

An aerial photograph of a vast, winding river system, likely the Peace River, flowing through a lush green landscape. The river meanders through dense evergreen forests, creating a complex network of channels and islands. The water is a deep, dark blue, contrasting with the vibrant green of the surrounding land. The sky is a clear, pale blue, suggesting a bright, sunny day. The overall scene conveys a sense of natural beauty and tranquility.

# *Canadian* **WILDERNESS**

A publication of CPAWS • FALL 2021/WINTER 2022

## THE DECADE OF CONSERVATION

TIME FOR AMBITION  
AND COLLABORATION

The CPAWS logo features a stylized circular emblem on the left, composed of several curved lines that suggest a sun or a flower. To the right of the emblem, the letters "CPAWS" are written in a large, bold, serif font. Below "CPAWS", the words "CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY" are written in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.

**CPAWS**  
CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY

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# Give Nature What It Needs

LAURA COLELLA

Canada is at a pivotal moment in history – one that will determine just how devastating the impacts of the climate change and biodiversity crises will be. With a re-elected federal government in place, we are looking forward to seeing more investment in conservation commitments. This will be essential to meeting Canada's targets to protect 25% of land and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

We tracked the progress of the federal, provincial, and territorial governments in meeting the 2020 targets of protecting 17% of land and 10% of ocean in our first Report Card. The results, which you can read about in our main feature, make one thing clear – the new federal government will need to collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to meet our current targets, and the more ambitious ones that will be needed for a sustainable future.

## NATURE NEEDS AT LEAST HALF OF LAND AND OCEAN

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) passed a motion this September, with support from the vast majority of international delegates, to recognize that protecting, conserving, and restoring at least half or more of the planet is likely necessary to reverse biodiversity loss and address climate change.

Quantifying our goals give us something tangible to strive for, but it is important to note that drawing the boundary lines of protected areas on a map is not the only measure of success for conservation. Just as important is ensuring the quality of protection: to serve their purpose, protected areas must be managed effectively. In this edition, we spotlight our newly released MPA Monitor, which evaluates the effectiveness of Canada's marine protected areas.

Thanks to your generous support, we have been able to carry on with the exciting conservation work you will read about in these pages. With your continued support, and by working closely with governments and Indigenous leadership, we will make this the decade of conservation that Canada needs!

*Laura Colella is President of the National Board of Trustees for CPAWS.*



Wild Elk in Banff  
National Park, Alberta.  
Photo: Jeff Whyte

## Canadian WILDERNESS

FALL 2021/WINTER 2022 VOLUME 17, ISSUE 2



CPAWS is Canada's voice for wilderness. Since 1963, we've played a lead role in creating over two-thirds of Canada's protected areas.

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# THE DECADE OF CONSERVATION

## IN THIS ISSUE

### FEATURES

#### Making up for Lost Ground • 6

CPAWS is working to help Canada meet bold, new targets and uphold its reputation as a global conservation leader.

#### Monitoring Our Marine Protected Areas • 8

How well protected is Canada's ocean?

#### CPAWS to Co-host World Leaders in Ocean Conservation • 10

The 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress will be held in Canada in 2022. Here's what you can expect.

#### Mother Earth Is Here for Us All • 12

Echo of the Earth, by Uapukun Mestokosho-McKenzie, Innu of Ekuanitshit

### DEPARTMENTS

2 • **PRESIDENT'S DESK** Give Nature What It Needs

4 • **CONSERVATION NEWS** Cumberland House Cree Nation Declares Economic and Environmental Sovereignty over the Saskatchewan River Delta; Grassy Mountain Coal Project Denied; Guilty Verdict Results in Precedent of Accountability for Future Mining Projects

20 • **TRACKS ACROSS CANADA**

22 • **CONTACT US**

*COVER: The Seal River Watershed in northern Manitoba. An initiative is being led by the Sayisi Dene First Nation to protect the watershed from industrial activity in partnership with its Cree, Dene and Inuit neighbours. sealriverwatershed.ca. Photo: Ron Garnett/AirScapes.ca © All Canada Photos*

*ABOVE: Snow covered red Muskoka chairs facing a frozen forest valley on a winter day in Banff National Park, Alberta. Photo: Alpegor*

### CPAWS 2020/2021 IMPACT REPORT

- 14 • **NATURE AT THE HEART OF THE COVID-19 RECOVERY**
- 15 • **OUR ASPIRATION FOR CONSERVATION IN CANADA**
- 16 • **CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS FROM A YEAR UNLIKE ANY OTHER** (April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021)
- 18 • **HONOURING OUR DONORS**
- 19 • **FINANCIAL FITNESS**



# Cumberland House Cree Nation Declares Economic and Environmental Sovereignty Over the Saskatchewan River Delta

CPAWS Saskatchewan is proud to announce that as of June 10, 2021, Cumberland House Cree Nation (CHCN) has declared economic and environmental sovereignty over the Saskatchewan River Delta. The Declaration, delivered by Chief Rene Chaboyer, protects the Delta under Indigenous Law, and reaffirms the stewardship of CHCN's traditional lands by the nation itself. This stewardship includes ongoing work

to restore the damage that has already been done to the delicate ecosystems of the Delta.

The largest inland delta in North America and the third largest in the world, CPAWS Saskatchewan is also currently involved in the coordination of a community-led nomination of the Delta as an area of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

CPAWS will continue to work with CHCN and their partners in developing a co-management plan for the Delta. Proper care and management of this unique region will achieve long-term positive outcomes for biodiversity conservation, local livelihoods, climate change adaptation, and affirmative reconciliatory action. For more information about the Delta, visit [saskriverdelta.com](http://saskriverdelta.com).



Saskatchewan River Delta. Photo: Garth Lenz



# Guilty Verdict Results in Precedent of Accountability for Future Mining Projects

A 2013 investigation by CPAWS Wildlands League uncovered that De Beers Canada Inc. failed to report on five out of nine surface water monitoring stations, a mandatory requirement of its mining permit. The failures in self-monitoring raised troubling concerns about entrusting the company to protect the environment in which it operates.

