

## For Immediate Release

# Tribes make history with signing of Grizzly Treaty in Alberta and Greater Yellowstone Sept. 30 – Oct. 2.

History will be made next weekend. On Friday Sept 30 at the Piikani Nation Tribal Complex in Brocket, Alberta, and at the Jackson Lake Lodge in Grand Teton National Park, only the third cross-border First Nations/Native American treaty in some 150 years will be signed. Entitled, **“The Grizzly: A Treaty of Cooperation, Cultural Revitalization and Restoration,”** the treaty offers innovative solutions and sweeping reforms to the so-called “management” practices of the states that are poised to take control of the destiny of Yellowstone’s grizzly bears if, as expected, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) removes Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections from the Great Bear considered sacred by a multitude of tribes. The treaty is rooted in a cultural foundation, and harmonizes ceremonial and traditional knowledge with contemporary scientific discipline and exploration to provide an alternative to the government-sanctioned state-oriented policy of “gun sight grizzly management” rejected by tribes.

Fifty-plus Tribal Nations, supported by the Assembly of First Nations, now stand in opposition to the ESA delisting and trophy hunting of the sacred grizzly bear on the basis of sovereignty, treaty, consultation, and spiritual and religious freedom violations. Next weekend the breadth of tribal opposition will be displayed, as tribal leaders from the Blackfoot Confederacy in the north to the Hopi Tribe in the south, gather to sign the treaty and hold ceremony for the sacred bear. “The grizzly bear is not a trophy for the affluent to kill for ‘sport’. The grizzly bear is sacred. Our people have a connection to the grizzly bear since our ancient migrations,” explains Lee Wayne Lomayestewa, Kikmongwi (Chief) of the Hopi Bear Clan. “We, the Bear Clan, were the first people to arrive in the Southwest. It was the grizzly, the most powerful of bears, which guided and protected the first among our people to arrive at *Tuwanasavi*, the Center Place, which continues to be our home today,” he says. Among those journeying to Greater Yellowstone with the Hopi Bear Clan leader will be Cliff Ami, leader of the Tewa Bear Clan.

“In our collective nations’ efforts to protect and preserve the grizzly – and by doing so protect, preserve and perpetuate indigenous cultures – this treaty is analogous to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP),” reads the historic document, which covers Greater Yellowstone, the Crown of the Continent, and the Great Bear Rainforest. At the heart of the treaty is the tribal alternative to delisting and trophy hunting the grizzly: the reintroduction of grizzlies to sovereign tribal nations with biologically suitable habitat in the Great Bear’s historic range for “cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic revitalization.” In May, President Bill Clinton offered his support for the tribes’ proposal, which was first presented to USFWS Director Dan Ashe in November 2015. “I look forward to working with you in the days ahead,” Ashe subsequently wrote to tribal representatives, but he has yet to keep his word.

The Piikani Nation Chief and Council of the Blackfoot Confederacy initiated the treaty. “Among our people, Spiritual and Sun Dance Leaders, Elders, and Councilpersons have all denounced delisting and trophy hunting the grizzly, and warned of the detrimental consequences to our youth and future generations if this should occur. Given the significance of the grizzly bear in the traditional ceremonial practices of the Blackfoot Confederacy, myself and others have categorized the delisting of the grizzly

bear as an act of cultural genocide against our people,” says Chief Stanley Grier, the driving force behind the treaty and Chief of the Piikani Nation.

In their respective resolutions and declarations in the years leading up to the treaty, many tribes have bemoaned the lack of transparency in the delisting process, and USFWS’s less than responsive attitude to official requests for data made in those legislative documents. As a result, tribes have received information obtained through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). “It is now apparent that the motivational factors behind both the delisting of the grizzly bear and the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline are closely aligned,” states the Piikani Nation Chief and Council in a recent declaration that correlates the two issues after reviewing FOIA disclosures. Through FOIA it was revealed that USFWS chose one of the world’s largest oil and gas service multinationals, Amec Foster Wheeler, to manage the peer reviews of its delisting rule, a company headed by former Halliburton executive, Jon Lewis. “I received no comments or questions from the Service on the peer reviews submitted last month, so those peer reviews stand as the final versions,” wrote Amec’s Dawn Johnson to USFWS Mountain-Prairie (MPR) Region Director, Noreen Walsh.

“This statement in itself should raise questions. How can USFWS have no queries when it has been exposed that only one of the peer reviewers engaged by Amec has any experience with grizzlies in Yellowstone, and that the reviewer in question has close connections to USFWS’s former grizzly recovery coordinator?” asks Chief Grier. “And equally troubling, the implication of the statement is that if USFWS had questioned the reviews they wouldn’t have stood ‘as the final versions,’ which undermines the notion of impartiality.”

USFWS’s delisting rule identifies 28 mining claims with operating plans in what it considers core grizzly habitat in Yellowstone. “Unless Congress repeals the 1872 General Mining Act, that law will hold primacy in respect to the 28 mining claims,” warns the Piikani Nation DAPL/Delist declaration. So far, USFWS’s MPR Deputy Director, Matt Hogan, has refused to divulge the extent of his alleged ties to Anadarko Petroleum and Gas, the third largest energy company in the world, and the largest landholder and leaseholder in Wyoming. “This has understandably led the Oglala Sioux Tribe to call for a Congressional investigation into the delisting process,” continues the Piikani declaration. The Piikani and Oglala Sioux not only question the influence of multinational energy companies on the delisting decision, but documented connections between high-ranking USFWS officials and trophy hunting giant, Safari Club International, “exemplified by Mr. Hogan’s role as a former chief lobbyist to Capital Hill for Safari Club.”

“We do not need to elaborate upon the impact the trophy killing of a being we consider to be fundamental to our culture and spiritual well-being will have on our people and their ability to practice their religion, or how that will be exacerbated if that killing is committed on sacred land in proximity to sacred sites, but we do need to raise the specter of the destruction of these sacred sites if, as appears inevitable, corporate energy development is initiated on the lands the grizzly presently protects through its ESA status,” the Piikani declaration underscores. To date, no Tribal Historic Preservation Office has been contacted to “survey, determine, and catalog” these sacred and historic sites throughout Greater Yellowstone. “If they are not, these sites will be subject to desecration and ultimately lost, resulting in irreparable injury to a multitude of tribes,” conclude the Piikani, based upon past and present experience – the latest exhibit being the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Through one of the FOIAs, tribal leaders received an email thread between USFWS Director Ashe and his assistant, Gary Frazer, in which they lay out the strategy for delisting the grizzly that has brought them

to this point. In it, Frazer complains that the courts “are not giving us deference,” which is a curious expectation for a federal court, and he admits that the Yellowstone grizzly population is “slightly declining.” To the delisting pathway ultimately taken, Ashe responds: “I may be missing something, but this recommendation seems at odds with the ‘best available’ science standard of ESA.” Many have so far “missed something” on grizzly delisting, but Tribal Nations have not, and the Piikani Nation has constructed a historic treaty for the world to witness.

Explore [www.piikaninationtreaty.com](http://www.piikaninationtreaty.com) for the issues, the explanations, and the answer – “**The Grizzly: A Treaty of Cooperation, Cultural Revitalization and Restoration.**”