

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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March 17, 2022

Honourable Katrine Conroy
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource
Operations and Rural Development
Via Email Only: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Honourable Josie Osborne
Minister of Land, Water, Resource Stewardship
Via Email Only: Josie.Osborne.mla@leg.bc.ca

Honourable Murray Rankin
Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Via Email Only: IRR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

RE: UBCIC Resolution 2022-09 “Support for BC First Nations’ Territorial Management and Protection of Caribou and Wolf Populations”

Dear Ministers,

We are writing with respect to Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) Resolution 2022-09 “Support for BC First Nations’ Territorial Management and Protection of Caribou and Wolf Populations” which was presented, affirmed, and endorsed by consensus at the UBCIC Chiefs Council on March 17, 2022 (enclosed).

By Resolution 2022-09, the UBCIC Chiefs Council recognizes that wolf culls and caribou recovery efforts are complex, interlinked issues for First Nations that are rooted in the provincial government’s mismanagement of caribou habitat, and that until the Province can prioritize rehabilitation and reclamation work in core habitat zones and reduce development in areas of critical importance to caribou, the only alternative for many First Nations is to protect caribou from predation and support selective wolf culls.

As a wolf cull program was commenced in the South Selkirk and South Peace regions in 2015 that has made wolves targets for inhumane aerial killings – despite the wolf cull being the direct result of the government’s failure to stop the human encroachment and habitat destruction that has pushed BC’s mountain caribou to the edge of extinction – UBCIC Chiefs Council continues to support First Nations in upholding the conservation and stewardship of wildlife, including protecting wildlife from any unethical hunting and culling practices that oppose Indigenous traditional values, ways of life, and fundamental rights.

By Resolution 2022-09 the UBCIC Chiefs Council urges your government to respect the laws, jurisdiction, and legal orders of proper Title Holders, and to advance not a full-stop end to wolf culls, but a selective approach that respects First Nations jurisdiction and territorial management, supports caribou habitat and recovery areas, and does not jeopardize First Nations caribou recovery programs and efforts.

Please keep us updated at this work develops.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Don Tom
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: UBCIC Chiefs Council
Pacific Wild
Animal Alliance
The Fur-Bearers
BC SPCA

Encl: UBCIC Resolution 2022-06

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UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS
CHIEFS COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 23RD TO 24TH, 2022
VIRTUAL MEETING

Resolution no. 2022-09

RE: Support for BC First Nations' Territorial Management and Protection of Caribou and Wolf Populations

WHEREAS First Nations in B.C. have been stewards of their lands and waters long before colonial contact, upholding the sacred responsibility – reflected in Indigenous laws and legal orders – of protecting and managing their territories including the wildlife species that reside within. Despite centuries of colonial laws and policies, First Nations continue their sacred holistic relationship with the environment and its wildlife in order to guide, shape, and empower their Title, Rights, and way of life;

WHEREAS habitat disturbance, predation, climate change, and human activities have contributed to the decline in caribou populations and have led to caribou recovery and wolf culls becoming complex, interlinked issues for B.C. First Nations that are fundamentally rooted in the provincial government's mismanagement of caribou habitat and unilateral decision-making;

WHEREAS the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, committed to implement through legislation, affirms:

Article 19: States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

Article 26(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired;

(2): Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired;

(3): States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned;

Article 29(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination;

WHEREAS a wolf cull program was commenced in the South Selkirk and South Peace regions in 2015 that has made wolves targets for inhumane aerial killings, despite the wolf cull being the direct result of the government's failure to stop the human encroachment and habitat destruction that has pushed BC's mountain caribou to the edge of extinction;

WHEREAS wolves are not only a keystone species whose demise creates imbalance in critical ecosystems, but are sacred animals that hold a special, spiritual connection to First Nations – Indigenous peoples have co-existed with wolves for millennia and they are deeply entrenched in our lifeways and belief systems, and are an important part of our ceremonies, regalia, and stories;

WHEREAS the root, underlying cause of the decline in caribou herds in B.C. is not predation, but rather the destruction and fragmentation of caribou habitat by logging and the construction of resource access roads and other infrastructure such as utility lines, oil and gas pipelines, and hydro transmission corridors;

WHEREAS the endangered status of caribou herds in B.C. is a result of decades of mismanagement of their critical habitat that has forced many First Nations to shoulder the impacts of the provincial government's failure to protect, recover, and conserve caribou habitat, and to choose between two wildlife species they value greatly;

WHEREAS faced with numerous challenges stemming from years of mismanaged, ineffective, and colonial government policies and practices, First Nations uphold and exercise the right to make decisions regarding the management and stewardship of their lands, including the wildlife species that reside within;

WHEREAS until the Province can prioritize rehabilitation and reclamation work in core habitats zones, remove linear disturbances (pipelines, roads, railways, etc.) and reduce development in areas of critical importance to caribou, the only alternative for many First Nations is to move forward with their Caribou Recovery Programs and protect caribou from further wolf predations; and

WHEREAS First Nations hunt, fish, and trap sustainably and ethically for social, economic, or ceremonial reasons and UBCIC Chiefs Council passed Resolution 2015-11 and Resolution 2021-05 to strengthen this position and to articulate a renewed UBCIC [mandate](#) on hunting and wildlife management that is founded upon strong principles of conservation, stewardship, and accountability, and that highlights how First Nations have governed and cared for their traditional territories since time immemorial and maintain deep spiritual connections to wildlife that is reflected in their identities, cultures, and livelihoods.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council fully recognizes that the challenges wolf culls and caribou recovery present to First Nations are rooted in the provincial government's mismanagement of caribou habitat, and that until the Province can prioritize rehabilitation and reclamation work in core habitat zones and reduce development in areas of critical importance to caribou, the only alternative for many First Nations is to protect caribou from predation and support selective wolf culls;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council continues to prioritize and respect Title and Right Holders and their territorial laws, and supports all First Nations in upholding conservation and stewardship of wildlife, including protecting wildlife from any killing contests and unethical hunting and culling practices that oppose Indigenous traditional values, ways of life, and fundamental rights;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council urges the provincial government to stop imposing unilateral state decisions on wolf culling and caribou recovery, and to recognize that territorial management must be up to the proper Title Holders whose laws, jurisdiction, and legal orders must be recognized and upheld;

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council directs the UBCIC Executive and staff to work with the other like-minded organizations to ensure the provincial government advances not a full-stop end to wolf culls, but a selective approach that respects First Nations jurisdiction and territorial management, supports caribou habitat and recovery areas, and does not jeopardize First Nations caribou recovery programs and efforts.

Moved: Kukpi7 Fred Robbins, Esketemc
Seconded: Chief Doug Thomas, Splantsin
Disposition: Carried
Date: February 24, 2022