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WHITEFEATHER FOREST RESEARCH COOPERATIVE (WFRC)

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

BETWEEN: Pikangikum First Nation with

Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation

AND: University of Manitoba

(Natural Resources Institute)

AND: Sault College

(Natural Resources Programs)

AND: Lakehead University

(Department of Anthropology)

AND: University of Winnipeg

(Department of History)

The Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative

The Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative (WFRC) is an initiative of Pikangikum First Nation. The goal is to bring together a partnership of supports and participants in the development of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative in the form of a knowledge network where Pikangikum people are in the driver's seat regarding the research programme.

The WFRC will promote the goal of the people of Pikangikum First Nation, especially the Elders of the community, to carry out partnership research in support of the vision, goals, aims and objectives of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. Partners that have been invited to join the WFRC include the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Sault College, the University of Manitoba, Lakehead University and the University of Winnipeg. Other university, government, industry and non-governmental institutions will be invited as the research programme grows.

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PREAMBLE

The people of Pikangikum First Nation are the keepers of a land-based indigenous way of life that has been passed on to them from their ancestors. Their culture is a vital part of the cultural diversity of humanity. Through their indigenous way of life the people of Pikangikum First Nation have always cherished the diversity of all living and non-living things on their land.

Pikangikum First Nation people have developed the Whitefeather Forest Initiative to provide livelihood opportunities for their youth in keeping with their indigenous cultural teachings, values and customs. The initiative is being guided by the Elders of Pikangikum. It is the goal of Pikangikum First Nation for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative to develop land-based tribal enterprises rooted in Community-Based Resource Management and Supported by mutually beneficial and consensus-based partnerships with the larger environmental, business, academic and research communities.

The Whitefeather Forest Initiative incorporates a number of key objectives that have been established by Pikangikum First Nation:

- 1. Acquire from Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and manage commercial forestry tenure (e.g. a Sustainable Forest License (SFL)) for a portion of their traditional lands within the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area (WFPA);
- 2. Develop and manage protected areas within the WFPA in co-operation with, the OMNR, and Ontario's partnership for Public Lands (PPL);
- 3. Promote and develop a community capacity to

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engage in forestry woodlands operations;

- 4. Develop other community-led and controlled business enterprises within the WFPA, including a value-added forest products enterprises, Non-timber Forest Products (NTFP) business, and protected area tourism opportunities;
- 5. Lead in the development of a collaborative research program to ensure that the foregoing are undertaken in accordance with the highest possible standards.

The Whitefeather Forest Planning Area (WFPA) comprises approximately 1.3 million hectares, and includes the traplines of Pikangikum people.

The development of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is centered on Community-based Land Use Planning, an approach that has now been adopted as policy under Ontario's Northern Boreal Initiative (NBI) (Appendix 1). (Title: Northern Boreal Initiative – Community-based Land Use Planning Approach). The first of several community-based Land Use Planning processes is "... [being] led by Pikangikum First Nation in association with NBI. The resulting land use strategy will guide the protection and management of lands and resources over a 1.3 million hectare area in Northwestern Ontario, north of Red Lake, Ontario and north of the [Ontario Living Legacy] OLL Strategy area" (Appendix 2).

The vision of Pikangikum people for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is based on an acknowledgement that the Creator placed them on their ancestral lands, where they have lived since time immemorial. It is also based on an acknowledgement that they are to take care of their lands as a sacred trust given by the Creator. Their vision for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is also one of partnerships rooted in cross-cultural respect and shared values for the care and protected of their ancestral lands, which they know are part of the heritage of all of humanity.

The vision of Pikangikum people for research in

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support of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative is that it will enhance their ability to take care of the land and resources in the Traditional Territories of the Pikangikum First Nation that forms that basis of the initiative. This vision honours the teachings and wisdom of Pikangikum Elders that supports the effective care and protection of the diversity of life on the land. This vision supports dialogue and working together to carry out research on the basis of respect and in a manner that will bring together the best of different knowledge traditions.

PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES OF THE WFRC

The Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative (WFRC) is established on the basis that research undertaken in support of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative should be based upon fair, equitable, transparent and mutually beneficial partnership. Decision-making within the WFRC will be based on mutual respect and consensus led by Pikangikum First Nation.