After painstaking research, reporting, and a private prosecution, the eight-year struggle for accountability against the diamond giant was finally resolved in the Ontario Court of Justice in July 2021. De Beers pleaded guilty to failing to provide mercury monitoring data at its Victor Diamond Mine.

Methylmercury is the most toxic form of mercury. It occurs when mercury in the ecosystem methylates, which can be triggered by open-pit mining like the Victor Diamond Mine. This toxin then bioaccumulates in longer-lived and larger fish such as walleye and northern pike, as well as in wildlife and humans.

The reporting failures undermined the effectiveness of the De Beers mine's early warning system for mercury. The case sets a precedent for the so-called "Ring of Fire" discoveries in Northern Ontario and how mining impacts are reported and overseen in Ontario.



Grassy Mountain, Alberta. Photo: CPAWS Southern Alberta

## Grassy Mountain Coal Project Denied

Alberta has seen a pivotal win in the fight against coal mining in the Eastern Slopes with the joint federal-provincial review panel denying Benga's Grassy Mountain Coal Project. The panel found that the adverse environmental and health risks would be too great to be outweighed by any potential economic benefits and concluded that the Grassy Mountain project was not in the public interest.

CPAWS Southern Alberta has been fighting the Grassy Mountain Coal Project since 2014 and officially intervened in the hearing in fall 2020. The chapter has been working closely with the Niitsitapi Water Protectors and the Livingstone Landowners Group to raise awareness on how Grassy Mountain would threaten clean water, fish and wildlife species, and would infringe on Treaty rights.

Benga has filed an application to appeal both the provincial and federal decisions. But Grassy Mountain is not the only proposed mine to threaten the Rocky Mountains. As Alberta moves towards the development of a new coal policy, CPAWS Southern Alberta is calling for a new vision for Alberta's Eastern Slopes that prioritizes conservation and community values: [bit.ly/CPAWS-GrassyMountainCoal](https://bit.ly/CPAWS-GrassyMountainCoal).



Above: De Beers' Victor Diamond Mine. Left: CPAWS Wildlands League's Trevor Hesselink (center) flanked by Ecojustice lawyers Charles Hatt (L) and Julia Croome (R) at the Ontario Court of Justice at Old City Hall, Toronto, 2016. Photos: CPAWS Wildlands League





CPAWS is working to help Canada meet bold, new targets and uphold its reputation as a global conservation leader.

Fall colors of Lac Legault with Mont Kaaikop in the background, in the Laurentians, Quebec.  
Photo: Hummingbird Art

# MAKING UP FOR LOST GROUND

Canada's image as a conservation champion is on the line. Ottawa has repeatedly promised to help lead the world, pledging to protect 25% of its oceans and land by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Yet, only last year, the nation broke a far-less-ambitious pledge to protect just 17% of its land and water by 2020. The failure means that Canada can't afford to miss its new targets without disappointing the international community – and Canadians – again.

Conservation organizations like CPAWS have a vital role in keeping the nation's plans on track.

## A GLOBAL CONSERVATION CHAMPION

"Lots of countries look to Canada, with its vast wilderness and with the

world's longest coastline, to lead the charge when it comes to protecting nature," says CPAWS National Executive Director Sandra Schwartz. "Conservation groups like ours have an essential role in encouraging governments to live up to those expectations."

Canada has long been considered an international leader for conservation. Almost three decades ago, the country became the first industrialized nation to sign the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD). Not long after, it became the permanent host of the convention's international secretariat in Montreal. In 2010, it was among almost 200 other signatory countries to set key conservation

benchmarks for 2020 – including goals to protect 10% of marine areas and 17% of land and water.

Then, for many years, Canada seemed to all but disappear from the international conservation stage. As the 2020 deadline loomed, the country was late announcing its own national goals and targets. While concerted eleventh-hour efforts secured some successes – including increasing Canadian marine protected areas to 13.8% – Canada ended 2020 with just 13.1% of its land protected, well short of the 17% promised to the world.

"It was disappointing," recalls Alison Woodley, Senior Strategy Advisor with CPAWS national office. "Canada didn't keep its pledge, because for many years



it didn't take conservation seriously. When it finally did, it was late to the game."

### PROTECTING NATURE MATTERS

Many scientists agree that protecting large areas of the planet can help end the extinction of species. Research suggests that protecting a minimum of 30% and up to 70% of land and ocean ecosystems can keep the planet healthy and ensure nature continues to provide ecosystem services for humanity.

In recent years, Canada has stepped forward as an early and vocal advocate for the idea. In 2020, for instance, Canada joined dozens of other nations in a "High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People," committing to protect 30% of land and ocean by the end of the decade. In June 2021, the country signed a comparable pledge with G7 nations in their "2030 Nature Compact."

But Canada's failure to make its 2020 UN CBD protected-land target has nevertheless cast a shadow over its bold new promises. To keep them, the country will have to almost double its currently-protected land within the next four years. "If we want to show the world that we're serious about protected areas, there is no time to lose," says Woodley.

### A PROTECTED-AREAS REPORT CARD

CPAWS is working to help. One tool recently introduced by the CPAWS team is a protected areas Report Card. The inaugural issue, called *The Grades Are In: A Report Card on Canada's Progress in Protecting its Land and Ocean*, was published in the summer as a yardstick by which CPAWS will measure Canada's commitment to the new targets in the years ahead.

The first Report Card looked back over the past decade and assigned grades to the provinces, territories and federal government, evaluating their past efforts to reach – or not – 2020 protection

targets. The grades will serve as a baseline and encourage more effective conservation action going forward.

Another tool is supporting and encouraging Indigenous-led conservation. For instance, CPAWS is promoting several large-scale conservation projects like the protection of the Seal River Watershed. That project would see the creation of a 50,000 square km Indigenous Protected Area in northern Manitoba.

