



For Immediate Release

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A Rapidly Changing Landscape: Degradation, Climate Change, and Treaty Rights

While the Canadian Chamber of Commerce suggests that industry and Aboriginal communities could align to extract resources, many Aboriginal communities would rather align to clean up Alberta's landscape, debilitated by pipeline breaks, cut lines, and over 50,000 abandoned well pads. When the random contaminated area at a 'non-active' Syncrude sump killed approximately 30 Blue Herons (a species of special concern in Canada) on August 8, 2015, the Alberta Energy Regulator asked Syncrude to conduct their own investigation.

The price of Western Canadian Crude oil remains under \$20 per barrel, less than half of the price for Texas crude. Current extreme extraction techniques such as those used in the oil/tarsands and SAGD developments in Alberta are no longer profitable, to say nothing of exploration for new resource development. How will oil companies perform their due diligence and clean up now? Who will take care of the environment left devastated by industry if they go broke? When three multinational companies (Shell, Suncor, and Syncrude) are exempt from the Alberta Energy Regulator's recent restrictions on water withdrawals from the Athabasca River, who will stand up for Treaty rights?

During the signing of the original Treaty 8 in 1899, First Nations were given to understand that their traditional ways of life would be protected. Treaty 8 states: "... the said Indians that they shall have right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered as heretofore described". Those present at the signing, both for the Crown and for the many First Nations present, assured each other that the Treaty would stand, "as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow."

This year, people have not been able to take their boats out on the rivers for the first time, and one individual reported getting stuck in the middle of Lake Athabasca. Climate change experts assure us that this is a "preview of the new normal", and water levels in Alberta are expected decline as much as 40%. Real urgency exists for those living off the land, yet in an election year, with the Government of Canada more interested in attack ads and terrorists, than attacking unsustainability and climate change we are forced to simply document these abuses of nature, to take up the case with a new government.

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