The WFRC is based upon the following objectives of Pikangikum First Nation for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative:

- 1. Community-Based Land Use Planning will be completed prior to any development activities, including the establishment of protected areas and the commencement of commercial forestry, within the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area.
- Community-Based Land Use Planning should guide the identification and development of resource-based opportunities, including protected areas, and infrastructure development

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in the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area.

In this relationship partners of the WFRC agree that:

- 1. The Whitefeather Forest Planning Area and adjacent areas are "... a geographic area that is a cultural landscape, modified, influenced and given special meaning", by the Pikangikum First Nation People; ¹
- 2. The outcomes of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative will maintain the ability of Pikangikum people to pursue cultural and livelihood activities on the land;
- 3. The outcomes of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative will maintain the ability of Pikangikum First Nation to take a leading role in the orderly development of new protected areas and commercial forestry opportunities and the stewardship and management of the land in support of these opportunities;
- 4. A primary goal of the Whitefeather forest initiative will be to conserve the forest cover of the protection of viable populations of Woodland Caribou and Wolverine and the habitats;
- 5. Research in support of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative will support the strategy of Pikangikum to work cooperatively with the Province of Ontario to establish the Whitefeather Forest Initiative, guided by the Elders of Pikangikum First Nation and centered on the indigenous Knowledge tradition, environmental values and perspectives, and customary indigenous stewardship values and practices of Pikangikum people and harmonized with broader-scale ecological considerations and provincial responsibilities of Ontario;
- 6. Research in support of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative will foster collaborative learning and capacity-building between indigenous and Western Science knowledge traditions.

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Research projects will stress technical capacity building among students and youth both from Pikangikum and students and youth associated with Cooperative partners. Project research and learning experiences will be mutual and all efforts will be made to ensure that fiscal resources available to Pikangikum for research projects will achieve this objective.

7. The economic benefits of Whitefeather Forest Initiative should flow primarily to the Pikangikum people.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME OF THE WFRC

Pikangikum First Nation has identified a research programme to be initiated by partners of the WFRC. The First Nation has mandated Whitefeather Forest Management Corporation with the responsibility to coordinate and pursue this research programme. Initial themes of the research programme will include the following:

- Research Projects supporting the completion of Community-Based Land Use Planning associated with the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. The Land Use network and areas that will be identified for inclusion in a forestmanagement tenure agreement with Ontario. The planning process is to be completed by the end of 2005;
- 2. Research projects that support the identification of areas suitable for world class forestry that

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- meets or exceeds the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council through Community-Based Land Use Planning that will become the areas where Pikangikum intends to secure forestry tenure in 2006;
- 3. Research projects supporting the goal of securing application of the provisions of the *Environmental Assessment Act* for the Whitefeather Forest Initiative and achieving environmental assessment coverage by 2006. This is to be done in a manner that addresses the particular community-based needs and vision of Pikangikum First Nation for the Initiative and the ecological circumstances of an intact northern boreal forest ecosystem;
- 4. Research projects supporting the goal of Pikangikum to work cooperatively with the Ontario's government to develop an agreement for a forest management regulatory system for the Whitefeather that achieves the economic objectives, social objectives and environmental objectives of Pikangikum while meeting the broad-scale responsibilities of the province;
- 5. Research projects that support the conservation of the forest cover of the Whitefeather Forest Planning Area and its biodiversity. This includes the protection of viable populations of Woodland Caribou and Wolverine and their habitats;
- 6. Research projects that will support the development of commercial forest and protected areas timber and other resource management strategies and practices consistent with the environment values and resource management principles, teachings, customs and practices of Pikangikum First Nation people;
- 7. Research projects that support the goal of Pikangikum First Nation to achieve a special designation of Indigenous Community Forest by the Forest Stewardship Council. It is the goal of Pikangikum that this new certification

