



## The Great Caribou Rainforest Conservation Area

The **Great Caribou Rainforest (GCR) Conservation Area** is a timely opportunity to advance reconciliation through conservation of the unique ecosystems in the world, BC's Inland Temperate Rainforest (ITR). It prioritizes transition of resource-dependent communities to sustainable alternatives.

Williams Lake First Nation, Canim Lake Band, Xat'sull First Nations and Simpcw First Nation have formed the **Great Caribou Rainforest Alliance** with Harmony Foundation to pursue this Indigenous-led initiative in cooperation with BC and Canada. In the words of the Nations' Chiefs, *"this area is highly significant to us, culturally, economically and environmentally and must be well-managed for future generations."*

Indigenous knowledge and leadership are integral to the initiative, which aligns well with government commitments on bio-diversity, species-at-risk, old-growth and sustainable forest management, climate change and Indigenous rights. It presents an excellent opportunity for BC and Canada to demonstrate in practical terms their commitments not only to conservation, but also to truth and reconciliation, through alignment of this project with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Establishing the conservation area would protect a significant portion of BC's Inland Temperate Rainforest (ITR), the only one in North America, and one of only three in the world.

- These forests have high capacity for carbon capture, and 10% of the area is classified old-growth.
- Conserving these forests will contribute to meeting Canada's 30% by 2030 commitment.
- This biodiversity rich area sustains hundreds of species at risk, including grizzly bear, wolverine, great horned owls, salmon and 3 of the 5 largest herds of the critically endangered Southern Mountain Caribou.

The Deep-Snow Mountain Caribou of BC's ITR are unique in the world. As recently as 20 years ago there were 17 herds. Today only 11 herds remain, with only five having more than 100 caribou. Fewer than 1,500 caribou survive and logging and other large scale resource extraction create islands of habitat, depriving caribou of food and shelter, disrupting migration and increasing predation.

There are compelling reasons to act quickly before this unique ecosystem is lost. Scientists assess that the unique ecosystem will collapse within nine to 18 years unless further habitat loss and fragmentation are stopped (Land 2021, 10(8), 775; <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-445X/10/8/775>).

The GCR Conservation Area is quite feasible and will succeed because:

- Indigenous knowledge, leadership and values are integral
- It builds upon existing parks and protected areas, respectively 53% and 33% of the proposed area. It is anchored by three provincial parks: Bowron Lake, Cariboo Mountains and Wells Gray.
- Only 14% of the entire proposed conservation area is without any protection.
- The relatively small addition of land (14%) knits together the patchwork of protections to create a world-class Conservation Area.
- The area's diverse ecology can support environmentally sustainable economic activities

Our future depends on sustaining healthy ecosystems for long-lasting benefits for nature and people. Here is an innovative, practical, and inspiring opportunity to simultaneously make progress on climate, biodiversity, reconciliation and the low carbon economy.

For further information: [harmonyfdn@outlook.com](mailto:harmonyfdn@outlook.com); [greatcaribourainforest@gmail.com](mailto:greatcaribourainforest@gmail.com)



# The Great Caribou Rainforest Conservation Area

