enhance regional connectivity.

**Working Landscapes** – We promote vibrant, working landscapes and ecologically-sustainable land uses within the limits of natural law.

**Being Accountable** – We are accountable to the web of life, Ginowaydaganuc

(Anishnaabemowin). We are accountable to future generations of all life. This accountability is shared with our partner organizations. We are accountable to the commitments we make to partner organizations, members, donors, and governments. We will reflect and evaluate regularly, and adapt as needed.

**Organizational Sustainability** – We will work to ensure our organization has the capacity (staff, expertise, funding) required to carry out our mission and serve our vision.

## Goals and Objectives

### 1. Restore and enhance ecological integrity

- a. Provide partners with skills and tools to enhance their conservation actions.
  - Action: Facilitate Conservation Action Plans (CAPs) among partners and key community players to identify local values, ecological priorities and threats, and catalyze local management and action based on them
  
  - Action: Develop tools from the A2A 2014 Regional Mapping Project to be shared with partners across the region
  
  - Action: Hire a part-time employee to communicate results from the 2014 Regional Mapping Project refinement to partners across the region in order to promote conservation and connectivity of regionally significant lands
  
  - Action: Build capacity for cross-cultural conservation work among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
  
  - Action: Provide workshops for partners on topics such as road ecology mapping
  
  - Action: Create and populate a research database
- b. Support a rich mosaic of interconnecting wildlife habitats.
  - Action: Conduct research on eco-passageways across key barriers such as highways, to share with partners and transportation agencies
- c. Influence governmental and non-governmental policies, projects, and development that will impact the natural heritage of the A2A region.
  - Action: Provide written comments on regional issues and policy
  
  - Action: Attend public consultation sessions
  
  - Action: Communicate with decision-makers

## 2. Engage the people of the A2A region

d. Build diverse cultural pathways to individuals, communities, organizations, and agencies within a shared sense of community in the A2A region.

Action: Attend meetings, events and gatherings to contribute an A2A perspective through participation in activities and forums organized by others.

Action: Cultivate capacity for sharing indigenous and western ways of knowing and knowledge in A2A projects

Action: Explore possibilities to incorporate citizen science into A2A projects

e. Provide partners with skills and tools to:

- i. Connect people to nature;
- ii. Encourage conservation action
- iii. Increase awareness of the importance of, and threats to, ecological integrity, conservation and connectivity in the A2A region
- iv. Increase awareness of the importance of the A2A region

Action: Provide workshops for partners on engagement and education

Action: Produce educational materials for distribution to the public and partners

Action: Work with the media

Action: Provide presentations for partners

f. Connect residents and visitors to nature through direct experience, and encourage them to take action to protect, conserve, and restore ecosystems.

Action: Hire a trail coordinator to identify trail linkages between Algonquin and Adirondack Parks, engage with key trail partners, and create a plan for the A2A Trail

Action: Open sections of the Trail; hold an event to mark the opening

Action: Share landowner resources from partners and others through our website for various audiences

Action: Provide landowner recognition of A2A partnerships or stewardship actions through plaques, general recognition, social media

g. Increase awareness of the importance of, and threats to, ecological integrity,

conservation, and connectivity in the A2A region:

- i. With emphasis on the relationship between ecological integrity and human well-being and livelihood,
- ii. As a climate change mitigation and adaptation imperative that also benefits people living within the region, and
- iii. As a means for delivering key ecosystem services for human well-being and safety (i.e., flood and drought attenuation; provision of clean water, clean air, healthy food, pollinating services, etc.).

Action: Provide coverage through press releases of A2A and A2A partner actions in local community papers to build awareness of our work (ongoing)

Action: Create a general information brochure for the public

Action: Provide information on our website for the public

Action: Increase website traffic

Action: Provide regular communication on social media highlighting the work of A2A and partners throughout the region

Action: Create an engaged social media following on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

Action: Provide public presentations

### **3. Strengthen organizational capacity**

h. Celebrate the A2A

Actions: Organize events that create a sense of fun around the A2A such as Arts and Music in the A2A, Stories and Myths of the A2A, events in natural outdoor settings, photo contests.

i. Engage partners in the United States, Canada, and First Nations.

