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Media Release

Fraser Headwaters Alliance (FHA) and Conservation North (CN) congratulate the Simpcw Nation on their declaration of the Raush River watershed as an Indigenous Protected and Conservation Area (IPCA). FHA has been advocating that the Raush be fully protected for more than 25 years. Until now, it has had the status of being the largest undeveloped, unprotected watershed in southern BC (south of 54° of latitude) and the largest undeveloped, unprotected tributary to the Fraser River. “We are very grateful for the Simpcw action on this file. It protects the old growth, biodiversity and wilderness that are in the Raush Valley”, stated Roy Howard, president of FHA. “It will also help the BC and Canadian Governments’ goal of protecting 30% of BC and Canada by 2030, the object of the 30 by 30 declaration made at the recent COP15 on Biodiversity in Montreal”, he added.

The naming of the Raush River originated in the 19th Century. There was a permanent village of Secwepemc people at present-day Tete Jaune Cache. This village was noted by the Overlanders (1862) and other early European explorers. The Indigenous residents of this village were forced to walk to a reservation near present-day Barrier B.C. in 1916 when the Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern railways were being constructed. The forced walk decimated the village's population en route due to introduced diseases and winter weather. The Simpcw Nation, a campfire of the greater Secwepemc Nation, trace much of their ancestry from the remnant population of the Tete Jaune Village.

Early European explorers noted that the Raush River and the area between it and the native village at Tete Jaune Cache were occupied and being used by the Secwepemc people. Due to pronunciation issues, the explorers and early settlers used the word Shuswap to alternatively name the people. The Raush River showed on early maps as Rivière au Shuswap (or Shuswap River or Big Shuswap River) and the high ridge between it and the Fraser (in the Cariboo mountains) as the Shuswap Mountains. Later map versions showed R. au Shuswap, then Raushuswap and from this the final official geographically accepted name became Raush.

The entire Raush watershed is 101,000 ha. and has very little development. There is some private grazing land and an old homestead in the lower end and recently some clearcut logging near its confluence with the Fraser, between McBride and Dunster. Two “protected areas” were declared by Cabinet as a result of the Robson Valley LRMP (Land and Resource Management Plan) in 2001. However, the Upper (5582 Ha.) and Lower (1279 Ha.) Raush Protected Areas are only a small portion of the watershed and are considered by conservation groups, such as FHA and Conservation North, as inadequate to protect the values there.

With the protection of this valley from further development, a wildlife corridor is preserved connecting the contiguous park systems of Wells Gray, Caribou Mountains, and Bowron Lakes Park systems with the upper Fraser River. In addition, vast carbon reserves are kept within ecological cycles, endangered fish habitats are kept clean of excess siltation, and limited access will continue to exclude poachers from endangered larger mammals. There are so many ecological wins achieved by protecting the Raush. Our conservation organizations are extremely pleased by this announcement.

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