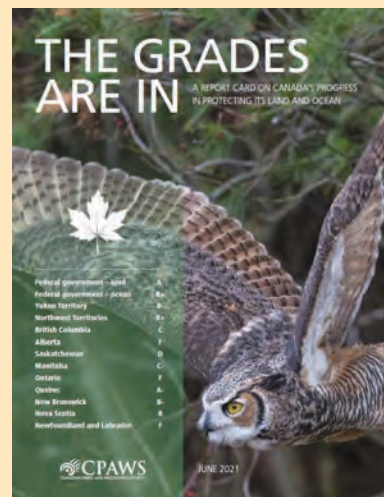
### THE WORLD IS WATCHING

Reminding Canada that the rest of the world is paying attention also helps. In September, CPAWS was co-author of a motion at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress to recognize the need to ultimately conserve at least half the planet to successfully tackle the twin biodiversity and climate crises.

Motion 101 also acknowledged the importance of Indigenous peoples and called for respect for Indigenous rights in all conservation activities. The motion, co-written by CPAWS, the WILD Foundation, the Yellowstone-to-Yukon Conservation Initiative, and other NGO partners, was approved by IUCN delegates representing dozens of countries, conservation groups, and Indigenous organizations.

While this country's new protected-area targets may look ambitious compared to previous (and, in part, unachieved) goals, this time momentum is on Canada's side. With encouragement from CPAWS and other groups, Ottawa committed to more than \$3 billion for nature conservation in the 2021 federal budget, including support for Indigenous, provincial, and territorial government partners and NGOs to help meet the protected areas benchmarks.

Thanks to the work of CPAWS and others, Canada's pledge to once again lead the world in conservation may just be a promise we can count on.



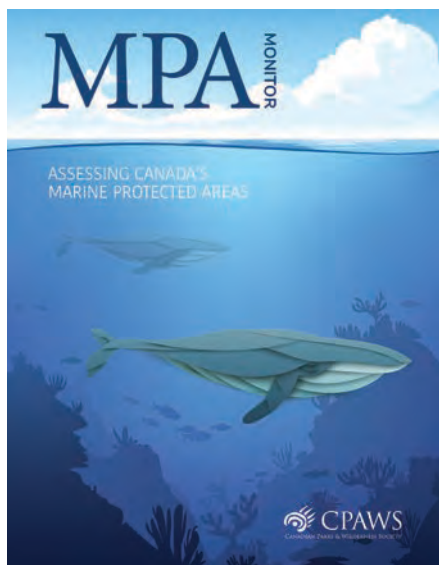
## PROTECTED-AREAS REPORT CARD HIGHLIGHTS WHERE CHANGE IS NEEDED

Weak conservation commitments by Ontario, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan were the main culprits in Canada's failure to meet an international promise to protect large areas of land and oceans by 2020, according to a new CPAWS report released in June 2021. The report is the first of its kind and tracked efforts by all provinces, territories and the federal government to meet Canada's 2020 commitment to protect 17% of its land and 10% of its ocean. The findings form a baseline for future reports on how well Canadian jurisdictions are doing to meet new, more-ambitious targets to protect 25% of land and oceans by 2025 and 30% by 2030. The Report Card credited Quebec, the Northwest Territories and the federal government for making positive strides for protected areas over the past decade. Read more at [cpaws.org/reportcard](https://cpaws.org/reportcard).

## DID YOU KNOW

The Seal River Watershed holds a whopping 1.7 billion tonnes of carbon in its boreal soils, wetlands, and peatlands. That's the same as eight years' worth of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.





# MONITORING OUR MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

How well protected is Canada's ocean?

**R**ecent momentum towards protecting Canada's ocean estate has been heartening. In 2016, less than 1% was protected. Over the next few years, we saw a flurry of activity and several new designations. By August 2019, Canada announced it had protected nearly 14%. Canada has now committed to protecting at least 30% of its ocean by 2030, which is in line with current scientific and international recommendations, and Federal Budget 2021 included an historic investment of \$977 million to support this goal.

But one question has been top of mind – how well protected is Canada's ocean?

In response to concerns about protection standards of Canada's marine protected areas (MPAs), in 2019 Canada announced minimum protection standards for MPAs that would prohibit oil and gas, mining, bottom trawling, and dumping in all new federal MPAs. The government also committed to review existing MPAs against the minimum protection standards.

MPAs are one of the most effective tools to restore habitats, rebuild biodiversity, and help species adapt to climate change. In doing so, MPAs produce long-term benefits for the ocean and for people – **but only when they are strongly protected and effectively managed**. Several international studies found that MPAs may not be sufficiently well protected and thus not producing conservation benefits as expected.

To help address questions of how well protected MPAs are, 42 global experts recently published *The MPA Guide* ([www.mpa-guide.protectedplanet.net](http://www.mpa-guide.protectedplanet.net)), a new tool to evaluate the quality of protection in MPAs based on the activities permitted within them and the stage of designation.

CPAWS is the first organization to use *The MPA Guide* to assess Canada's 18 federal MPAs – which cover approximately 8.3% of Canada's ocean estate – against both the minimum protection standards and *The MPA Guide*

framework. The results were published in CPAWS' 2021 MPA Monitor report in October.

## ANALYSIS IDENTIFIES WEAKNESSES IN EXISTING MPA REGULATIONS

When the size of MPAs is considered, only 0.4 % of Canada's ocean estate is strongly protected in federal MPAs, 5.7 % in weakly protected MPAs, and 0.3 % in MPAs that are incompatible with conservation. One very large MPA covering 1.9% of Canada's ocean is only proposed and so was not scored.

Our analysis found that four MPAs met all four minimum standards in practice. Implementing the minimum protection standards would push two MPAs from incompatible to weakly protected, and another two MPAs from weakly to strongly protected. We also found considerable regional differences in protection levels, with the more strongly protected MPAs in Atlantic Canada, large but weakly protected MPAs in the Arctic, and several weaknesses in MPAs in the Pacific.

## MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Our analysis shows that while Canada has made encouraging progress with on ocean protection enroute to 30%, there is still work to be done if we are to maximize conservation benefits.