Action: Host an Annual Partners' Meeting to bring partners together, foster learning, highlight A2A & partner projects, and gather feedback

Action: Recruit key partners to join the A2A Collaborative

Action: Develop communication with partners including semi-annual updates and an annual partner survey

Action: Write letters of support for partner funding applications

Action: Write letters to support partner policy initiatives that align with the A2A vision and mission

- j. Enhance our multi-national organization with highly skilled directors from the United States, Canada, and First Nations.

Action: Recruit new directors to the Board to fill needs

Action: Develop and strengthen responsibilities, structure, and roles (e.g. Board of Directors' manual, organizational chart, evaluation)

Action: Create an Operations Manual of Policy & Procedures to be given to each new director upon election to the A2A board, which shall also contain sections pertinent to employees and volunteers

Action: Develop communication tools that make it easier for directors to work together, given the geographic distances in the A2A region

Action: Hold at least two face-to-face meetings with directors annually

- k. Enable a sustainable flow of funding and resources to support staffing/overhead and programs/projects associated with our goals and objectives.

Action: Complete grant deliverables and reporting for all funders

Action: Secure core funding support A2A staffing and overhead

Action: Secure program and project funding

Action: Review and set staffing targets

Action: Build membership base

- l. Work to attract passionate and knowledgeable employees and volunteers.

Action: Recruit to fill staffing and volunteer needs

- m. Retain skilled employees and volunteers.

Action: Establish clear expectations for employees and volunteers around roles, responsibilities, supervision, and evaluation

Action: Develop a policy manual for employees and volunteers (may be a subsection of or the entire Director's Policy Manual) which outlines clear expectations around roles, responsibilities, supervision, and evaluation

Action: Supervise and evaluate employees and volunteers according to agreed-upon timelines and processes

Action: Ensure that employees work in a safe, inclusive environment

Action: Ensure that employees have opportunities to be challenged, and also recognized for the work that they do

Action: Ensure that employees have opportunities for personal development as part of their working experience with A2A

n. Revisit Strategic Plan mid-year to ensure activities are sufficient and strategic.

