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Travel Astronomy: Or Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous

🌸 Culture Shock Guaranteed (Thank God!) At Kanatha-Aki In The Canadian Laurentians

We live in a culture defined by algorithms, divisions, repetitions. In this self-imposed echo chamber, we see and experience more of what we've previously chosen and less of the totality of possibilities.



We begin to think everyone sees life as we do, that all people lust after the newest consumer products, the latest Netflix hit, the biggest house they can possibly afford.

That's why visiting a place like [Kanatha-Aki](#) is so refreshing. Rather than reinforcing the closed system we believe is reality, this gorgeous nature preserve in the Canadian Laurentians opens us up to different ideas, different cultures, a competing narrative.



The guardians of **Kanatha-Aki** (using the word owners doesn't quite seem appropriate) is a French outdoorsman named Stéphane Denis and Dominique Rankin, the Algonquin nation's last hereditary chief.

Together, they respectfully oversee this piece of undisturbed wilderness, opening it up city folks like me who have a tendency to forget the deep connection we share with the natural world.

The word **Kanatha-aki** is an Algonquin term that means "guardian of the boundless earth" and its mission is for all humans to discover the most beautiful and wildest of Mother's Earth's offerings.

I felt so blessed to spend a day with Dominique, the revered chief, to hear of his adventures with Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, to hear how he has forgiven his early captors, to learn of his morning ritual committing himself to being in harmony with all living beings.

We shared a delicious cheese fondue in one of the log cabins on the property, a visitor's center of sorts where people come for such outdoor

activities as dog sledding and ice fishing in the winter and trekking and ziplining in the summer.

There is a tipi at the summit where visitors can overnight on pine beds and bison skins, trapper's huts where they can sample balsam fir tea and maple syrup cooked over primitive wood-burning stoves and a Mikizi (it means Eagle) cabin where purification ceremonies and other healing rituals take place.

But mostly, visitors come to remember what it's like to breathe uncarbonized air, what it's like to be one with wolves and fox and even the sled dogs who are all treated with the same respect.

I took an expedition (led by a delicious guide whose long hair and beard created the spitting image of Jesus) on a dog sled to the Kanatha-Aki wood bison reserve, the first such preserve in Quebec. This Athabasca species, the largest bison alive, have been around since prehistoric times, having survived the Ice Age and contributing to mankind's survival on the planet.

On the vernal equinox 2005, the herd gave birth to a white female bison, the seventh in the world, which according to Rankin, fulfills a prophecy about the healing of earth and mankind. In honor of this auspicious event, 25 sacred pipes were simultaneously lit by Amerindian chiefs and medicine men throughout North America.

So if the reverberation in your echo chamber is getting old, head to [Kanatha-Aki](#), located in Val-des-Lacs in the majestic Laurentian Mountains, adjacent to the Mont-Tremblant National Park.

T8aminik (that's Dominique's Algonquin name) delights in sharing the simple, profound Anishinaabe teachings in your choice of Algonquin, Cree, French, English, Odjibway, Atikamek and Innu.

