

PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERACY OF **TREATY SIX** FIRST NATIONS



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ALBERTA CHIEFS MEET WITH CANADA AND ALBERTA TO RAISE THE ALARM AND CALL FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Alberta Chiefs Summit on Climate Change (Edmonton, AB) - Alberta Chiefs gathered to discuss the environment and climate change with the Federal and Provincial governments where they voiced frustration and calls for action on saving the planet for future generations.

Leaders from Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 7 and Treaty No. 8 (Alberta) met to create dialogue on innovative approaches to address climate change and to get commitment that they will be fully engaged in any plan to address the impacts from climate change. Chiefs reminded government that any approach must be rooted in Treaty and Inherent Rights and the Crown's Duty to consult and accommodate First Nations' interests to share and protect the Land.

"As long as the Sun shines, the Grass grows and the Rivers flow, we will protect Mother Earth. Our ancestors agreed to share our lands and maintain our way of life based on our treaties," said Treaty No. 6 Grand Chief Randy Ermineskin. "That has a significant meaning to us, it means for all times – that there would be no end. Yet our ancestors saw so many changes to their way of life, changes that we continue to experience today. We watch our Mother Earth being stripped of Her natural resources while our people settled into poverty. Agreements, economic benefits made in good faith were not respected. We see the impacts on the land, the water...air."

Minister of Environment and Parks, and the Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office, Shannon Phillips attended the Summit today to discuss engaging Indigenous Peoples on Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan to tackle climate change. She says the work has been significant, with a deadline for some of the policies to be revealed by the end of the year. Other initiatives will need more time to figure out, such as consulting with First Nations about opportunities and adaptation related to the climate plan.

She said participants shared in discussions at those sessions, exploring outcomes, priorities and community interests related to climate change and Aboriginal peoples. Many perspectives and ideas were shared, including comments related to Treaty and Aboriginal rights, education, cumulative impacts, climate change adaptation, environmental policies and the impacts on future generations. Phillips told Chiefs at today's Climate Summit that Alberta has engaged with "Aboriginal" communities and organizations that shared their unique perspective and connection to the land.

"Many comments we received centred on the impacts from climate change rather than on efforts to mitigate climate change – something we encourage government to address alongside the implementation of their response to our proposals. Concerns about the impacts of climate change, as well as the other environmental impacts of energy development, were constant throughout our process. We need you to be part of this process as well," said Phillips.

Canada also addressed the Summit today to outline the Federal Consultation process on Environment Assessments and to provide an update on its Climate Change Discussions and the recent Paris Agreement. Canada says Indigenous Peoples will receive capacity funding as partners in the process of creating a green economy and the fight against climate change – from planning to implementation – respecting Aboriginal and Treaty rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Many Chiefs remain skeptical that government will honour Treaties, the Crown's Duty to Consult and Accommodate and truly engage First Nations in a meaningful way, by working with Indigenous governments to develop concrete plans to fight climate change.

"We are now seeing the impacts...our peoples for the most part can no longer live off the land, our natural food supplies have been contaminated, and our traditional medicines have been contaminated and destroyed. We can no longer drink our water and our air is polluted. Our health continues to decline," said Grand Chief Ermineskin. "Our peoples are waking up...it will be our Indigenous peoples who will save our Mother Earth. This is why we have come together to discuss what we need to do to protect and heal our lands, water and air. So we will listen to Canada's plan and Alberta's plan...we owe it to our children and grandchildren to do all we can."

The Prime Minister said he would convene a meeting with premiers and Indigenous organizations on December 8-9, 2016 to develop a pan-Canadian framework to fight climate change.