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- category will build upon existing FSC standards and will include the additional criteria of historical indigenous occupancy and adherence to the Code of Practice -of the International Federation of Alternative Trade; and
- 8. Research projects and educational and other activities in support of the development of the Whitefeather Forest Indigenous Knowledge Teaching Centre. In particular, these will support the vision of Pikangikum Elders to develop the Centre as world-class initiative, which will include First Nation led partnership research, an experiential teaching program and a Visitor/Interpretative capacity related to creating greater understanding about and interpreting the indigenous cultural and natural heritage of the Traditional Territories of Pikangikum First Nation people associate with the Whitefeather Forest Initiative. This will include exploring the linkage between cultural and natural heritage on the land and indigenous ecological perspectives of Pikangikum people. A priority of the center will be to offer learning and training opportunities to Pikangikum people and outside students and researchers. This will include the investigation of economic opportunities and the development interpretive materials, programs and businesses.

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RESEARCH PROTOCOLS OF THE WFRC

Research proposals will be developed through collaboration between the parties of this Agreement.

Upon acquisition of research funding each research project will develop a Research Protocol which incorporates the following elements:

- 1. A statement that the project is a research partnership under the Whitefeather Forest Research Cooperative;
- 2. Identification of the specific experts and researchers who will be involved in the project;
- 3. That the project research partnership will be accountable to Pikangikum First Nation and the institutions of the research partners;
- 4. The composition of an Advisory Committee made up of members of the WFRC agreed to by the Whitefeather Forest Initiative Steering Group and research partners responsible for research funding;
- 5. Research being performed by researchers from the University of Manitoba, Sault College, Lakehead University, the University of Winnipeg and research from other institutions shall be undertaken in accordance with the policies of their respective institutions.
- 6. The Advisory Committee will have the responsibility to review approved project proposal and provide guidance and advise on the project activities consistent with funding agency requirements;
- 7. The WFRC will seek authorization to undertaken approved research projects from by the Council of Pikangikum First Nation or a designated community authority;

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- 8. Funded research projects under the WFRC shall be presented to the community in clear language through an oral presentation to the community. Concerns regarding the private and public nature of research results shall be discussed in this presentation, in order that they may be addressed before the project completion;
- 9. Research protocols shall include a consideration of individual consent to participate in research projects, confidentiality of data provided by individuals, masking of individuals for information released publicly, archiving of data and access to archived data;
- 10. Research Results will be presented in clear language to the Pikangikum Community, the Advisory Committee and Project Partners at community workshops and at meetings of the Advisory Committee;
- 11. Issues and problems that arise during the Research Project will be dealt with at meetings convened with the Advisory Committee and Steering Group;
- 12. Written reports, theses, dissertations, publications and any other material for the public release that is based on the activities undertaken for a research project will be submitted to the Advisory Committee for review. In the case of data, results, and conclusions of the western science component of the project strong obligations to the research findings, data, or interpretation will be noted and published. The review process will be undertaken within two months of the document being submitted to the Advisory Committee;
- 13. Public domain information will be freely available to partners of the WFRC and Community members of Pikangikum;
- 14. Copies of all documentation to be in the public domain collected during a research project will

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- be available for use by WFRC partners;
- 15. WFRC partners will create an archive of all research documentation which will include protocols of access to information;
- 16. Research partners may create archives of public domain information with access protocols (procedures) agreed to by the WFRC partners and private information which includes protocols to ensure confidentiality and masking of sensitive information collected during research;
- 17. During their time in Pikangikum First Nation, research students will undertake to help in compiling any curriculum and educational materials based on the research for use by the Pikangikum Education Authority or the Whitefeather Forest Indigenous Knowledge Teaching Centre;
- 18. Research students will make themselves available during the time that they are undertaking research in the community to help with community programmes in which they can offer services;
- 19. Research students will undertake to prepare their research results in clear language presentation that enhance communication with community members through translation during community workshops.

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ENDORSEMENT

Nothing in this Agreement shall prejudice in any manner or way any of the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights of the citizens of Pikangikum First Nation or the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights of any other First Nation person.

The parties signing this Agreement represent that they are familiar with, and agree to the terms and conditions set forth in this agreement and that they are duly authorized to sign the Agreement and agree and intend to be bound by the Agreement.

In signing this Letter of Agreement, we solemnly seek continued gifts of good guidance and strength from the Creator in our efforts to work together on developing the WFRC in support of the Whitefeather Forest Initiative.