



BEAVER LAKE

CREE NATION

Press Release

Beaver Lake Cree Nation Expresses Anger Over Bear Killings at Conklin

Lac La Biche, Alberta, August 18, 2009 – Beaver Lake Cree Nation is saddened and dismayed by news that Alberta wildlife officers have shot and killed 12 bears in a landfill near Conklin, Alberta last week. Beaver Lake Cree Nation, a small Cree band from north-eastern Alberta, has filed a court case to halt the wholesale devastation of their traditional hunting and fishing lands by the destructive march of the tar sands. The legal action is aimed at protecting the wildlife and wildlife habitat of the boreal forest that covers those lands.

The Conklin area falls within Beaver Lake’s traditional territory, and rests alongside an ancient Cree trail to important traditional hunting grounds in the north. In the last few years, the forest west and east of Conklin has faced rapid, unchecked development of large scale *in situ* tar sands projects, each aimed at pumping as much as 200,000 barrels of bitumen a day. Along with rapid development has come a huge increase in the number of industry workers living in large-scale “camps”, with an attendant increase in the volume of garbage sent to landfills.

“Once again, we see a prime example of poor planning, rampant development and regulatory failure” said Beaver Lake’s lawyer, Jack Woodward. “We have to wonder when Alberta is going to sit up and take notice of the very real impacts those failures are having on the province’s wildlife.”

Beaver Lake Councillor Henry Gladue noted that Beaver Lake has specifically expressed concerns about increased work camp numbers in the area and felt those concerns were ignored by the Alberta government. “For many of our people, bears are sacred animals – not pests to be killed without thinking. This is why we are fighting this legal case, to protect the land and to help those creatures on the land and in the forest who have no voice to speak for themselves. The cost of this case is high, but the cost of not acting is higher. We have responsibilities to these lands and these animals.”

Media outlets report that wildlife officers who shot the bears had received complaints from nearby PTI Conklin Lodge, a \$23-million dollar facility providing 376 rooms for workers in the oil and gas industry located near the dump site.

Dr. Stephen Hererro, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science at the University of Calgary noted: “Black bears have a natural attraction to energy rich food sources like edible garbage. Baiting bears and then killing them for doing what comes natural violates most people's ideas about what is ethically acceptable.”

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