



## PRESS RELEASE

### West Moberly First Nations Announces Partial Settlement of Civil Claim

**(Moberly Lake, B.C., Treaty 8 Territory, June 24, 2022)** West Moberly First Nations has entered into a partial settlement agreement with the Province of British Columbia, BC Hydro, and Canada with respect to our outstanding claims aimed at protecting our traditional territory. This represents settlement of a portion of our civil claim relating to the Site C Dam.

The Site C Dam project will cause irreversible damage to land which has sustained West Moberly and our ancestors for generations. Watercourses will be poisoned with methylmercury. Key sites will be destroyed. Plant and wildlife habitat will be lost, and species may never recover.

Site C was found by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to clearly contravene Canada's obligations under the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* due to its impact on the ability of Indigenous peoples to exercise their rights within a crucially important part of their traditional territories. The government chose to proceed with the project without the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples including West Moberly, contrary to the obligations recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Site C Project cost has ballooned from \$7.9 billion to \$16 billion and counting. This cost will be felt by ratepayers for decades. Even before the budget mushroomed to \$16 billion, the British Columbia Utilities Commission found that an alternative low carbon portfolio including wind and geothermal could provide as good if not better value to ratepayers.

West Moberly has been actively opposing the Site C Project and hydroelectric expansions on the Peace River for decades. Our community has fought for our rights, culture, and principles, forgoing economic and financial benefits from the Site C dam. For example, we have not participated in contracting or procurement opportunities related to the construction of Site C, despite the fact that we have a robust economic development arm, and there were many lucrative procurement opportunities to help build the dam.

However, Site C has progressed to a point where it is unlikely that any judge will order the dam dismantled. Because of this, we have reluctantly agreed to settle that portion of our court case related to Site C.

West Moberly will take the benefits of the Site C settlement and direct them towards reclaiming and restoring land, revitalizing our community's culture and ways of life, and protecting the best of what's left. We will participate in activities related to mitigating the effects of Site C, with a view to ongoing restoration, stewardship and management of our lands.

With the Site C component of the claim settled, the remainder of the civil claim focuses on the existing hydroelectric dams (the WAC Bennett and Peace Canyon dams and related reservoirs and facilities), including their relationship to the cumulative impacts of resource development in our territory. These dams were constructed, built, and continue to operate without our consent. The balance of the claim will require the Court to grapple with the cavalier way these dams were constructed without regard for impacts on Indigenous Peoples, and the devastating effects these dams have had on plants and wildlife in the region. The remaining portion of the claim represents our demand for Crown accountability for blatant breaches of Treaty 8 that continue to cause ongoing and widespread harm.

West Moberly's primary concern now is to do what we can to mitigate and heal some of the damage that the Peace River valley has suffered through the construction of the three dams, as well as through massive forestry, mining and oil and gas development. We will continue to negotiate with the Crown with a view toward addressing these issues. During this negotiation, the remaining portion of the claim is paused. However, if an agreement is not reached, we will continue with the litigation.

West Moberly and our ancestors have been living in and around what is now Northeast BC since time immemorial. From the Tse Kwa heritage site in Charlie Lake, archaeological findings have shown continuous use by our Dunne-za predecessors for at least 13,000 years. West Moberly, through our predecessor, the Hudson's Hope Indian Band, adhered to Treaty 8 in 1914, on the promises that there would be no forced interference with our ways of life, and that, even though the land would be shared with settlers, we would be as free to hunt, fish, trap, and maintain a way of life after signing the Treaty as if we had never entered into it.

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