

Mikisew Cree First Nation applauds UNESCO decision on Wood Buffalo National Park

The Mikisew Cree First Nation is pleased that today, at the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee in Bonn, Germany, UNESCO requested that Canada invite a Reactive Monitoring mission to conduct an in-depth investigation of how Wood Buffalo National Park is being impacted by hydro-electric and oil and gas development. Wood Buffalo National Park was listed as a World Heritage Site over 30 years ago for its globally unique and important ecosystems.

After acknowledging the threats to Wood Buffalo National Park from hydro-electric dams, oil sands development, and proposed open-pit mining near the Park, UNESCO also requested that Canada not take any decision related to development projects that would be difficult to reverse. UNESCO also requested that Canada undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment to assess the potential cumulative impacts of all developments on the Park.

UNESCO's decisions comes in response to a petition from Mikisew in December to place Wood Buffalo National Park on the list of World Heritage in Danger.

"We are deeply concerned about the existing impact of industrial activity and climate change on the Wood Buffalo National Park and the new threats posed by megaprojects upstream of the Peace-Athabasca Delta. We thank the World Heritage Committee for taking Mikisew's concerns seriously in today's decision" says Mikisew Chief Steve Courtoreille.

Melody Lepine, head of the Mikisew delegation in Bonn, added "We have been stunned by the support we have received in Bonn from members of the international community. We look forward to assisting the joint UNESCO/IUCN field mission as it investigates the threats facing Wood Buffalo National Park and the Peace Athabasca Delta in the coming months."

Mikisew is grateful for the wide support its petition has received from other indigenous groups, former Parks Canada officials, eminent scientists and researchers, and numerous non-governmental organizations, including the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

"We applaud the leadership of Mikisew Cree First Nation in bringing the serious threats facing Wood Buffalo to the attention of UNESCO, and urge the Canadian and Alberta governments to act quickly to implement the World Heritage Committee's recommendations." says Alison Woodley, park program director for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS).

Mikisew encourages anyone interested in learning more about the petition and the threats to Wood Buffalo National Park to watch a short video about the petition available here:

<https://vimeo.com/131438792>

For more information, please contact:

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