Among the recommendations in the report: applying minimum protection standards to new and existing MPAs will provide a critical level of basic protection. Secondly, adopting *The MPA Guide* as an evaluation tool will help MPA managers identify gaps in protection so they can be effectively addressed. The report also recommends implementing more robust management plans to deal with outstanding issues in existing MPAs.

Read CPAWS' full analysis of Canada's federal MPA's at [cpaws.org/oceanreport](http://cpaws.org/oceanreport).





Sea anemone and sponges, British Columbia.  
Photo: Gary Peplow

#### CPAWS' ANALYSIS INDICATES THAT OF THE 18 FEDERAL MARINE PROTECTED AREAS:

- ● ● ● ● ● ● Seven of Canada's federal MPAs are strongly protected
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● Eight are weakly protected
- ● Two are incompatible with biodiversity conservation
- One is proposed but not yet established

#### IMPLEMENTING MINIMUM PROTECTION STANDARDS WOULD:

- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● Make nine of Canada's federal MPAs strongly protected
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● Make eight weakly protected, moving incompatible areas into protection
- One is proposed but not yet established



An underwater photograph showing a dense kelp forest with many yellowish-brown kelp stalks and blades. Numerous small, silvery fish are swimming throughout the water, which is a deep blue color. The scene is brightly lit from above, creating a vibrant and healthy marine environment.

## CPAWS TO CO-HOST WORLD LEADERS IN OCEAN CONSERVATION

The 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress will be held in Canada in 2022. Here's what you can expect.

In less than a year, global leaders and marine conservationists will come together in Vancouver, British Columbia for the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) to chart a course to restore ocean health by protecting at least 30% of the ocean by 2030 in strong and effective Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

From 1-8 of September 2022, IMPAC5 will convene marine protection practitioners, Indigenous Peoples, and young professionals from around the world to share best practices and innovations for advancing and effectively managing a global network of MPAs that will help to rebuild and protect biodiversity.

CPAWS is honored to be a key partner to the Government of Canada and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as one of the host organizations of IMPAC5, alongside three Host Nations, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm



IMPAC CONGRESSES ARE GLOBAL FORUMS THAT WELCOME MARINE PROTECTED AREA PROFESSIONALS, INDIGENOUS LEADERS, CONSERVATIONISTS, POLICY MAKERS, YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AND OCEAN FRIENDS AND ADVOCATES.

(Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and the government of British Columbia. The Congress is held every four years under the auspices of the IUCN.

IMPAC5 is an opportunity to shore up commitments made at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in China, the One Ocean Summit in France, and the United Nations Ocean Conference in Portugal. Participants and leaders will come to IMPAC5 prepared to move forward on ambitious and innovative approaches that represent transformational change.

As a member of the planning committee, CPAWS has been hands-on in the development of the Congress program. “We are proud to be a key partner on IMPAC5 at this critical time when Canada and the world must find a way to protect at least 30% of the ocean by 2030,” says Sandra Schwartz, CPAWS National Executive Director. “IMPAC5 is an important forum for collaborating on how best to safeguard the most important and vulnerable ecosystems and species, bolster Indigenous-led conservation, and ensure our vibrant ocean wildlife, habitats, and coastal communities can recover and flourish for future generations.”

The Congress will be a hybrid event that includes virtual and in-person programming. “To celebrate IMPAC5 and share this amazing experience with the public, we are also planning a unique Ocean Festival where anyone — young and old, from scientists to school children — can explore some of the amazing places and species we want to protect,” explains Alexandra Barron, National Director of CPAWS’ Ocean Program. “CPAWS Chapters are busy planning activities from coast-to-coast-to-coast to connect all Canadians to IMPAC5.”

To further foster a sense of global community and elevate the voices of all marine conservationists, IMPAC5 will be comprised of three main streams: **Innovation and Transformational Change, Indigenous Peoples Leadership, and The Voice of Young Professionals**. Each of these streams will address five key themes:

- ◆ Building a Global Marine Protected Area Network
- ◆ Managing Marine Protected Areas and Human Activity
- ◆ Addressing the Climate Crisis and Conserving Biodiversity
- ◆ Advancing Conservation in the Blue Economy
- ◆ Connecting Ocean, Culture and Human Well-Being

Often described as “the MPA Olympics” in terms of its timing and global scale, the goals of IMPAC5 are to:

- ◆ Demonstrate global support for marine conservation efforts such as networks of marine protected areas and marine spatial planning.
- ◆ Provide an opportunity to celebrate and galvanize global cooperation in marine conservation.
- ◆ Provide an opportunity for countries to come together to develop a roadmap to a post-2020 biodiversity framework for ocean conservation.
- ◆ Showcase the important role of marine protected areas in addressing the climate crisis and conserving biodiversity in a post-pandemic world.
- ◆ Share what is uniquely Canadian: our vast marine and coastal environment, the rich diversity of local and Indigenous peoples and coastal cultures, our collective efforts, and our world-class ocean science and management regime.

Calls for proposals have closed. Registration opens soon. For more information, visit [www.IMPAC5.ca](http://www.IMPAC5.ca) and watch for updates from CPAWS and IMPAC5 on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



THE IMPAC5  
LOGO DESIGN  
A powerful call  
for global action

There is a meaningful story behind the development of the IMPAC5 logo. The design was a collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and symbolizes the need for coordinated global action from all nations and cultures to protect the world ocean and the wildlife that calls it home.

The global ocean theme comes through with a stylized Humpback whale emerging from a cresting wave. The “Salish Eye” motif incorporated into the whale was created by Ta7taliya Michelle Nahanee of Nahanee Creative and a member of Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish Nation). It represents the watchful eyes of past and future generations. Visit [IMPAC5.ca](http://IMPAC5.ca) for the full story about its creation.

THE OCEAN COVERS 70%  
OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE  
AND SUPPORTS AN  
EXTRAORDINARILY DIVERSE  
WORLD. WE MUST  
WORK TOGETHER TO  
PROTECT AT LEAST  
30% BY 2030.



