



ACFN Elders' Declaration on Rights to Land Use

This is our Dené suline territory, our Traditional Lands. We have occupied these lands for the last 10,000 years and maybe longer. Our traditions go on and we have the right to continue our traditional way of life. We agreed only to share our lands and we still consider these lands ours. Clearly we have been here longer than anybody. The Government must recognize that we still have the right to use these lands.

Our Rights to use the lands and water on Traditional Lands have never been extinguished. The Traditional Lands, and our rights to use of the lands, are central to our Dené culture, identity and well-being. They are essential to the well-being of our future generations and their ability to sustain our culture in a changing world.

The meaningful practice of our treaty rights depends on having sufficient lands and resources to exercise those rights. Sufficient refers to not only quantity but quality, including what is required to fulfill our cultural and spiritual needs.

Our parents and grandparents have told us that Treaty 8, signed by our Chief Laviolette in 1899, is an intergovernmental agreement that, in return for sharing our Traditional Lands, upholds our inherent Dené rights to land use and livelihood. In our experience, Alberta is not upholding their end of the Treaty and is sacrificing our rights to industrial development. We have never been properly consulted and the Federal and Provincial Governments have never accommodated our rights or compensated us for infringements.

ACFN has had enough with having our land destroyed, no one is dealing with it; neither the Federal nor the Provincial Crown. Yet you come to us for approval of new projects. It is time for the Government to stop cheating us of our rights to land use and livelihood, culture and identity without proper consultation, mitigation and compensation.

As the Elders of our community, we demand that our ability to practice our constitutionally protected treaty rights and traditional uses is sustained within our Traditional Lands for future generations. We demand that our rights are protected in the LARP and any other initiatives proposed by the governments.

The lands from Firebag north, including Birch Mountain on the west side of river, must be protected. Richardson Backcountry is not to be given away – not to any government.

Everything we do here, we do to protect our rights to land use, livelihood and culture.

— Declared by the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Elders Council, July 8, 2010, Fort Chipewyan, Alberta