

Why East Ferris

Historical documents describe how the Algonquins hunted and fished throughout the territory nestled between Trout Lake and Lake Nosbonsing up to the height of the land near the western shores of both lakes. Lake Nosbonsing is said to come from the Ojibwe word “nasbonsing” which, means “meeting place” or “place where we meet.” There exists oral accounts of Algonquins participating in inter-family hunting and fishing excursions, berry picking, and other activities on the lakes and waterways of East Ferris. To this day, East Ferris is proud to remain true to its roots, and along with surrounding communities, count on numerous aboriginal citizens that contribute to the area’s rich cultural fabric.

Municipality	% of Municipal Population Identifying as Aboriginal
Mattawa	41.2%
Papineau-Cameron	23.7%
Calvin	16.3%
Bonfield	14.7%
East Ferris	10.8%

However the fact remains that from the onset, Mattawa has been the primary settlement community for the Algonquins in the area. Local historian Doug MacKey writes “in the early 1800s, two groups of Algonquins under Chief Antoine Kiiwisens and Chief Amable du Fond settled in Mattawa on a more permanent basis. In the 1830s and 40s, Mattawa was an important aboriginal village.” Given this historical settlement pattern by the Algonquins, East Ferris wonders why in 2021 it finds itself at what seems like the epicentre of the Algonquin Land Claim.

Question 1: What are the goals of the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) Land Claim as it pertains to East Ferris?

Positive outcome

In the year that it celebrates its centennial, Municipality of East Ferris is disappointed to be drawn into negative discussions, especially as it pertains to such an important matter as the AOO Land Claim. While the Municipality understands it is not a party to the negotiations between the Crown and the AOO, it nonetheless seeks the support of both the Crown and the AOO on resolving the conflict that is emerging over land in East Ferris.

In seeking solutions, East Ferris was drawn to Ottawa where last week the Tewin project was announced by both the City and the AOO. This large residential development in the south east section of Ottawa is moving forward in partnership with the private sector company Taggart Group. It will be developed in keeping with the One Planet Living concept. One Planet Living is a vision of a world where all people live happy and healthy lives within the ecological limits of our one planet. It will bring the AOO, the City of Ottawa and the broader community together through a shared vision of sustainability: an outcome that East Ferris hopes is also possible for its community. This is the second real estate development project in Ottawa that is proceeding in a positive manner.

Question 2: How can the Land Claim in East Ferris lead to a similar positive outcome as in Ottawa?

Preliminary Concept Plan

In 2013, the Consulting Firm Jp2g completed a Preliminary Concept Plan. It indicated nearly 465 hectares that could be developed for Estate Residential and Rural Residential. The Preliminary Plan also indicates that 121 hectares of land would be retained as Park Area. At the same time the Plan included lands designated for moose, deer and bird hunting with ponds for turtles: activities that may not be as appealing to buyers seeking to purchase an estate home. And so it is unclear whether the Preliminary Plan was designed with the general public in mind or for members of the AOO.

Question 3: Is the Preliminary Plan just that “preliminary” and not a true reflection of the AOO’s intention?

Development costs

The Preliminary Concept Plan has residential lots planned along the escarpment of the Mattawa River and parkland to the south spread throughout the marshland: challenging terrain to develop given the large wetlands and the many rocky outcrops as the following photo indicates.



When examining the AOO's success in Ottawa, partnerships with large residential developers have been established.

- Wateridge Village – Tartan Homes assumed ownership of the property formerly known as CFB Rockcliffe to assist with the development of a large residential and commercial project.
- Tewin – Taggart Group of Companies partnered with AOO to develop the lands that Ottawa City experts declared to be very challenging to develop.

AOO surely wants a similar outcome for East Ferris: a negotiated settlement with positive economic and commercial opportunities. This means avoiding lands that are too costly to develop. It means focusing on lands that can provide a developer with a sufficient return on investment.

Question 4: Was the Preliminary Plan accompanied by a technical evaluation of the land to ascertain which portions are developable? Are there opportunities for the Municipality's Planning Department to collaborate with the AOO and Consultant Jp2g to identify alternative properties that may be less costly to develop?

Parcel 302B

Under the Land Claim Agreement-in-Principle, it specifies that the Algonquin lands will be subject to municipal jurisdiction, including the same land use planning and development approvals and authorities as other private lands. In East Ferris this process includes review by a Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) composed of citizens and elected officials. The Committee considers and makes unbiased recommendations to Council based on the review Municipality's Official Plan, Zoning By-Law and other relevant policies and legislation. The Committee also considers public input, as planning is fundamentally a public process in East Ferris as it is in all other communities in Ontario.

With the emerging public sentiment that is now opposed to the inclusion of Parcel 302B in the Land Claim, it means future planning applications are already doomed to conflict assuming the Parcel is kept as part of the Claim. Members of the Planning Advisory Committee will surely be subjected to substantial public advocacy. They could end up siding with the public and not approving the development of Parcel 302B.

East Ferris citizens opposed to the inclusion of Parcel 302B in the Land Claim have already organized themselves to pursue legal channels should the Parcel not be omitted from the Claim. This direction is in contradiction to the AOO and the Crown objective for a final settlement that is accompanied by certainty and finality in order to avoid Court challenges against the Claim.

Question 5: How do we achieve a win-win AOO settlement in East Ferris? Are there other lands, owned either by the Crown, the Municipality or privately that could be swapped in lieu of Parcel 302B? Could the market value of the Parcel be established via a professional appraisal and a payment in lieu of land made to the AOO?

Centennial Crescent and MacPherson Drive

Both roads follow the important water route that was once used by First Nations, Voyageurs, trappers, fur traders and loggers. As East Ferris developed, Centennial Crescent was originally known as Lakeside Road while MacPershon Drive was the cottage country trail. To this day, the area retains its cottage country appeal with residents often seen cycling and walking along the roads. Some of the area residents came together many years ago and developed the Stepping Stones Hiking Trails. These trails located in the Mattawa River Provincial Park attract hikers who enjoy the land's natural beauty.

Residents are strong proponents of the 1999 Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy and Lands for Life planning initiative that aimed to protect their historical, ecological, environmental and recreational value for future generations. They have difficulty understanding how the AOO negotiated settlement will maintain these important goals and wish to see Mattawa River Park excluded from the Land Claim.

Question 6: Are there opportunities for the AOO and the Crown to address the concerns of citizens regarding the Mattawa River Park development? Following is a summary of some potential actions that could be taken.

- **Water / Ecology**
 - **Exclude the Mattawa River shoreline from development.**
- **Environment / Recreation**
 - **Maintain sections of the Park and the Stepping Stones Hiking Trails**
- **Traffic**
 - **Widen the shoulders and straighten portions of MacPherson Drive**
 - **Add a second entrance to MacPherson Drive e.g. Johnson Road**