



Press Release

For Immediate Release

September 13, 2023

Mikisew Cree First Nation applauds newest World Heritage Committee decision calling on Canada to enhance efforts to save the Peace Athabasca Delta

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – Representatives of the Mikisew Cree First Nation were in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to welcome a decision by UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee highlighting the need for Canada to strengthen the Wood Buffalo National Park Action Plan.

The decision follows a 2022 expert monitoring mission from UNESCO, the second in recent years to conclude the Peace Athabasca Delta in Wood Buffalo National Park is facing ongoing, serious threats. The Peace Athabasca Delta is the largest boreal delta in the world, a RAMSAR wetland and a key biodiversity area. For the Mikisew Cree, it is a vital cultural landscape.

“The ongoing seepage of tailings from tailings ponds and the huge risks those ponds create for our people and our waters are completely unacceptable” said Chief Billy Joe Tuccaro. “And to be weeks away from BC Hydro starting to fill the Site C reservoir without protections of our Delta is simply wrong. This has to stop.”

Today’s decision requested that Canada.

- Implement all 17 recommendations of the 2022 Reactive Monitoring Mission, including committing to decide on corrective actions to address the impacts to the hydrology of the PAD by 2026
- Submit an updated Action Plan to the Committee by February 2024
- Complete a tailings risk assessment by December 2024
- Invite a 3rd reactive monitoring mission to review progress in 2026

Mikisew representative Melody Lepine addressed the World Heritage Committee, saying: “We are hopeful your decision will be met by Canada in the spirit intended – an opportunity to reflect on areas of progress – but most critically to renew, rededicate and expand its commitment to save this vital area in full partnership with the Mikisew Cree”.

Ms. Lepine called on all partners to increase their efforts to save the Peace Athabasca Delta, saying “The Mikisew Cree are working tirelessly to see the Action Plan succeed. We expect nothing less of Canada, Alberta, and BC Hydro. Through partnership and lifting each other up, we can secure a healthy future of this important place. And safeguard our Mikisew Cree way of life.”

The Mikisew Cree First Nation is continuing its efforts to advocate for tangible measures to strengthen progress towards saving the Peace Athabasca Delta. It is calling on Canada and its Action Plan partners to

- urgently make new, sustained investments in the Action Plan
- enhance the Action Plan to address challenges identified by the reactive monitoring mission.
- act on all 17 recommendations of the reactive monitoring mission
- make clear commitments to meet the timelines in World Heritage Committee decision.
- urgently take real actions, within the Park and on the Peace and Athabasca Rivers, to correct the harmful alterations to our Delta’s hydrology.

For information or to book an interview:

Melody Lepine (GIR Director) melody.lepine@mcfngir.ca or 1-780-792-8736

Dr. Rohan Ghatak (Mikisew CEO) ceo@mikisewcree.ca or 1-647-473-7545