



Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Office of the Chief

NEWS RELEASE

**BROADBACK: CREE FIRST NATION DELEGATION IN B.C. TO LEARN ABOUT
PROTECTING FORESTS FROM FIRST NATIONS AND ENGOS WHO SIGNED
GREAT BEAR FOREST AGREEMENT**

Vancouver, March 7, 2016 — Set against the climate action talks in Vancouver between the Prime Minister and Premiers as well as the 2016 GLOBE Leadership Summit for Sustainable Business, the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi met with B.C. First Nations, environmental groups and others who were directly involved in negotiating the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, to learn about how to best protect their forests in the Broadback region.

The meetings came a week after the official signing of the Agreement, 20 years in the making, and a day after the *Great Bear Rainforest Forest Management Act* was introduced in the B.C. Legislature by Premier Christy Clark's Government.

The groundbreaking Agreement provides for the protection of 85 per cent of the Great Bear Rainforest, an area the size of Ireland on B.C.'s north and central coast. The region is the habitat for the rare Kermode or Spirit Bear and is one of the Earth's most important temperate rainforests. The Agreement involved the Provincial Government, 24 First Nations, environmental groups and the forest sector. It provides for a four-tiered protection system, co-managed by the First Nations, with varying degrees of activities allowed. Nearly a half a million hectares are completely protected, and an additional 1.5 million hectares are conservancies that recognize the First Nation's importance. In the 15 per cent of the area that allows logging, the Government of B.C. and timber companies agreed to only use ecosystem-based management, which recognizes ecological integrity and human well-being.

"We thank the First Nations who met with us and shared their vision for the Great Bear Rainforest," said Chief Marcel Happyjack, Chief of the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi. "A key learning for us was that willing partners, such as the Province of B.C. and logging companies, can find creative solutions that work for everyone. We are bringing this lesson back to our discussions with Premier Couillard, the Premier of Quebec and the logging sector."

In addition to the protection of the Great Bear Rainforest, the First Nations worked with the Province to develop an innovative way to manage climate change: carbon credits managed and sold by the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project. An audit process determines how much carbon is "sunk" by keeping more forest protected. The carbon credits are then sold on the market, benefiting both the Government of B.C. (the main customer) and the First Nations who own the credits. This funding is used to create jobs, notably in the monitoring and stewardship of the area.

"We heard from one Chief that the Great Bear Agreement has now resulted in as many jobs – in stewardship work – as was once created by logging. This proves that protecting forests does in fact create jobs" said the Chief.

The First Nations that Chief Marcel Happyjack and his delegation met with have offered to visit the Broadback in the near future to provide additional advice on how the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement and the Carbon Project can provide a model for solutions that benefit all Quebecers, including the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi.

“If the Province of B.C. and First Nations can sign the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, we see no reason why we can’t achieve something similar in the Broadbank area with the Province of Quebec, to protect the remaining 10 per cent of unlogged area in our territory,” said the Chief.

Chief Happyjack and his Deputy Chief Mandy Gull travelled to British Columbia with an 8-person delegation that included community members of the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi, hunters and trappers and talley-men, who are Cree land stewards. They met with the following First Nations, individuals and organizations:

- Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative (represents nine signatory Nations)
- Kitasoo/Xai’Xais First Nation (signatory Nation)
- Nanwakolas Council (represents seven signatory Nations)
- George Abbott (former Province of B.C. Minister of Sustainable Resource Management during key Great Bear Rainforest negotiations)
- Greenpeace Great Bear Rainforest Campaign
- Canopy (an environmental group that works with forestry companies on sustainable practices)
- NatureBank (carbon credit trading advisors)

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