Whapmagoostu ·ÁΛLd[∞]⊃Δ

Chisasibi Cらどん

Wemindji ·ÅΓ° Ċ

Eastmain ∆\7°

Waskaganish ·ቯ`b"∆bσ∽

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PRESS RELEASE

Cree Nation Celebrates Renaming of James Bay Highway in Honour of One of Its Greatest Statesmen, Billy Diamond

Nemaska, Eeyou Istchee (November 10, 2020) – The Cree Nation Government is pleased to announce the renaming of the James Bay Highway in honour of the chief architect, and chief Cree negotiator of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*, former Grand Chief Billy Diamond.

Tomorrow marks the 45th anniversary of the signing of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (JBNQA). It is a day for the people of Eeyou Istchee to reflect upon the remarkable achievements of the last 45 years as the Cree Nation continues to forge new paths in advancing its Nation-building agenda that began in 1975.

Billy Diamond (1949-2010) served his home community of Waskaganish as a Band Manager, and then as Chief from 1970 to 1976. He played a central role in the establishment of the Grand Council of the Crees and was its Grand Chief from 1974 to 1984, and during that time was Chairman of the Cree Regional Authority (which later became the Cree Nation Government). In addition to his pioneering role as one of the negotiators and signatories to the JBNQA, he also made contributions to the advancement of Indigenous rights throughout Canada and was acknowledged to be an important player in creating Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution which affirms Indigenous rights.

Billy Diamond was also an innovative entrepreneur. He was the driving force behind the establishment of the Cree-owned airline, Air Creebec, in 1982, and was involved in the establishment of the Cree Construction Company, and in Waskaganish he initiated Cree Yamaha Motors. In recognition of his achievements, Billy Diamond was appointed as a Chevalier of the Ordre National du Québec in 1987, and in 1997 he was the recipient of a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in business and commerce.

The new Route Billy-Diamond Highway, which extends north from Route 109 from Matagami to Radisson, is approximately 620 kilometers in length and is currently undergoing substantial repairs and resurfacing. The \$334 million upgrade of the highway was made possible by contributions from Quebec and Canada.

"The renaming of this critical infrastructure link that safely connects our Cree communities and the region with the economic centres of Quebec and Canada is a very fitting and appropriate tribute to the late Billy Diamond. It acknowledges his important role in the history of northern Quebec and also in the future development, not only of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee, but of this region and Quebec as a whole. This gesture allows us to honour our former leader and we are very appreciative of Quebec's openness to this meaningful symbolic gesture", stated Grand Chief Dr. Abel Bosum.

Δンゼ ΠVナ"C1ンゼ Cree Nation Government Gouvernement de la Nation Crie

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The highway was initially constructed in order to facilitate the construction of the James Bay Hydroelectric Project in the 1970's, and continues to be a vital link connecting the coastal Cree communities of Eeyou Istchee with the southern areas of Quebec, thus enhancing the economic opportunities for the Cree communities while facilitating the safe flow of people, goods and services in the context of the orderly development of the region.

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For more information: Melissa Saganash, Director of Quebec Relations

Tel: (514) 249-8598