
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
December 2-3-4, 2025, Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 52/2025

TITLE: Opposition to “Treat and Release” Toxic Tailings and all Environmental Racism

SUBJECT: Environment, Lands, Water, Rights, Governance

MOVED BY: Chief Billy-Joe Tuccaro, Mikisew Cree First Nation, AB

SECONDED BY: Chief Kelsey Jacko, Cold Lake First Nation, AB

DECISION: Carried by consensus

WHEREAS:

- A. All First Nations are the Indigenous Peoples of what is now Canada, and they exercise political authority through their own Inherent governments and Nation processes.
- B. All First Nations have a direct Nation-to-Nation relationship with the Crown and, as such, are the representatives of their Nations in all Crown-First Nation relations.
- C. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a not-for-profit corporation, which was established on September 29, 1970, through a letters patent and articles of incorporation, as an advocacy body not a representative political or decision-making institution.
- D. Through this advocacy body, the AFN, the First Nations are seeking strategic and political support to combat environmental racism and industrial contamination across what is now Canada.
- E. Several First Nations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories have depended on the Peace Athabasca Delta and the Athabasca River system since time immemorial.
- F. Contaminants, toxins, and carcinogens from the Athabasca Oil Sands have been identified in the Athabasca River since at least 2012.
- G. Cancer rates in Fort Chipewyan, where Mikisew Cree First Nation and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation have their reserves, are increasingly elevated as compared to the general population.
- H. There are 1.4 trillion litres of toxic tailings in tailings “ponds” which the province of Alberta is seeking federal approval to “treat and release” into the Athabasca River.

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- I. There are other threats to water and land across Canada that disproportionately affect First Nations in a form of environmental racism.
- J. Many First Nations, including Mikisew Cree First Nation, are calling for a coordinated and national advocacy against environmental racism in all its forms, focused on the proposed “treat and release” of toxic tailings that could affect several First Nations downstream from the oil sands.
- K. The matters in this Resolution are emergent in nature, impacting the Treaty Rights and survival of all First Nations, and implementation must be addressed.
- L. The AFN has agreed not to speak for First Nations except where and how explicitly authorized to do so.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:

1. Oppose the proposed treat and release of toxic tailings into the Athabasca River and oppose environmental racism in all its forms.
2. Call-upon the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to meet with all First Nations affected by environmental racism (“Affected First Nations”), including Mikisew Cree First Nation, and not to allow these meetings to occur without direct representation from the Affected First Nations.
3. Request that the AFN arrange meetings between those Affected First Nations and federal government officials and not allow any such meetings without direct representation, as requested, from the Affected First Nations.
4. Direct the AFN to advocate for direct funding to First Nations’ technical, legal and advocacy capacity, to shift the resource imbalance between affected First Nations and industry/government.
5. Direct the AFN to provide a copy of this Resolution to the federal government as soon as possible, prior to the next Assembly.
6. Require the AFN to obtain explicit consent from any Affected First Nations to assist in advancing their interests.
7. Direct the AFN to commit to full transparency with the Affected First Nations.
8. Record the outcomes of this Resolution consistent with AFN’s existing procedures to ensure transparency and accountability.

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