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Dene Nation presents to Special Rapporteur, Francisco Calí Tzay on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE [Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – March 9, 2023] The Dene met with Special Rapporteur, Francisco Calí Tzay on the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on March 4th, 2023 in Enoch Cree Nation, Treaty 6 to discuss the impact of UNDRIP on the Dene Peoples. Dene Chiefs along with Treaty 8 First Nations representatives and Neskonlith Indian Band representative Judy Wilson were present to share the issues impacting our peoples.

The role of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is to listen to the issues affecting Aboriginal people and to carry these issues to the UN Human Rights Commission. In this historic meeting with the Dene, the UN Special Rapporteur heard from Dene leaders about how UNDRIP impacts Inherent and Treaty rights, and the fact that Canada does not have dominion over the Dene. Issues like the Lutselk'e Dene First Nation's culture camp raid by the GNWT, impacts of poisoning from Tarsands tailings ponds water release all the way to the Arctic Ocean into International waters, health and benefits to Aboriginal peoples as well as the state of affairs between Canada and the Inherent Rights of the Dene.

"The Dene are sovereign people. The Canadian state does not have the right to define Dene sovereignty, internationally recognized and affirmed rights, title, and jurisdiction within Canadian law, we did not agree to put ourselves in Canada's section 35 box and become 'subjects of the Crown'," stated Dene National Chief Gerald Antoine

The presentation highlighted the 52nd Dene National Assembly resolution unanimously rejecting Canada's Act Respecting the UNDRIP (Bill C-15) (CANDRIP), which was given Royal Assent by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, on June 21, 2021. The resolution directed the Dene National Chief to advocate at both the national and international levels to inform all parties of the Dene decisions.

UNDRIP upholds the 'territorial integrity' and 'political unity' of the State in Article 46. This article was added by state governments prior to endorsing UNDRIP without the consent of the Dene. What this means is that Canada has overriding authority in Dene territory contrary to Treaty 8 and 11 and the Paulette Case of 1973.

Dene National Chief, Gerald Antoine says, *"The Dene are a nation of Peoples who entered into Treaty 8 and 11 with the British Crown. Canada's legislation is attempting to domesticate the Dene and take over their territories."*

The Dene know that Canada's colonial processes are wholly based on racist presumptions such as the 'Doctrine of Discovery', the Indian Act, and now Bill C-15. Just recently, we witnessed Pope Francis publicly admit genocide was committed upon our Peoples. This legislation, and the process used to enact it further perpetrates the policy of systemic racism and genocide towards the Dene and other original nations in Canada.

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