



Pimicikamak Okimawin

P.O. Box 399

Cross Lake, Manitoba ROB OJO

October 17, 2014

STATEMENT ON THE TAKE-OVER OF THE JENPEG DAM

Jenpeg, Pimicikamak Territory — Yesterday, the people of Pimicikamak effectively evicted Manitoba Hydro from the Jenpeg Generation Station on Kichi Sipi (the Nelson River), in Pimicikamak territory, approximately 525 kilometres by air north of Winnipeg.

All Hydro personnel are out of the staff housing complex. The building is empty, locked, undamaged and under the Pimicikamak (*pim-i-chick'-a-mak*) flag. A few Hydro personnel remain inside the dam itself to monitor the facility. Pimicikamak guarantees the safety and well-being of these people, and ensures that Hydro facilities will not be damaged.

The action was carried out by several hundred Pimicikamak citizens with support of the four traditional councils, which comprise the elected government of Pimicikamak. Jenpeg —by which Manitoba Hydro controls outflows from Lake Winnipeg into the Nelson River system—is located about 20 kilometres from Cross Lake, which is the main Pimicikamak settlement of approximately 8,000 residents.

“This is our home; we will not let it be trampled,” said Chief Cathy Merrick. “This dam has been great for the south but for us it is a man-made catastrophe. Hydro needs to clean up the mess it has created in our homeland. Hydro needs to treat us fairly.”

On average Manitoba Hydro produces \$3.8 million worth of power on its five Nelson River dams every day. While Hydro has spent over a billion dollars on mitigation and compensation throughout Manitoba, an environmental disaster remains in many northern waterways. The hydro system has not contributed to “the eradication of mass poverty and mass unemployment” as was contemplated in the 1977 Northern Flood Agreement (NFA). The NFA says affected people will be “dealt with fairly and equitably.”

The hydro system floods 65 square kilometres of Pimicikamak land and causes severe damage to thousands of kilometres of shoreline. Outlying grave sites have been washed away. Pimicikamak people have died as a result of semi-submerged debris from eroding shorelines and unsafe ice conditions caused by Hydro. The project has turned a once bountiful and intimately know homeland into a dangerous and despoiled power corridor.

“I now leave my beloved northlands in good hands” – Chief Albert R. Sinclair (1939)

In addition to Jenpeg, Pimicikamak is affected by the Kelsey Dam which is up for re-licensing next year.

Pimicikamak's road map to positive change includes:

- 1.) A public apology from Premier Greg Selinger for past and present harms suffered by all hydro-affected peoples and their lands.
- 2.) A commitment from Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to engage in a good-faith process to fulfill promises in the NFA, including measures related to community development, environmental mitigation and maximum employment opportunities.
- 3.) A revenue sharing agreement and/or water rental arrangement with Pimicikamak.
- 4.) A commitment from Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to undertake a comprehensive review of how the northern hydropower system is operated with a view to minimizing environmental impacts.

“Hydro is not responsible for addressing all our challenges,” said Chief Merrick, “but we believe these measures could put us on a course of increasing social and economic independence.”

The province has spoken about “reconciliation” with all hydro-affected peoples, and a “new era” of “partnership.” The above list is what reconciliation looks like. In many parts of Canada, governments and companies are realizing that everyone benefits when the tremendous wealth and opportunity of the land is shared fairly.

Members of the Pimicikamak government are scheduled to meet this afternoon at Jenpeg with Hon. Stan Struthers, Minister Responsible for Manitoba Hydro, and Scott Thomson, President and CEO of Manitoba Hydro. Pimicikamak has proposed an initial exchange of good faith measures. A later reconciliation summit with the premier is expected.

The Pimicikamak people will not leave Jenpeg until Manitoba and Hydro make substantive commitments to follow the course outlined above.

In Chief Merrick's spirited speech to a cheering crowd gathered on the Jenpeg grounds yesterday, she said, simply, “We mean business.”

Contact: Chief Cathy Merrick
(204) 679-8653
camerrick@mymts.net

“I now leave my beloved northlands in good hands” – Chief Albert R. Sinclair (1939)