



Statement: Fort McKay First Nation Calls for Respect for the Treaty Relationship and Reconciliation Process

May 6, 2025

Fort McKay First Nation shares the concerns of Treaty Nations and Treaty organizations regarding Alberta's Bill 54 and the implicit support Premier Danielle Smith appears to be offering separatist factions in Alberta.

Our fellow leaders have commented on the blatant disregard for Treaty rights and many in our communities are understandably outraged and emotional about Alberta's actions. We share those concerns, but we also invite Premier Smith and, indeed, all Albertans to consider the wisdom of the path of reconciliation.

Some Albertans desired to see a change in National governance and are disappointed that they have not achieved that result. However, that is how democracies work. Rejecting this basic fact of democracy, some individuals promote separatism and speak of western alienation. Allow us to offer our perspective.

Indigenous people have endured a cruel history which has included genocidal policies seeking to destroy our culture and language. We were not merely left with feelings of "alienation." Rather, our very foundations as a people were subjected to sustained and brutal attack.

We have more and better reasons to be bitter and resentful. Yet we have not responded with pique by promoting separatist ideologies. Rather, we respect the Treaty relationship we made with the Crown. Sometimes we had to fight in the Courts and sometimes we had to negotiate hard to enforce the Treaties, but we never walked away from the Treaty relationship.

We have only just begun the work of reconciliation. For Fort McKay First Nation that has included economic reconciliation, and we are a partner in the energy industry that drives the Alberta economy. At the same time we understand the value of balance and the need to protect the environment. That is why Fort McKay first negotiated and then litigated the Moose Lake Accord which created a protected zone preserving our traditional lands from encroachment by oilsands development. We are an example of the process of reconciliation and the results that can be achieved by respecting the Treaties. We advanced our interests playing the long game and using reason rather than caprice.

We are all Treaty people who are part of a relationship that requires respect and constructive dialogue. Premier Smith and her cabinet must start behaving according to the values and principles of the Treaty. That includes recognizing that Alberta cannot change the Treaty status of these lands without the full consent of the parties to the Treaty. Nor can Alberta sever us from our Treaty partner, being the Crown in right of Canada.

We call on Premier Smith to reject the politics of division and to work within the Treaty framework and the principles of reconciliation. Let us find a path forward by engaging in constructive and respectful dialogue amongst all levels of government. Let us also recognize that so long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow, we will all be Treaty partners.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ray', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chief Raymond Powder
Fort McKay First Nation

CC:

Councillor David Bouchier, Councillor Crystal McDonald, Councillor Bobby Shott,
Councillor Melinda Stewart