



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2012

Guelph local *Alexander Muth* wins a trip of a life time: He found the baby bison!



Friday April 20, 2012, Toronto, Ontario: The Bison Collaborative, made up of four of Canada's leading environmental organizations – Parks Canada, Earth Rangers, Toronto Zoo and the Royal Ontario Museum – awarded Alexander Muth, age 11, from Guelph Ontario, with a three day, three night trip for himself and his family, to Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan. The event took place today at the ROM with top level officials from the Bison Collaborative in attendance. Alexander, along with over 2300 other kids from across Canada, played the “Find the Baby Bison” contest www.findthebabybison.com (November 3 2011 through February 25th 2012).

The purpose of this contest was to help bring awareness to grassland ecosystems and species at risk. Alexander found the hidden Baby Bison at the ROM in the First People's Gallery, and entered to win one of several secondary prizes and the Grand Prize. Alexander was the randomly chosen recipient for the Grand Prize.

“The ROM was excited to give new life to our “baby bison”, and use this piece of our collection to stir the imagination of so many young people,” explains Dave Ireland, Managing Director, Biodiversity Programs, “it will be an transformative experience for Alexander to see the Grasslands of Saskatchewan and the many rare species that this system supports.”

"I'm pleased to join in congratulating Alexander Muth on winning a trip of a lifetime to experience Grasslands National Park," said the Honourable Peter Kent, Canada's Environment Minister and Minister responsible for Parks Canada. "Parks Canada continues to lead the way in

the protection of natural and cultural heritage through the provision of real and inspiring experiences for all Canadians. We are pleased to work with our partners and look forward to welcoming Alexander and his family to discover one of Canada's national treasures."

Plains Bison are North America's largest land animal and a key species of Canada's grassland ecosystem. They help maintain the specialized habitat upon which so many other species depend. In the 1860s, there was an estimated 30 million wild Plains Bison in the grasslands of North America.

Mark Northwood, CEO of Earth Rangers said "This Bison Collaborative was the perfect fit for our organization because we have been involved in bison conservation efforts with our - Bring Back the Wild Campaign."

Parks Canada is a world leader in the protection of natural areas. Today temperate grasslands are considered the most altered terrestrial ecosystem on the planet yet aren't always recognized as some of the most endangered ecosystems on most continents.

Alexander and his family will experience wildlife and wild spaces like never before: they will assist Park biologists in the monitoring of the recently reintroduced black-footed ferret, hike through rattlesnake territory and see Parks Canada's own free-ranging Plains Bison herd roaming across the open prairie. Parks Canada has a proven track record of effective recovery for species at risk in national parks. Plains bison are icons of the prairies and their return to Grasslands National Park in 2006 was made possible with the support of partners, park neighbours, local communities, First Nations and visitors. Parks Canada staff will host Alexander and his family during the trip, and ROM and Toronto Zoo staff will travel with the family and accompany them on all adventures at Grasslands National Park.

"The Toronto Zoo is proud to be a part of the Bison Collaborative as we have been involved in bison conservation initiatives for many years, said Dr. Rapley, Executive Director Conservation, Education & Wildlife, Toronto Zoo. We have also had staff work alongside Parks staff in the recovery efforts for the black-footed ferret in Grasslands National Park – It is truly a magical part of this Nation."

Accommodations for Alexander and his family have been graciously provided by The Crossing Resort (www.crossingresort.com) which is located on the border of Grasslands National Park, the quietest place in Canada with the darkest and clearest skies. Indeed, for one child and his family, an experience of a life-time!

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