## ECHO OF THE EARTH

She raised us all equal  
But the ego of some  
Left us divided  
Divided the nations, divided the Earth  
Divided to conquer

It was the beginning of the end of the ancient world  
That world that I dream of  
That I hope one day to live in  
Perhaps in another life, on another planet  
Where I could be that which I truly am

I am tired of surviving against the current  
Caught between the rapids of life and the endless portages to other challenges

River my sister  
I talk to her about everything I feel  
As if she had the power to soothe my suffering  
Swimming in her waters at times calm at times turbulent  
Each time I feel myself restored as if rocked in the waters of my mother's womb

I dive in and observe her depths  
Sometimes I am afraid  
Sometimes I want to transform into a fish and float inside her

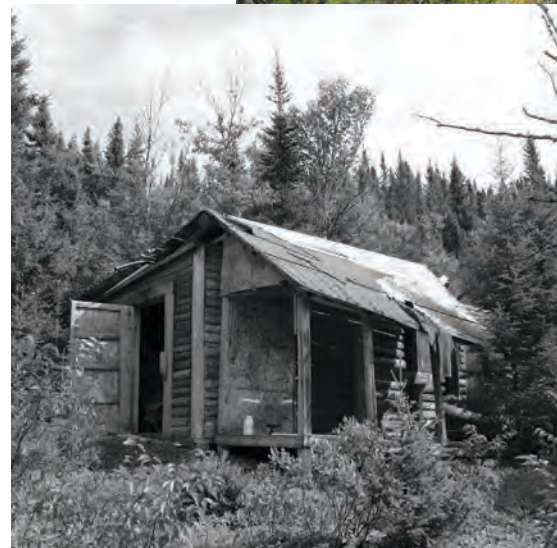
I have been told  
That water carries our memories, the memories of older civilizations  
I like to believe that is why she pulls me in  
She calls me to immerse myself in her, to remember our life in harmony

Sometimes I cry out underwater with all my strength hoping she will hear my call  
of distress  
Sometimes I sit down beside her and sing her a prayer  
To tell her how grateful I am that she is present in my existence  
And that she allows this life to flow

It is in the wildness of nature that I find myself  
Trying to escape the reality that hurts too much  
Haunted by the traces of abuse in the past... still very much present  
In this society that wants to change me into something I am not

I pray to the great spirit to give me strength to continue on this road  
I pray to my ancestors to guide each of my steps toward the path that is my destiny  
So as to perpetuate this nomadic way of life  
And reopen the passage of ancestral paths

For our survival and that of future generations.







# MOTHER EARTH IS HERE FOR US ALL

*Muteshekau shipu*, the Magpie River.  
Facing page, from top to bottom:  
Remnants of life in Nitassinan.  
Author Uapukun Mestokosho-McKenzie  
standing alongside the Magpie River.  
Photos: Uapukun Mestokosho-McKenzie

**F**or many years, we have been working to protect *Nitassinan*, our ancestral homeland, and *Muteshekau shipu*, the Magpie River. We have attributed rights to it and have even recognized it as a “legal person” - a first in Canada. This river is known internationally for its rapids and whitewater, but she is far more than that. Where there is water, there is life. Water is what brings us together on this planet Earth. It moves around the Earth like a great river that flows and continues its eternal cycle to sustain life.

Protecting the Earth is a matter of survival; protecting the Earth is, quite

simply, respecting Life. We need her, even if she would probably be better off without us.

The Earth must be given time to regenerate, to recover from all the destruction she has suffered. Some dams that prevent the water from flowing and accomplishing the purpose for which it exists should probably be dismantled. We must come together, unite and go out to occupy this magnificent territory, in order to restore the connection to *Nitassinan*.

We need to decolonize... deconstruct the structures of a failed system... that have conditioned us to want always

more and more, when we already have everything we need right here.

I come from a generation that has suffered the intergenerational traumas of colonialism, residential schools, systemic racism, cultural genocide, all the injustices of this world and our connection with the Earth that they tried to destroy.

I have long dreamed of this moment when my voice would be heard, for it is also the voice of my ancestors, and that of the Earth.

*Uapukun Mestokosho-McKenzie*  
*Innu of Ekuanitshit*





# 2020/2021 Impact Report

# Nature at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery

PETER MATHER

**W**hile the first full year of COVID-19 cast a long shadow, one bright message during this period became abundantly clear: Canadians need CPAWS.

Across the country, countless numbers of us found solace and relief from pandemic stress by visiting Canada's parks and spending time in nature. We discovered – if we didn't know already – that we need these wild places, that protecting them is vital, and that the mission of this organization is critical.

The pandemic reaffirmed that Canadians need nature, but it was also a reminder that nature needs us. That's why CPAWS was a leader among dozens of groups to urge the federal government to put nature first when rebuilding Canada's post-COVID economy. The central message was that investing in natural infrastructure will create green jobs while supporting conservation, protecting wilderness and battling climate change. More than 230 organizations signed the letter.

CPAWS also urged Canada to work toward its latest promises to protect 25% of land, freshwater and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030. In Budget 2021, we welcomed the federal government's largest-ever investment in protecting nature: more than \$3 billion to deliver on these commitments.

Establishing more protected areas is important, but ensuring they stay protected is essential, too. That's why CPAWS is working with Indigenous communities, governments and other groups to improve conditions at several of Canada's internationally recognized natural World Heritage Sites. Fewer than half of the 10 sites – plus one mixed (cultural and natural) site – across the country were considered to have a "good" conservation outlook in the latest (December 2020) World Heritage Outlook report by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Five were described as "good with some concerns," with invasive species and climate change topping the list of threats. Wood Buffalo National Park – Canada's largest national park – remained a World Heritage Site of "significant concern," thanks mainly to threats from upstream industrial development and global warming. CPAWS is continuing to press the federal government to act on its 2019 Action Plan for Wood Buffalo.

