

Aboriginal Leaders Celebrate Protection of Boreal Homelands

June 2, Winnipeg, Manitoba – Today, a former premier and an international award-winning environmentalist will discuss aboriginal leadership in protecting and developing Canada's boreal forest in a celebration at the University of Manitoba.

In the inaugural event of the Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI) national speaking tour *The Boreal: Our home, Our Stories, Our Responsibility*, Sophia Rabliauskas, winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize, spokesperson for proposed UNESCO world heritage site Pimachiowin Aki and member of Manitoba's Poplar River First Nation, will join Stephen Kakfwi, former Premier of the NWT and President of the Dene Nation, to highlight the work of First Nations in the stewardship of their boreal homelands.

Rabliauskas has been at the forefront of land use planning for Poplar River, a proposed plan that is anticipated to conserve 8,620 km² of pristine boreal landscape. She notes how critical aboriginal leadership is in land management and preservation.

"Aboriginal people have been on the cutting edge of resource and environment management for decades," said Kakfwi. "In the North, after years of living with the destruction caused by mining and oil and gas development, we forced government and industry to adopt new approaches to resource development back in the 1970s. These new approaches have served as models in Canada and across the globe."

Kakfwi adds that aboriginal leadership and traditional knowledge are critical to land management.

"We are very pleased to be sponsoring this tour" said Larry Innes, executive director of CBI. "This is an exciting opportunity for the public to be able to hear about aboriginal stewardship firsthand from leaders in the field, and to gain new insights into the many opportunities and challenges that we all face as Canadians to ensure the future of the boreal forest and its peoples."

Tonight's free event will take place at 7:00 PM at the University of Manitoba, University Centre, Room 211 and is open to the public. The speakers will be joined by local, award-winning musical group, Eagle and Hawk.

About the Boreal Forest

The boreal forest of Canada is the world's largest intact forest, provides the world's largest storehouse of carbon, holds more fresh water than any other ecosystem in the world and is home to more than 600 aboriginal communities.

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