

Building Cross-Cultural Understanding of the Pikangikum Cultural Landscape: An Exhibit of Art and Research

The rich cultural relationship between Pikangikum First Nation people and fire in the Whitefeather Forest was on display at the Red Lake Heritage Centre from **September 22nd - October 30th, 2009**. Art and research were brought together to celebrate this relationship.

The display featured paintings created by the gifted young Ojibway artist from Pikangikum, Mario Peters. His paintings highlighting knowledge and teachings about fire from the rich Indigenous Knowledge tradition and the Keeping the Land stewardship tradition of the Pikangikum people. This information has been brought together through the collaborative documentation efforts of Pikangikum Elders, Head Trappers, and other community members renowned for their knowledge of the Whitefeather Forest, PhD student Andy Miller from the University of Manitoba.

Fire has been an important feature of life for Pikangikum people in the Whitefeather Forest for countless generations. As Elder Whitehead Moose from Pikangikum has noted, stories about the fire and the Whitefeather Forest have been passed on among Pikangikum people since forests were placed on the land and the ancestors of Pikangikum people placed in those forests by the Creator.

Until now, much of the cultural tradition of Pikangikum people related to fire has remained largely invisible to the larger world. The display at the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre was a collaboration between Pikangikum First Nation, the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba and Ontario Parks, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

[Visit the Whitefeather Forest Initiative website here.](#)

Learn more about related initiatives:

[Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project](#)



Peeshaskoosaywahseegay
Geeminozahgeegink

by Mario Peters

"It occurred in the early spring while the ice was still on the lake. I learned the practice from my father. It was intended to bring new growth to small creeks, and marshes.

We must understand this process. It is only to burn grass. Not to burn the soil. Not to burn the ground. It was only to burn the grass.

Those areas that they burnt, from what I saw, when they burnt those grass areas in the early spring, once everything thawed out, when things started to grow on the land in the late spring, these burnt areas tend to grow much faster and more plentiful whereas these ones that we did not touch just grew with the season. In other words those areas that they burnt, they helped those areas grow faster. Geeminozahgeegink – for the land to grow beautifully. Those other areas just grew with the season."

Charlie Peters