Quebec's Magpie River, meanwhile, gained huge protection from development and other threats when it became the first river in Canada to be granted the rights of legal personhood. The swift, pristine, 300 km river was granted its personhood status by the Innu Council of Ekuanitshit and the Minganie Regional County Municipality after a decade-long campaign spearheaded by CPAWS Quebec and the Muteshekau-shipu Alliance.



More bold action is needed, and protecting nature often starts with getting the word out first. Twice during the past year, CPAWS took to the opinion pages of the acclaimed Ottawa newspaper The Hill Times to make the case for conservation.

An article headlined “A COVID-busting fiscal plan should put nature first” outlined how conservation can help Canada’s economy, too. Another article – just ahead of the federal budget – carried the headline “Biden’s protected-area push highlights Canada’s conservation opportunity” and suggested Canada should match the exciting new U.S. efforts to save nature south of the border.

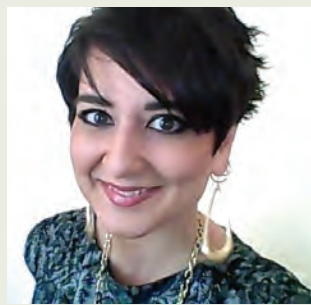
These highlights of CPAWS successes over the past year are only part of the picture. Thanks to the generous support we get from our thousands of donors, volunteers, and partners, CPAWS has been able to help protect wilderness and wildlife in myriad other ways across this country.

As more Canadians look to nature to help them cope in troubled times, our supporters can take pride: our work together to permanently protect at least half of our land, freshwater and ocean plays a vital role in helping our country stay strong and safe, and ensures next generations will live in a Canada where every corner is home to a healthy ecosystem, teeming with wildlife.

Yours in Conservation,



Sandra Schwartz  
CPAWS National  
Executive Director



Laura Colella  
Chair and President,  
Board of Trustees



## Our aspiration for conservation in Canada

CPAWS envisions a Canada that values nature for its intrinsic worth, for the life-sustaining services it provides, and for its essential role in the fight against climate change.

We believe that the right areas need to be protected, defended, and effectively managed to sustain the nature within them for the wellbeing of current and future generations. We recognize that meaningful conservation takes time and is based on trusted relationships.

Working in a way that respects the sovereignty and leadership of Indigenous nations, we achieve our mission through knowledge-based advocacy, and public education and engagement, underpinned by collaboration and partnership.



# Conservation highlights *from a year unlike any other*

(April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021)

**B**y April 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had transformed the world, and CPAWS adapted quickly. We were ready, for instance, when governments began planning Canada's post-COVID recovery, and we stood with over 230 organizations urging leaders to put nature at the heart of these plans.

Our annual parks report, *Healthy Nature Healthy People*, was released in July 2020 describing how governments can provide health and economic benefits by investing in protected areas.

CPAWS celebrated when Canada joined the Global Ocean Alliance in July 2020 which is working towards **protecting 30% of our ocean by 2030**, put nature and climate at the heart of COVID-19 recovery in the Speech from the Throne and by signing the **Leader's Pledge for Nature**, and joined the **High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People**, a group of over 30 countries championing an ambitious nature conservation agenda.



Meanwhile, CPAWS successes continued across the country. In Nova Scotia, for example, Katewe'katik and Pu'tlaqne'katik, the traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people, were designated as protected areas by the province following extensive work by CPAWS Nova Scotia and its Indigenous Guardian partners.



After a targeted campaign supported by CPAWS Manitoba, the Government of Canada invested \$3.2 million in the Seal River Watershed Indigenous Protected Area. The area in the Taiga Shield of northern Manitoba is within the traditional territories of the Cree, Dene and Inuit.



In the Yukon, a 65 km exploration road through the Beaver River Watershed proposed by ATAC Resources Ltd. was rejected by the territorial government following years of opposition from CPAWS Yukon, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Yukon residents, and other conservation organizations.





PETER HOLCOMB

In Quebec, years of work by CPAWS Quebec and others to protect the Magpie River from development resulted in a landmark decision by the regional municipality and the Innu Council of Ekuanitshit to **grant the river the legal rights of personhood for the first time in Canada.**

In Alberta, CPAWS Northern Alberta and CPAWS Southern Alberta cheered after the province backtracked on an earlier decision to delist or close 175 Alberta park sites. The reversal was a direct result of the **Defend Alberta Parks** campaign led by the two CPAWS Alberta chapters and resulting in more than 21,000 letters sent to MLAs.

Similarly, in February 2021, the Alberta government **reinstated a 1976 Coal Policy** that had been quietly rescinded in May 2020. The reinstatement came after thousands of Albertans voiced their opposition to open-pit mining in the Rocky Mountains.

In December 2020, CPAWS Quebec also celebrated with the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, the Makivik Corporation, the Kativik Regional Government (KRG), and the Cree Nation Government after **nearly 30,000 km<sup>2</sup> in Nunavik was declared protected by the province.** Extensions were also announced for **Tursujuq National Park**, the largest protected area in eastern North America, and the **George River Protected Area**, an important calving ground for migratory caribou.

Later that month, the government of Quebec announced the addition of **66,000 km<sup>2</sup> new protected areas** in the province, including more than **39,000 km<sup>2</sup> of protected areas in Eeyou Istchee** – a territory of high bio-cultural significance to communities, trappers and hunters of the Cree Nation – and a new protected area in the famous **Chic-Choc Mountains.**

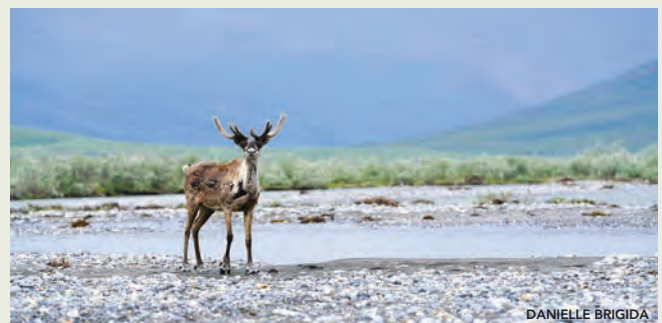


BENNY MAZUR

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear a developer's challenge to an **emergency order protecting western chorus frogs in La Prairie, Quebec.**

The decision sends a strong message that the protection of biodiversity is a fundamental societal value.

