



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Chiefs Address International Seminar on Treaties and Indigenous Laws about Canada’s failure to recognize the rights and jurisdiction of Treaty Nations**

*Chiefs Steering Committee is available for interviews upon request.*

**January 24, 2025 – Samson Cree Nation, Treaty 6 Territory**



*Chief Vernon Watchmaker,  
Kehewin Cree Nation,  
Treaty 6*

Chief Vernon Watchmaker, Kehewin Cree Nation, addressed attendees at the International Seminar on Treaties and Indigenous Laws, on behalf of the Chiefs Steering Committee on Technical Services. This significant event, hosted by Samson Cree Nation and the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development (IOIRD), underscores the ongoing efforts to protect the Inherent and Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples worldwide.

Chief Watchmaker emphasized the critical need to address water-related concerns across Indigenous territories, highlighting the cautious anticipation of the pending federal election. While Bill C-61, the *First Nations Clean Water Act*, is no longer on the order paper with parliament proroguing earlier this month, its provisions would have fallen short in meeting the dire demand for clean water and related infrastructure, and the Treaty rights of First Nations.

“Chiefs are concerned about how we will assert jurisdiction under Treaty, which is far beyond reserve lines. Many of our Nations don’t have the water sources to sustain this generation, so what about the next seven generations?” shared Chief Clifford Poucette, Goodstoney First Nation.

In their submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Chiefs Steering Committee asked the United Nations to assist in recognizing and raising awareness about the detrimental impact of Canada’s continuous use of legislation and policy implementation to complete their objective of formalized dispossession of Treaty Nations’ lands and resources.

Chief Watchmaker invoked the wisdom of his Elders who maintain that water is life, and who caution that a federal strategy to offload legal obligations under Treaty agreements further harms Indigenous Peoples and their rights. “Our knowledge keepers tell us that if we do not take a stand now, legislation will be just another federal maneuver to off-load



*Chief Clifford Poucette,  
Goodstoney First Nation,  
Treaty 7*



their legal obligations under Treaty to further minimize the real need to address outstanding issues in our Nations,” Chief Watchmaker stated.

On behalf of the Chiefs Steering Committee, an invitation was extended to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for a meeting to further discuss these critical matters.

### **About the Chiefs Steering Committee**

The mandate of the Chiefs Steering Committee on Technical Services is to provide oversight and direct TSAG programs and service delivery, holding the organization accountable to their values and operating principles. Starting in October 2022, the Chiefs Steering Committee has taken the lead in exploring the organizational, community, legal and political impacts of the Indigenous Services Act 2019 and Bill C-61 First Nations Clean Water Act. For a list of Committee members, please see <https://tsag.net/chiefs-steering-committee/>.

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