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## **Historic Native Land Claim under Threat Dispute between Algonquin Groups Could Affect Eastern Ontario Deal**

By Mohammed Adam, Ottawa Citizen December 5, 2011

Photograph by: Dennis Leung, The Ottawa Citizen

A historic land claim deal between Ontario Algonquins and federal and provincial governments over much of Eastern Ontario could fall apart after a West Quebec band threatened a court challenge against it.

At the centre of what could be a messy battle pitting Algonquin against Algonquin is 36,000 square kilometres of land in Eastern Ontario, including Ottawa, that the Golden Lake Algonquin, known as the Pikwaknagan, claim to be their ancestral land. The federal and provincial governments have both recognized the long-standing claim and, after more than 20 years of negotiations, an agreement-in-principle is expected in a few months.

But a group in West Quebec led by the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg - the Algonquin of Maniwaki - are also laying claim to the land, and they have vowed a court challenge to block the negotiations, or any agreement that doesn't include them.

Chief Gilbert Whiteduck, chief of the Kitigan Zibi, says the land has long belonged to the Algonquin nation as a whole - not just one Ontario group - and he has warned both the federal and provincial governments to take heed. He has also conveyed a similar warning to the Pikwaknagan, his Golden Lake cousins.

*"At least they've been forewarned. We believe the Algonquins of Ontario cannot enter into a treaty without all of the Algonquin nations having given their approval,"* Whiteduck said in an interview. *"We have to decide what to do, whether we can afford it, but I expect what will happen is they will get challenged in court. We will challenge them in court to say that they cannot move forward without the agreement of the Algonquins in Quebec. "*

Whiteduck says the dispute could trigger *"internal infighting"* but says the Kitigan Zibi have been left no choice. They have been trying to get the federal government to act since 1996, when Indian Affairs acknowledged that the Kitigan Zibi's claim to territory in the Ottawa River watershed on both sides of the border *"met the historical, traditional and current land use information requirements"* for acceptance.

*"This is still our traditional land, and they are not going to be signing a treaty in which our rights, the rights of all the Algonquin communities in Quebec, will be extinguished,"* Whiteduck said.