The social value of nature was reaffirmed when the **"Big Five" Canadian banks announced they would not fund drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** following a U.S. decision to sell drilling leases in the area. Dozens of banks from around the world did the same.



DANIELLE BRIGIDA



# Honouring our donors

Thank you to those individuals, foundations, corporate donors, corporate partners, and organizations that demonstrated their leadership in our 2020-2021 fiscal year with gifts and contributions to CPAWS of \$1,000 or more.

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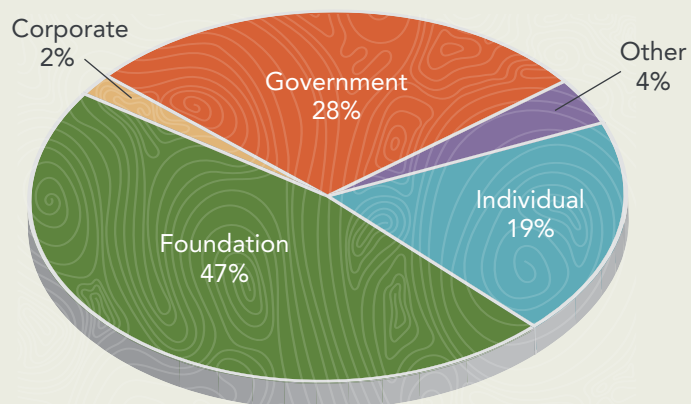
# Financial fitness

We began the year adapting to a new work-from-home reality and to pandemic-related financial uncertainty, but we had faith that our supporters would continue to believe in our important work. Our donors came through, supporting our conservation efforts with \$13,317,562 in funding and allowing us to focus 79% of our spending exclusively on conservation. Our stakeholders can be confident CPAWS remains financially stable and focused on our conservation mission.

– Laura Cui, Director of Finance

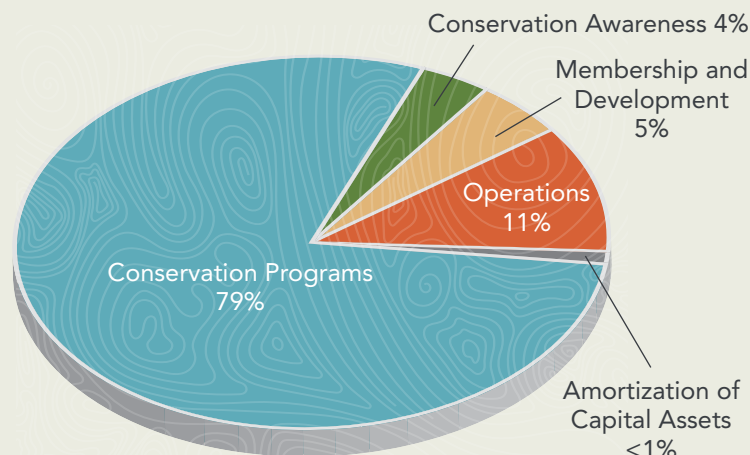
## How CPAWS is funded

INCOME: 13,317,562 (FY 2020/2021)



## How your donation is used

EXPENDITURES: 11,546,678 (FY 2020/2021)



To view the full financial statements, please visit [cpaws.org/about/about-cpaws/financials/](https://cpaws.org/about/about-cpaws/financials/).

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## YUKON

What lives among the trees in your backyard? **CPAWS Yukon** set up camera traps and audio recorders throughout McIntyre Creek (Chasàn Chùa in Southern Tutchone) a wildlife corridor that passes through Whitehorse, in the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. McIntyre Creek could be a great example of an urban park that connects visitors and the people of Whitehorse to wildlife and wild spaces. Learn more, [cpawsyukon.org/chasan-chua](http://cpawsyukon.org/chasan-chua).

Moose and calf spot our camera trap in McIntyre Creek.

Photo: CPAWS Yukon



## BRITISH COLUMBIA

**CPAWS BC** continues to press the BC government to protect 25% of its land and water by 2025. During the hardest days of the pandemic, BC's 1000+ parks were the places to which people turned to breathe deeply and relax. Nature saved us then – now it's time for us to return the favour and protect more of BC. Learn more, [cpawsbc.org/naturesavedus](http://cpawsbc.org/naturesavedus).

Nature Saved Us campaign illustration.

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**CPAWS NWT** is working with Deninu K'ue First Nation to set-up bird song recorders and document fish and wetland habitat in the Slave River Delta and Taltson River watershed. The effort will help build an avian acoustic inventory and increase knowledge about wetland and riparian vegetation. Information will contribute to conservation decisions related to land-use planning and a potential protected area. The focus of the project is downstream of Wood Buffalo National Park, is important for migratory birds, food security (fish, moose, ducks, geese) and is a nationally important carbon sink. Industrial development upstream along the Athabasca River and the dams on the Peace River including Site C under construction, threaten water quality, disrupt water quantity, and degrade the health of water, fish and wildlife here.



Bird song recording along the Taltson River watershed.

Photo: CPAWS NWT



Wood Bison and bison calves.

Photo: Martin Prentice

## ALBERTA

**CPAWS Northern AB** is asking for wildlife status for wild bison herds in Alberta. In the past, the Government of Alberta has addressed regulations on a herd-by-herd basis, but leaving many important herds behind without any protections. Bison in Alberta desperately need over-arching protective measures across their historical range, for all herds. A wildlife status will be the first step toward ensuring responsible and meaningful population and habitat conservation measures across the province. Learn more: [cpawsnab.org/bison-in-alberta](http://cpawsnab.org/bison-in-alberta).



