**Treaty No. 10 Gathering Response to Unauthorized Interference with Treaty No. 10 Traditional lands, including traplines at the Birch Narrows Dene Nation’s Traditional Territory**

**Feb. 25, 2021**

Treaty No. 10 Gathering supports Birch Narrows Dene Nation’s outrage that Saskatchewan would authorize access to Treaty No. 10 lands, amid a global pandemic, in such a way that puts the First Nation community, their traditional territories, traplines, and the dwindling caribou, lynx and other wildlife populations at risk.

Baselode Energy Corp. should be commended for confirming that the project will not proceed without the consent of the Birch Narrows First Nation. It seems that corporate partners have greater respect for the inherent and Treaty rights of Treaty No. 10 members than the Province of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan has been quoted as saying the Treaty No. 10 Nation, Birch Narrows, “had ample time to voice any concerns”. This is misleading, inaccurate, and disingenuous.

Birch Narrows’ concerns were well known to Saskatchewan and to Baselode Energy Corp. and talks were underway with regard to the First Nation’s request for a Traditional Land Use assessment. Despite this, Saskatchewan completely disregarded the Nation’s position, issued exploration permits, and inexcusably failed to notify Birch Narrows of its decision. It was not until First Nation members discovered Baselode Energy Corp. workers in their treaty territory, that Birch Narrows became aware of the company’s activities and discovered the destruction of its members’ traplines.

While the Province’s consultation policy is outdated and inadequate, the exploration being conducted by Baselode Energy Corp. required, at a minimum, a Level 3 response under Saskatchewan’s Duty to Consult policy – i.e., written notice and offer to meet with the community to discuss the project and seek input. Saskatchewan had no interest in hearing any meaningful input from Birch Narrows and exerted unilateral control to deny Birch Narrows an opportunity to engage in appropriate consultation.

Saskatchewan’s position that a “traditional land-use study is not required by law” speaks for itself about the Province’s lack of respect or recognition of inherent and Treaty rights, not to mention its lack of regard for the basic interests of First Nation citizens in Saskatchewan.

Exploration activities are known to have disturbing effects on the wildlife, their habitats and to cause environmental degradation from their construction of access roads. Exploration activities on commonly used hunting and trapping grounds has a major impact on the lands and resources of the Dene people.

At a minimum, Saskatchewan is bound by its purported commitment to reconciliation. Building partnerships and respect based on Treaty rights is fundamental to developing reciprocal inter-governmental relationships.

We fully expect Saskatchewan to work with Birch Narrows and come to a mutually acceptable resolution to this discord.

With Bill C-15 on course to harmonize federal law with Indigenous rights, as recognized by the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights (UNDRIP), Saskatchewan must work with the federal government and First Nation governments to rebuild a relationship based on trust, respect, and sharing, as originally intended by the Treaties.

British Columbia has already announced its commitment to implementing UNDRIP, and while more work is required to develop new relationships that take into account rights recognized by UNDRIP, progress is being made elsewhere in Canada. It is about time Saskatchewan caught up.

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