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FSIN REAFFIRMS FIRST NATIONS OPPOSITION TO THE SASKATCHEWAN FIRST ACT AND SEEKS INCLUSION IN RESOURCE REVENUE SHARING FROM NATURAL RESOURCES

Treaty 6 Territory, Saskatoon SK – The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) reaffirms its opposition to the Saskatchewan First Act and is calling on the province of Saskatchewan to recognize First Nations Inherent and Treaty rights to natural resources.

FSIN, under the direction of Chiefs within the province, reaffirmed their commitment to oppose the Act at the FSIN Winter Legislative Assembly in February. Therefore, FSIN will take legal action to oppose the Act as it infringes on First Nations Inherent and Treaty rights to land, water and resources.

First Nations leaders believe the province of Saskatchewan does not have the legal authority to assert exclusive jurisdiction over natural resources as Treaties signed with First Nations take precedence and pre-date the creation of the government. It has been an accepted practice in other provinces in Canada to recognize Treaty Rights and implement resource revenue-sharing policies. This must become standard practice in Saskatchewan to ensure First Nations have the opportunity to participate in today's economy and build strong communities.

FSIN leadership says the Saskatchewan First Act demonstrates complete disregard for First Nations' Inherent and Treaty rights. The Act goes against First Nations Constitutional rights to the lands, resources and waters in the province of Saskatchewan and does not include consideration of Section 35 rights.

FSIN maintains that it was unlawful for the federal Crown to unilaterally transferred the administration and control of land and natural resources to the province of Saskatchewan pursuant to the Natural Resources Transfer Act (NRTA) in the Constitution Act of 1930. It was done without First Nations' knowledge, consultation and consent. First Nations have always maintained that they did not relinquish, cede nor surrender rights to natural resources at the time of Treaty negotiations. Rather First Nations agreed to open the land for European settlement, sharing only six inches of topsoil or the "depth of a plough" for agricultural purposes.

The Saskatchewan First Act disregards the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) which has been recognized by Canada.

QUOTES

“The province of Saskatchewan does not have the jurisdiction to claim exclusive ownership of natural resources. The province was created after the signing of Treaties. First Nations through Treaties, maintain our rights to make decisions about their lands, resources, waters and Nations. Treaties guarantee that First Nations would share in the revenue and resources derived from our homeland. Lands that our ancestors inhabited and cared for long before the settlers arrived,” said FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron.

“It’s evident that First Nations are not benefitting from the Treaty relationship when First Nations communities struggle to maintain necessities for life, clean drinking water, adequate housing and food. Assimilation policies have negatively impacted our people and our exclusion from natural resources stands to further exclude our people from benefitting from the rich resources in our land. Treaty rights have long been ignored and in the spirit of reconciliation we ask the province to provide a way for our governments to work together to build strong First Nations communities and make our people part of the economy,” said FSIN Forth Vice Chief Heather Bear and FSIN Lands and Resources portfolio chairperson.

“Premier Scott Moe and his government have repeatedly used the Treaties as a reason to exclude First Nations from some provincial revenue programs and natural resource revenue sharing, saying First Nations are a federal responsibility. We know that the Treaties with our First Nations Chiefs were signed with the intent of land sharing and maintaining access to resources for our future generations. They didn’t anticipate this right being severed by a division of governance responsibilities,” said FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron.

About FSIN

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations represents 73 First Nations in Saskatchewan. The Federation is committed to honouring the spirit and intent of the Treaties, as well as the promotion, protection and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.

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