## ALBERTA

**CPAWS Southern AB** led a comprehensive response to Parks Canada's Rocky Mountain National Parks public consultation to ensure park management plans continue to guide effective management over the next 10 years. CPAWS Southern Alberta and CPAWS Northern Alberta collaborated on submissions detailing well-positioned and supported recommendations based on science and the expressed needs of Canadians for each plan. The chapters also encouraged park users to provide feedback to Parks Canada on the plans. See all the submissions here: [bit.ly/RMNP-plans](https://bit.ly/RMNP-plans).



Winter in the Mashkiki Biodiversity Reserve.  
Photo: Alain Trudel

## MANITOBA

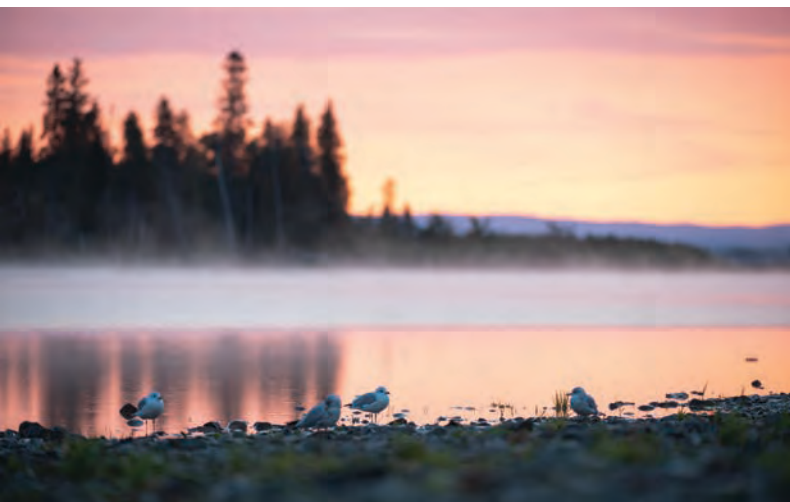
**CPAWS Manitoba** continues to support the Sayisi Dene First Nation on an initiative to protect the entire 50,000 sq. km of the Seal River Watershed in partnership with its Cree, Dene and Inuit neighbours. The Seal River Watershed Alliance is calling on the government of Manitoba to support its efforts to establish an Indigenous Protected Area and protect a pristine expanse of tundra, wetlands and forests as vast as Nova Scotia. Learn more, [cpawsemb.org](https://cpawsemb.org).

## ONTARIO

**CPAWS Ottawa Valley** continues to advocate for the protection of Gatineau Park. The new master plan released in January by the National Capital Commission included many improvements from the 2005 plan, including stronger emphasis on the importance of ecological connectivity and recognition of the park's cultural heritage. Despite the improvements, there are still six areas of concern. Learn more about the campaign to protect Gatineau Park and how you can help at [cpaws-ov-vo.org](https://cpaws-ov-vo.org).

## QUEBEC

This summer **CPAWS Quebec** celebrated a victory for the protection of the marine life in the Fjord Saguenay against the GNL/Gazoduc project - great news for the St-Lawrence Beluga whale population! CPAWS Quebec and its partners also mobilized thousands of citizens to send letters urging the premier to stop the logging activity in the Péribonka protected area and succeeded in stopping the destruction of this territory taking a step toward its protection. Learn more on [snapquebec.org](https://snapquebec.org)



## NEW BRUNSWICK

**CPAWS NB** continues to advocate for the protection of the Restigouche Wilderness Waterway, and was pleased to see the Province's Public Response Report about their consultations, released this spring. The report outlines several issues CPAWS NB advocated for regarding future conservation and protection of the Restigouche wilderness, including involving First Nations and other local organizations in the management of the waterway, and an increase in outdoor ethics education aimed at users. For more information, view the report: [cpawsnb.org/campaigns/restigouche](https://cpawsnb.org/campaigns/restigouche).

Restigouche River. Photo: Justin Dutcher





Eastern Shore Islands along the Atlantic Coast of Nova Scotia. Photo: Irwin Barrett

## NOVA SCOTIA

**CPAWS NS** is working hard to establish over 100 new protected areas this year. The chapter is well on its way toward achieving this goal, with the Nova Scotia government recently increasing the protected areas target to 20% of the provincial landmass and agreeing to fully implement the Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan. These new commitments will result in the creation of many new protected areas in Nova Scotia.

## NEWFOUNDLAND

**CPAWS NL** wrapped up another successful puffin and petrel season. With the help of the community, approximately 1,500 volunteer patrollers assisted CPAWS NL in banding and safely releasing over 2,000 pufflings and petrels! This annual campaign is crucial as juvenile Leach's Storm-Petrels fledge from their burrows and are attracted to artificial lighting on land, sometimes becoming stranded. To learn more, visit [cpawsnl.org/puffinpetrelpatrol](http://cpawsnl.org/puffinpetrelpatrol).

Banded juvenile  
puffin ready to be  
safely released.  
Photo: Emma Corbett



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[www.cpaws-southernalberta.org](http://www.cpaws-southernalberta.org)

CPAWS Northern Alberta  
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Inspired by Nature, Driven by Science to *Make Life Better!*

We create natural health products using the highest-quality testing standards in the industry.

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SAFE FROM  
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SAFE FROM  
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PROUDLY 

Coldfront Down Jacket  
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OR

Eco-conscious materials  
x 700+ fill power insulation

OR x CPAWS PARTNERSHIP

# OUTDOOR RESEARCH



**GIVING TUESDAY** is Nov. 30, 2021:  
an international day dedicated  
to giving back.

Join us on social media to learn  
how to participate with CPAWS.

Together, we can make  
a big difference!

**GIVINGTUESDAY™** 

Want to help fundraise for CPAWS with your event, product, or activity?  
Contact Vicki Dimillo at [vdimillo@cpaws.org](mailto:vdimillo@cpaws.org)





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the outdoors  
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\$1 million** to Canadian  
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**Teach** outdoor skills  
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Our Outdoor Impact partners



THE ROYAL CANADIAN  
GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

