

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Pimachiowin Aki listing as World Heritage Site would be cause for celebration for Indigenous Peoples and all Canadians

May 16th, 2018. The acceptance of Pimachiowin Aki this summer as an Indigenous-led World Heritage Site would be a major inspiration in the drive to partner with Indigenous peoples to protect at least 17% of Canada's land by 2020, says Valérie Courtois, Director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI).

"The recommendation by UNESCO's two main WHS advisory bodies that Pimachiowin Aki be listed is extremely exciting news and would be a welcome recognition of Indigenous-led conservation and a significant coup for the First Nations involved and for Canada," said Courtois.

Canada has committed to protecting at least 17% of lands by 2020 as part of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. It can reach that goal by partnering with Indigenous Peoples, who are creating and managing parks and protected lands across the country, said Courtois.

"A Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Site designation offers a clear demonstration of what Indigenous Peoples can achieve, and it's an example of how Indigenous-led conservation gains can help Canada meet international targets for protecting biodiversity," said Courtois.

The nomination would create Canada's first "mixed" cultural and natural site under new evaluation procedures that Pimachiowin Aki led the charge to create.

"This project is a testament to the dedication of the Pimachiowin Aki First Nations and their provincial partners who have worked for the past 12 years to secure this listing," said Courtois. "It's also a reflection of the global significance of these boreal forest lands—home to abundant animals, plants, clean water and vast storehouses of carbon—and the cultures they nourish."

"Pimachiowin Aki is something we can all celebrate as it will generate clean air and water and a more stable climate for all Canadians," said Courtois.

Courtois said Pimachiowin Aki is something the federal government should wholeheartedly celebrate and support, noting \$1.3 billion was provided in this year's federal budget for land protection and conservation, including Indigenous-led projects. This appears to be a significant recognition that investing in Indigenous partnerships, land use planning and management is key to reaching the 17% target and making Canada a global leader in conservation, while also advancing reconciliation and a new relationship with Indigenous peoples.