



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Road
Prince George, BC V2K 5S3
Website: www.bcafn.ca

BCAFN SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
March 7 & 8, 2024
Online via Zoom

Resolution 15/2024

SUBJECT: PROTECTION FOR THE NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL AND ITS OLD-GROWTH HABITAT

Moved by: CHIEF JERRY JACK, MOWACHAHT/MUCHALAHT FIRST NATION

Seconded by: CHIEF LYNDA PRICE, ULKATCHO FIRST NATION

Decision: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. First Nations in B.C. have inherent title, rights, and jurisdiction to our respective territories, and, as the original caretakers of these territories, we continue to exercise our laws and jurisdiction to protect and steward the environment, lands and waters;
- B. the logging and harvesting of old-growth forests have significantly impacted the habitat and population of the spotted owl through a reduction in suitable nesting and foraging areas resulting in the decline of the owl population in B.C.;
- C. the spotted owl is part of the unique biodiversity and traditional territories of First Nations, particularly the Nlaka'pamux community of Spô'zêm (Spuzzum) First Nation in the Fraser Canyon;
- D. 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 B.C., passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

Article 26(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.

Article 32(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

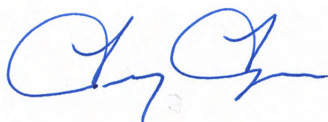
Article 34: Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs, in accordance with international human rights standards;

- E. the current population of spotted owls living in the wild is one. The historic population is estimated to have been 500 pairs, indicating there is currently insufficient protected habitat to support the owl's recovery;
- F. clear cut logging continues in old-growth forests and there are 295 approved and pending cut blocks located within spotted owl habitat even as the province is consulting on its draft framework on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health and old-growth action plan; and
- G. by Resolution 23/2023 "Support for the Draft Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation", the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly called upon the Regional Chief to ensure that First Nations are full partners in the identification of areas for conservation and protection and in habitat enhancement and restoration initiatives as well as ensuring that First Nations are full partners in any planning and decision-making processes, including for land use and species at risk protection and recovery.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on the governments of Canada and B.C. to permanently protect all remaining critical spotted owl habitat as is interpreted by First Nations throughout the Canadian range in southwest B.C., ensuring enough protected forest to accommodate a self-sustaining population of 250 spotted owls; and

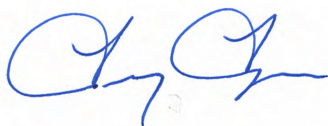
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2. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directs the Regional Chief and BCAFN staff to work with like-minded organizations in calling on the Province of B.C. to immediately protect the spotted owl population and old-growth habitat; and
3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on the Provincial and Federal Governments to acknowledge and uphold the unceded, inherent title, rights and sovereignty of First Nations in relation to species at risk and old growth habitat.

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