

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq
Minister of the Environment
July 22, 2015

Dear Minister Aglukkaq,

We are former employees at the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. We were the craftspeople, groundskeepers, sanitation workers, trailblazers, and administrative personnel who for years kept the park working and in good order. We are fully supportive of the Never Forgotten National Memorial at Green Cove, and more than pleased to explain our reasons.

The people of Ingonish and Cape Breton have a strong historical and cultural tradition of service with the Canadian Armed Forces particularly in times of global conflict. A project such as the Never Forgotten National Memorial not only honours the ultimate sacrifice of the 114,000 Canadians who never made it home, but will also recognize that proud local tradition of Canadian military service, and the devotion of neighbours past and present to stopping the tyranny of oppressors abroad.

The historical record of the area has also been one of inclusion; the indigenous Mi'kmaq population welcomed the early European settlers, and taught them skills and local knowledge to help them survive. Inter-marriage between ethnic groups took place creating the Métis culture that has almost been lost in the mists of time. Local storytellers like Jimmy Cooke, Tuma Young, Emerson Barron, Tommy Young, Joanne Doucette and others have kept their stories conserved and presented, as per the Park's mandate. By incorporating recognition of those important local elements, the Memorial will ensure that this cultural heritage will be told and further protected before it disappears.

Also, we would like to set the record straight on some arguments that have been presented to you. A group of 28 former Parks Canada staff erroneously stated to you that the Green Cove site was a Wilderness Zone Designation and the project was against park policy. One of the cosigners, George Mercer, has publicly acknowledged that they were wrong about this zoning claim; a reading of the Park Management Plan dispels the other claim.

The Never Forgotten National Memorial will draw visitors from around the world. It will, hopefully, increase employment opportunities in a chronically under-employed region of Canada and will tell important local and national stories that must be preserved and shared.

We appreciate your attention to our views and we would be happy to discuss them with you further, if you so wish.

Sincerely yours,

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