



**ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
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**Assembly of First Nations Supports Indigenous-Led Conservation in Canada,  
Report by Indigenous Circle of Experts Points the Way Forward**

(Ottawa, ON) – Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde, together with Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, commend the work of the Indigenous Circle of Experts on the release of their report recommending changes in the way conservation areas in Canada are created and managed.

“This report’s recommendations provide an essential guide for all governments in respecting and asserting Indigenous rights and our responsibilities to the lands and waters,” said AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde. “This report and its recommendations help point a way forward to partnerships that respect Indigenous peoples, governments, cultures and laws in ways that benefit all of us.”

The report, “*We Rise Together – Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit of practice and reconciliation*”, explores the concept of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) and their contribution to conservation outcomes in Canada. It was shared by the Indigenous Circle of Experts with federal Environment Minister Catherine McKenna in ceremony March 28, 2018.

The report includes 28 recommendations to support the establishment of IPCAs, including through the reconciliation of existing areas, appropriate recognition of Indigenous-led initiatives and the role of partners in this process. Recommendations include expanded and shared responsibilities between Indigenous and Crown governments for protected areas through appropriate recognition and support of IPCAs. IPCAs prioritize the connection between a healthy environment and strong culture.

“Indigenous-led protected areas are part of the effort needed now to uphold our rights and environmental responsibilities and we urge the Government of Canada to work together with First Nations and other Indigenous governments to implement these recommendations,” said AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Co-Chair of the AFN’s Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment.

In addition to supporting overall conservation objectives, IPCAs will emphasize the primary leadership role of Indigenous governments and respect for Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems, support the revitalization of Indigenous languages, create opportunities for sustainable conservation economies, apply holistic approaches to governance and planning, and respect protocols and ceremony.

The report further outlines principles to support the efforts of governments to meet global biodiversity targets by respecting Indigenous rights, Treaties and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Indigenous Circle of Experts is comprised of Indigenous experts and members from federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions across Canada, and includes representatives from the AFN. It was created as part of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 to develop a report providing advice to federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments on how to achieve Canada Target 1 through the appropriate recognition of Indigenous leadership and knowledge systems in the conservation of the land and water.

*The AFN is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.  
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