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CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED DISASTER NARROWLY AVERTED

Skidoo goes through ice in Northern Alberta during coldest time of year

Fort Chipewyan- Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Chief Allan Adam is calling for immediate action to address climate change after an employee went through the ice on his skidoo, Tuesday afternoon.

“First and foremost, we are grateful for the safety of our employee who suffered the accident. Thanks to his quick thinking and the fact that he and his coworkers had ice safety training, no lives were lost,” said Chief Adam. “This however shows once again the dangers of unchecked development and runaway climate change. It is January 7 and minus thirty degrees in Northern Alberta and yet the ice is still too thin to travel on. And this was just a skidoo, not even a car or truck.”

Indigenous communities in the Peace Athabasca Delta have long warned about the culmination of low water levels from the A.C. Bennet dam, unknown substances being emitted into the water by industry and unpredictable weather patterns from climate change. The result is that even in the coldest time of the year, traditional travel routes that have been utilized for millennia are no longer safe.

“This just goes to show what Indigenous peoples have been saying all along,” said Adam. Climate change is real. The impacts from development are real. And they are affecting our ability to conduct our constitutionally protected Treaty rights to hunt, trap and fish. I just hope that government and industry don’t wait until someone dies before they act.”

Water levels that were, more or less, stable for thousands of years have now dropped precipitously, starting in the 1950’s with the A.C Bennett dam in BC and continuing with industry, municipalities, forestry and agriculture all drawing on water systems at unsustainable rates. In free water months this means that Indigenous people can’t access historic hunting grounds, and in winter it means danger for anyone out on the ice. These activities are Treaty protected rights that all levels of government have allowed to deteriorate.

"We have been warning governments about this for a long time," said Adam. "We were in court just last month for Kenney's challenge of the Federal Carbon Tax telling Alberta that this is exactly the sort of thing that would happen. These results are predictable. So why do they refuse to act?"

ACFN will continue to advocate for real action on climate change and warns all residents of the area to think twice before heading out on the ice. "This ain't your grandpa's ice no more, be careful."

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FOR MORE INFO CONTACT

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