



**FORT MCKAY**  
FIRST NATION

**Draft Remarks by Chief Raymond Powder**

**For MOU Announcement March 7 2024**

**(approx. 10 min)**

**Chief Powder will begin with a Welcome in the Cree language.**

Good morning.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge that I am speaking to you today from Treaty 6 territory.



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I would like to thank our Elders Marie Boucher and Clara Boucher for their blessings. I would also like to thank all of the Elders here today for your ongoing guidance, counsel, and support. You represent the wisdom of our Nation.

I also want to recognize the wonderful youth of our Nation. They represent our future. Truly, the work we do is so that our youth will have the opportunity for a healthy, happy, and prosperous life. Nothing makes us happier than to see our beautiful young people growing and thriving in our community.



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We are here today to announce an important new opportunity for our Nation. But before we do that I would also like to recognize our partners, represented here today by

- Alberta Energy Minister Brian Jean;
- Dayna Jongejan (pronounced JONG – AH – GIN)  
the Associate Regional Director General of  
Indigenous Services Canada Regional Operations  
for the Alberta Region;
- Suncor Vice President Peter Zebedee.



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I would also like to welcome our dignitaries including RMWB Mayor Sandy Bowman and our MLA Tany Yao.

Thank you for walking this path with us. I believe we are creating a new way forward, which can help not only our Nation but others as well, and the people of Canada and Alberta. So, thank you.

I think it is symbolic and also essential that our Nation's Elders are here to act as our witnesses and guides. The wisdom of our Elders is the reason we are here today at all. It's thanks to them that we have a



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clear map of the path ahead. That is the path to greater quality of life, and long-term economic health for our people. That is what they want for our members. The Elders have given us this task and this responsibility.

It's a path that puts an obligation on us. We have a duty to make wise decisions that create hope and opportunity for our youth. And we have the responsibility to ensure that our land and water and air are protected, not just for the current generation but for all those generations who will come after us.



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So today is about bringing economic growth and employment to Fort McKay. It is also about protecting the Nation's land, the water and the air.

We can do this – as we have done at Moose Lake, with the land, trees and water protected now forever. No one is more qualified to do this work, growing the economy and protecting the environment, than we are.



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It is obvious that I'm extremely proud to lead Fort McKay First Nation. We have been leaders for a long time – leaders in industry, leaders in protecting our land. We are innovators and entrepreneurs. We are hard workers. We are respectful of the people who work with us, and we are respectful of our clients and partners in industry and government. They in turn respect us and work with us to protect our land, water and air. If we run into a problem, we solve it together. This is how we do business. It's based on the traditional values of our Nation, on mutual respect. And I can tell you: This kind of leadership really works.



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If anyone is looking for a concrete example of how well it works, I invite them to take a tour of our school, the Elsie Fabian School. This school is state of the art. I don't know if there is another school like it anywhere. Traditional teachings and land-based learning are built right into the curriculum. So there is no need for a trade-off between having a future, in your own community, and getting a great education. We are bringing the great education home. And you can see the young people leading here. Come and see a game of the Fort McKay Northern Spirits, which is the first





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FIRST NATION

and only on-reserve all-girl football team in all of Canada. These girls are serious athletes and they have a lot of fun. But they also represent something more: It's hope for a brighter future.

This brings me to the important announcement we are making today, which is the exploratory work by Fort McKay First Nation and Suncor Energy, towards a prospective oil sands mine development on our Reserve lands.



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I'm happy to announce that Fort McKay and Suncor have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to explore the potential to develop Reserve 174C. This will allow technical and feasibility assessments, including regulatory submissions for drilling, so we can determine the quality and quantity of the recoverable resource.

One key point I want to make is that this has been a very long time in the planning and a lot of work has been done, to get us here. For two decades we've worked to take all the necessary steps to prepare to



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develop this land for the purpose for which we set it aside a generation ago. Reserve 174C is Fort McKay land. And we are going to bring our values of environmental stewardship and care to this development in a way that hasn't been done before. We are forging a new path.

In conclusion: The people of Fort McKay First Nation have worked very hard, for a very long time, to be a collaborative and reliable partner, so that our people can have good jobs, a place to call home, and a future in our own community. This is the concrete meaning of



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reconciliation: It puts in our hands the tools we need to bring prosperity and a healthy, sustainable future for our people.

At the end of this event, following the next speakers, I'd be happy to take your questions.