

## **FILM DIRECTOR JAMES CAMERON VOWS TO HELP FIRST NATIONS IN ALBERTA'S TAR SANDS FIGHT FOR BASIC RIGHTS, SAYS "WE MUST PUT THE BRAKES ON EXPANSION"**

### **For Immediate Release**

**September 29, 2010, Edmonton** - After touring tar sands operations, meeting with scientists, industry representatives from Syncrude, Suncor and Cenovus, Premier Stelmach and the Alberta government and after visiting with First Nations in Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan, Canadian-born film director James Cameron, in Alberta on a fact finding trip, said he was determined to help communities whose health and traditional ways of life are being threatened.

"The scale and pace of tar sands development are creating problems because of many scientific unknowns. We need to put the brakes on expansion and learn more about how to extract this resource in a safe manner and we must include the First Nations in these important policy decisions because right now they can't even trust the water they are drinking," said Mr. Cameron at a press conference today in Edmonton, flanked by First Nations leaders from Alberta and across Canada.

There has been an increased incidence of cancers in Fort Chipewyan located downstream from the most intensive tar sands development. Canada's Pollutant Release Inventory shows that the tar sands industry is emitting tonnes of toxic material, and a recent study by internationally renowned water scientist David Schindler shows elevated levels of toxic metals in the water downstream from tar sands operations. The incidence of deformed and unhealthy fish appears to be on the rise.

"The Alberta government, Prime Minister Harper and the oil industry must respect the laws of this country which include the duty to consult First Nations at the earliest stage of any development that effects our First Nations lands," said Shawn Atleo, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations. "We need top notch science, but also the political will to use the existing laws to protect the environment, health and Aboriginal rights of downstream communities."

First Nations in Alberta say what's needed first is a peer-reviewed epidemiologic and toxicological study of cancer rates and levels of exposure to environmental toxins in communities of the lower Athabasca River.

"It's been heartening to know that a fellow Canadian – and one with the influence of James Cameron – cares enough to come and see what we live next to, how we cope and how life might get better for us," said George Poitras, of the Mikisew Cree in Fort Chipewyan, who invited Cameron to the Tar Sands. "He is not a lobbyist, not part of some special interest group and not out for a quick buck - you could say James Cameron is the most objective person in Alberta."

Mr. Cameron, who sits on the Nasa Advisory Council, has been working with an alliance of Indigenous peoples led organizations comprised of Amazon Watch, Cultural Survival, Seventh Generation Foundation and the Indigenous Environmental Network. He has made the top two highest grossing movies of all time, number one being Avatar, widely interpreted as a fictional depiction of indigenous struggle against industry.

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