



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Xat'sull First Nation files petition for the protection of selcweýcen – southern mountain caribou

Xat'sull joins Syilx Okanagan Nation Territory in filing under Section 80 of the Species at Risk Act

XAT'SULL FIRST NATION TERRITORY; 20 JULY 2026: Under Section 80 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), Xat'sull First Nation (Xat'sull) is filing a petition to the Government of Canada to issue an emergency order to protect the southern mountain caribou (selcweýcen), arguing that years of provincial and federal efforts have failed to halt their continued decline.

The need for an emergency order has never been more urgent. Selcweýcen have been a federally listed endangered species for over 20 years. Despite years of government commitments and collaborative initiatives, populations across British Columbia continue to decline. Existing federal and provincial measures have not prevented the continued destruction and degradation of critical habitat or the ongoing decline of selcweýcen populations.

Despite these declines, British Columbia continues to authorize forestry activities within important selcweýcen habitat, increasing disturbance in areas essential for the species' survival and recovery. British Columbia has done so despite Xat'sull raising these issues at every turn. In some cases, British Columbia has even authorized such forestry activity against the advice of its own caribou conservation specialists working within government.

Xat'sull is calling of the Government of Canada to issue an emergency order under Section 80 of SARA and work collaboratively with First Nations to implement immediate habitat protections and long-term recovery measures that address the ongoing decline of selcweýcen.

Xat'sull is not calling for an end to forestry. Rather, the Nation is advancing practical solutions through its proposed First Nation Woodland License, including identifying areas where harvesting can proceed while protecting critical selcweýcen habitat and other important ecological values. Xat'sull continues to seek meaningful collaboration with government and forest licence holders to implement these stewardship-based solutions.

"Xat'sull will not stand idly by while selcweýcen and their habitat continue to face serious threats to their survival and long-term recovery," said Kúkwpi7 (Chief) Rhonda Phillips. "We are calling on the Governments of Canada and British Columbia to take immediate action to protect critical habitat while working with First Nations and the forest sector to



implement sustainable, long-term forestry solutions. Xats'ul has demonstrated that conservation and responsible forestry can coexist when stewardship is placed at the centre of decision-making.”

In 2021, the federal government decided against issuing an emergency order based on the expectation that provincial measures and collaborative conservation initiatives would effectively reduce the imminent threats facing selcwe'ycen. Five years later, those expectations have not been realized. An emergency order would enable the federal government to immediately prohibit activities that pose imminent threats to selcwe'ycen and their critical habitat while longer-term recovery measures are implemented. Without an effective strategy, their chances of survival will continue to decline.

“The federal and provincial governments have ignored this issue for too long and we are running out of time — some important herds for Xats'ul have already been extirpated and others are on the brink,” said Kúkwpi7 Phillips. “We are hopeful the federal government will act decisively by issuing an emergency order and demonstrating its commitment to protecting selcwe'ycen and the ecosystems we all depend on.”

For Xats'ul, selcwe'ycen have always been more than a wildlife species. They are an integral part of our culture, history, and responsibilities as Secwépemc people. We have lived alongside them since time immemorial, relying on them for sustenance and respecting them as relatives within our shared ecosystem. The Cariboo region itself takes its name from the caribou, reflecting their enduring significance to these lands.

Protecting selcwe'ycen is not only about preventing extinction — it is about safeguarding our culture, our responsibilities, and the future of generations yet to come.

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Xats'ul First Nation is a First Nations government and is part of the larger Secwépemc (Shuswap) Nation, located in the Cariboo region of British Columbia near Williams Lake. Learn more on Xats'ul First Nation's [website](#).

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