



Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation
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MEDIA RELEASE

DEATH OF WOMAN ATTRIBUTED TO DANGEROUS WINTER ICE ROAD CONDITIONS IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN

(April 13, 2010 – Prince Albert)

Tragedy has struck a Northern Saskatchewan First Nations community yesterday. A woman is dead after authorities recovered a vehicle only 1½ kms from Wollaston Lake which fell through a pressure ridge of the winter ice road. This tragedy is the latest of several incidents which occur every year due to the dangerous conditions of travelling in Northern Saskatchewan. Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation has lobbied along with other First Nations and communities in Northern Saskatchewan for over 20 years to construct an all-season road which would improve the safety of residents and others travelling in Northern Saskatchewan.

Condolences and regret are offered by the Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation to the family and loved ones of the deceased woman. The woman, originally from Oshawa, Ontario was young in her 40's and taught at the Father Megret High School within the First Nation community.

This is not the first tragedy to strike in Northern Saskatchewan as a result of winter ice road conditions. Every year northern communities in Saskatchewan are affected by some incident occurring on the winter roads which will strand drivers, cause serious accidents, and often take lives. Winter ice roads are dangerous but people will drive on these roads at their own risk because of the lack of accessibility to fuel and supplies for a major part of the year.

Winter ice roads provide the only means of road transportation to remote communities in Northern Saskatchewan for only about 2 months of the year, depending on the weather conditions. This is the only time to get supplies and fuel into the community by truck and this small window is reduced every year as a result of climate change. In the summer months fuel and supplies can be transported by barges only once the ice has melted. The only other alternative during the off season is to fly supplies into the community by plane which adds a significant cost to food and supplies.

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Northern residents have been long awaiting the construction of an all-season weather road which would improve access and transportation of goods and supplies to remote northern communities, improve emergency response, reduce isolation, and potentially reduce the very high cost of living. Access to economic opportunities and essential government services, which are normally available year-round to all other residents of Saskatchewan, would also improve for northern residents.

Northern residents believed there was a commitment from the government in 2007 to develop an all-season road but little progress has been made to date on the construction of this road and there is no financial commitment from the Canadian government to complete the all-season weather road. All-season roads in the north seem to be a priority only if resource development companies benefit.

Hatched Lake Denesuline First Nation leadership indicate they are tired of waiting for the governments to construct the all-season road they were promised. Maybe now is the time for civil disobedience and other measures to draw attention to this issue – this has impacted the cost of living for years and now more and more it is costing lives.

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