## **News Release**

For Immediate Release

Government of Canada and Cree Nation Government working collaboratively to protect Eastern James Bay

Memorandum of Understanding to launch feasibility assessment for new national marine conservation area

June 27, 2019

Gatineau, Quebec

Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, and Dr. Abel Bosum, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees and Chairman of the Cree Nation Government, today announced a Memorandum of Understanding to launch a feasibility assessment for the establishment of a national marine conservation area in Eastern James Bay, within the Eeyou Marine Region.

James Bay is an environmentally important and distinct sub-arctic ocean ecosystem, which is part of the larger Hudson Bay inland sea. It is known for its role in the continental migration of geese, ducks, and shore birds as well as its estuarine fish populations. The landscape of James Bay is young and still bears the marks of its recent emergence from the last ice age, however it rests on some of the oldest rocks in Canada.

Extensive consultations with local communities and consideration of the social, environmental and economic benefits and impacts of establishing a national marine conservation area will play an important part in conducting the feasibility assessment. It is expected that the national marine conservation area would create opportunities for Cree from local communities to participate in the establishment and management of the protected area, while supporting an ecologically sustainable way of life. As partners, the Government of Canada and the Cree Nation invite the Cree communities, the Nunavik Inuit, the Government of Quebec, and the Government of Nunavut to participate in the feasibility assessment based on their level of interests in the proposal.

Parks Canada is responsible for protecting nationally significant examples of Canada's natural heritage and sharing the stories of these treasured places, including the history, cultures, and contributions of Indigenous peoples, with Canadians and the world. Nature is central to our health, communities and identity. By doubling the amount of nature protected in Canada's lands and oceans, we can save our fragile ecosystems and fight climate change.

## Quotes

"Nature is our most precious resource, but our waters and forests, and the wildlife that depend on them, face increasing risks from climate change. That's why we are doubling the amount of nature that we protect in Canada's lands and oceans. We are working with the Cree Nation Government to protect Eastern James Bay and advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples."

The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada









"The Cree Nation Government welcomes this opportunity to work with Parks Canada to assess the feasibility of creating a national marine conservations area in James Bay – a distinct component of Canada's northern seas and a region which reflects important aspects of the recent history of the Canadian landscape – including hydroelectric development. The successful pursuit of this initiative is expected to strengthen our working relationships not only with the Canadian Government, but also Quebec and the Nunavik communities to the North, as well as the Nunavut government. We see valuable opportunities here for the Cree First Nations in Québec, in particular the communities along the coast of James Bay."

#### Dr. Abel Bosum.

Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) and Chairman of the Cree Nation Government

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## **Quick Facts**

- Through Budget 2016, the Government of Canada provided \$42.4 million to continue working towards creating new national parks and national marine conservation areas, including the proposed national marine conservation area in Eastern James Bay.
- The proposed study area is located offshore within the Eeyou Marine Region, along the eastern coast of James Bay, from the mouth of the La Grande River south to the Quebec/Ontario border. Several terrestrial protected areas are located along that coast, including Boatswain Bay Migratory Bird Sanctuary and the proposed Paakumshumwaau-Maatuskaau, péninsule de Ministikawatin and Waskaganish biodiversity reserves.
- Under the Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act,
  Parliament mandated Parks Canada to establish a system of national marine conservation areas to
  protect and conserve representative examples of each of Canada's 29 unique marine regions. The
  James Bay Region is currently unrepresented.
- The eastern shores of James Bay are home to four Cree First Nations Waskaganish, Eastmain,
  Wemindji, and Chisasibi. Further to the North, in southeastern Hudson Bay, we should acknowledge the
  interest in this initiative of Whapmagoostui, a Cree First Nation closely linked to the Inuit community of
  Kuujjuaraapik. These Cree communities have a combined population approaching 10,000 they are
  young and growing, and despite their diverse recent histories, share a common interest in the future of
  the coastal regions in James Bay.

## **Related Links**

Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act











# **Contacts**

Sabrina Kim Office of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change 819-938-9413 sabrina.kim2@canada.ca

Media Relations Parks Canada Agency 855-862-1812 pc.medias-media.pc@canada.ca

Bill Namagoose Executive Director Cree Nation Government 613-761-1655 billnama@cngov.ca