# Appendix

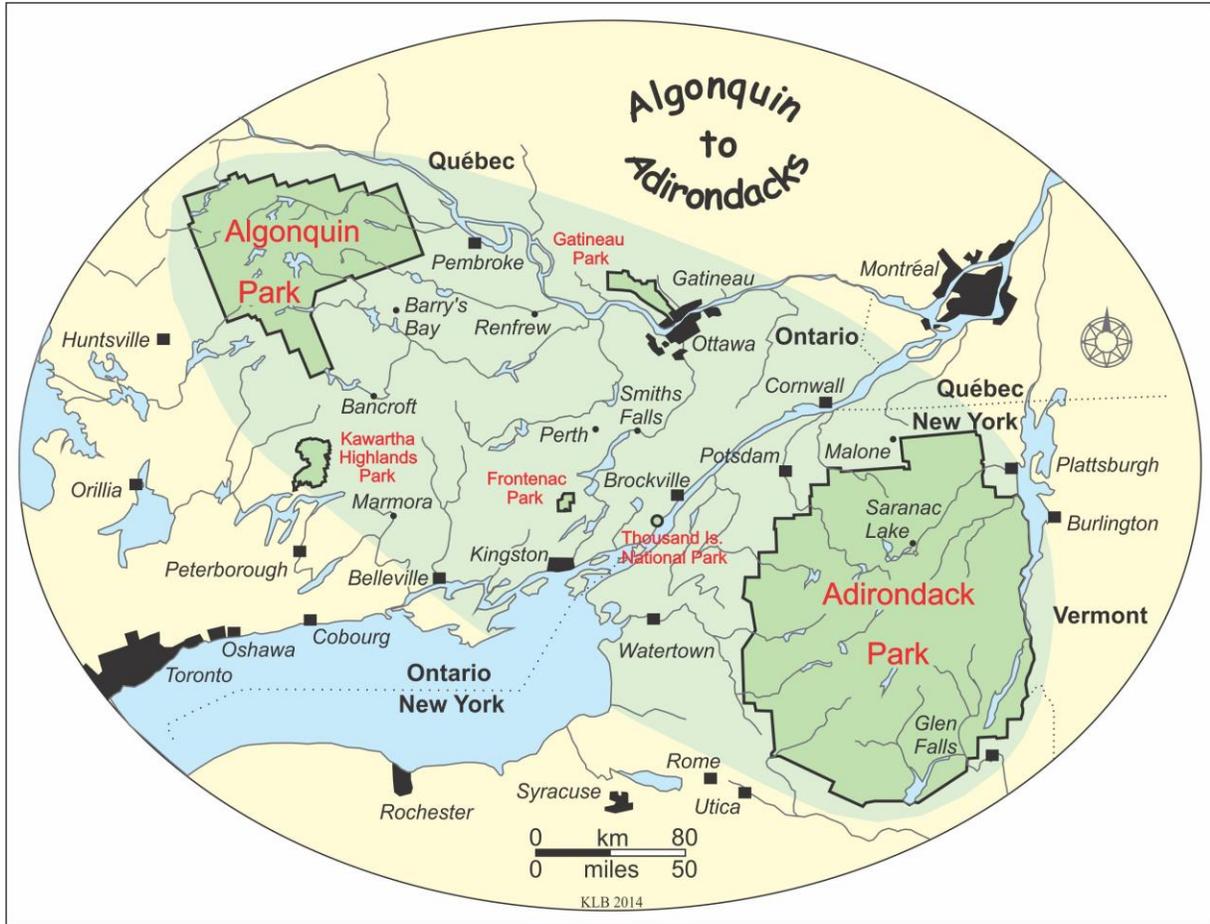
## The A2A Region

The Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative (A2A) works to achieve its mission in the landscape between and including Adirondack Park in New York and Algonquin Park in Ontario. This region is critical for maintaining genetic diversity and healthy ecosystems in eastern North America. It is the most extensive, least degraded north-south linkage east of Lake Superior, connecting the Appalachian forests of the southeastern United States to the vast boreal forests of the Canadian Shield (Keddy, 1995). Bisected by the St. Lawrence River valley, the A2A region functions as a crossroads for wildlife movement. The Frontenac Arch, which is the backbone of this region, has served for millennia as a funnel for the dispersal of wide-ranging mammals and it has enabled the free movement of organisms in response to environmental stresses, thus supporting population resilience through time. Moreover, the A2A region in its southern extremities provides a pathway through which species farther south can advance to maintain resilience as climate changes.

The heart of the A2A region also represents one of the most biodiverse areas of eastern North America. The Frontenac Arch at the St. Lawrence River is an area of bio-geographic overlap between northern Boreal, Carolinian (southern deciduous), Appalachian, Atlantic coastal, and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands forest regions. This “interchange zone” contains southern species at the northern extreme of their range mingling with northern species at their southern-most extent, and other species in midrange. The result is globally significant biodiversity that has earned the Frontenac Arch designation as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

This landscape has endured because of the positive stewardship activities of the many residents living within this region. A2A works to support partner organizations and build community pride to ensure this region will continue to sustain a quality of life for humans and the rest of nature.

There is not a hard line delineating the edge of the A2A region, since wildlife does not recognize borders.



Credit: Map drawn by Ken Buchan, 2014.

<sup>i</sup> See one set of definitions for Vision, Mission, Goals, Objectives:

[http://www.nucifora.com/art\\_243.html](http://www.nucifora.com/art_243.html)

<sup>ii</sup> United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), article 43, page 14:

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)