

Ermineskin Lands Purchased by the City of Parksville

The Council of the City of Parksville has approved the purchase of a tract of land known locally as the Ermineskin land from the Ermineskin Cree Nation. The lands, located at the civic address of 790 Hirst Avenue, encompass about 35.9 hectares or 97 acres and were purchased for \$1.3 million.

The City of Parksville and the Ermineskin Cree Nation share a vision for the preservation and conservation of this important area and the sale of the Ermineskin lands supports that vision by allowing the City's residents and their future generations to enjoy this area. The Ermineskin lands are included in the Agricultural Land Reserve and at the request of the Ermineskin Cree Nation will be maintained as a park in perpetuity. At the meeting on September 18, Council gave three readings to a bylaw which will officially dedicate the lands as park.

Mayor Marc Lefebvre said, "I am extremely pleased with the City's successful purchase of the Ermineskin lands. It is truly a rare opportunity to preserve such a large piece of natural habitat so close to residential neighbourhoods. We anticipate strong public support for this significant area which we have secured for future generations of Parksville residents."

As stated by Chief Randy Ermineskin, "After thirty years of negotiations and talks, Chief Randy Ermineskin quotes a Cree word "Witaskiwin", which means 'living together on the land' and how this can be translated is that it will 'apply to a land-sharing arrangement between individual members of a nation'. Chief Ermineskin also said, "Ermineskin Cree Nation is pleased this section of land will be maintained as a park in perpetuity. It would be fitting, that Parksville City Council, consider placing a memorial on the land to commemorate this agreement."

For many years, the Parksville Council has worked to acquire this site; over the years, Council has received delegations from concerned residents requesting the City consider acquiring the lands to ensure members of the community may continue to enjoy the wildlife and natural environment of the site. Currently the lands contain several City wells and are used by the public for bird watching, walking and the opportunity to quietly enjoy the natural surroundings. These uses will continue and maintenance of the park will be performed by City staff, keeping the park, as much as possible, in its natural state.

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