



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 23, 2021

## **THE FNFN/PEAK FORESTRY PROJECT IS A MODEL FOR LAND STEWARDSHIP, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND RECONCILIATION**

Fort Nelson, Unceded Treaty 8 Territory

Certain environmental organizations have recently made public statements drawing erroneous conclusions about FNFN forestry initiatives without talking to the FNFN and without specific knowledge about the FNFN partnership with Peak Renewables Ltd. (Peak) The FNFN/Peak partnership is a model for land stewardship and sustainable economic growth.

### **Local Opportunity**

FNFN has a long-term vision for a diversified economy in the territory that includes a vibrant, sustainable forestry sector, including a wide range of local opportunities. FNFN's partnership with Peak on a pellet plant and associated forestry operations is designed to catalyze such a sector and ensure its success. FNFN will not only hold a large equity stake that can grow over time, but the project paves the way for stable, long term skilled employment and contracting opportunities for FNFN members and the town of Fort Nelson. Public statements by people far removed from our community and the project have wholly failed to mention the project's strong commitment to the development of both existing and future local value-added businesses, including FNFN's forestry tenures and the FNFN Community Forest partnership with the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality (NRRM).

Chief Sharleen Gale said "The FNFN partnership with Peak allows us to lay the foundation for sustainable economic opportunities for our people. Our partnership allows us to own these opportunities, to create sustainable jobs and to chart a sustainable course for future generations. The partnership is committed to both existing and future local value-added opportunities. This is reconciliation in action."

### **Model for Land Stewardship**

Peak and FNFN have committed to the adoption of the FNFN Land Management Framework (LMF) for the pellet and forestry project. This framework has been developed over the years under the guidance of world-class ecologists and FNFN Indigenous knowledge holders. It includes a collaborative long-term harvesting planning process which comprehensively, and

proactively, integrates traditional and ecological values.<sup>1</sup> **The LMF is an unprecedented best practice for forestry planning.**

FNFN Lands Director Lana Lowe said: “Our people hold an inseparable attachment to our lands and waters. FNFN, as a nation, has a long and unquestionable track record of defending our territory and treaty rights when faced with unacceptable impacts from commercial activity. We take our rights and responsibilities to the land and water very seriously and we are applying that ethic to our forestry initiatives.”

### **Timber Supply and Land Protection**

Again without any discussion with FNFN or knowledge of the extensive work FNFN has conducted in analyzing potential impacts, certain public statements have been made questioning the sustainability of harvesting in FNFN territory. First, there has been no forestry in FNFN territory since 2008. In addition to thoroughly reviewing the provincial base case for the 2019 AAC determination, FNFN retained a team of environmental and forestry experts to analyze timber supply in light of the Land Management Factors listed above. The FNFN analysis concluded that the timber supply was flexible enough to both sustain important environmental and traditional use values, while also providing enough fibre to support both a pellet plant such as our project with Peak, as well as to support opportunities for local value-added manufacturing. The use of biomass as a sustainable and renewable source of energy has been well researched and documented and the long-term benefits of forest biomass energy are well-established in scientific literature as an important contribution to reducing climate change impacts by replacing more impactful energy sources such as coal and fossil fuels.

### **Self-Determination**

Chief Sharleen Gale questioned recent statements by certain environmental organizations:

“Without talking to us, conclusive statements about FNFN’s forestry projects have been made by groups that are far removed from our territory. These statements totally fail to take into account the livelihoods of our people and our extensive land stewardship work. Since Canada forced us onto reserves and claimed our land for themselves, we have been told how we should live in our own territory. We unquestionably hold the best knowledge of our territory and an unalienable right to self-determination and to freely pursue our economic, social and cultural development in our lands.”

Contact FNFN Chief Sharleen Gale, [sharleen.gale@council.fnnation.ca](mailto:sharleen.gale@council.fnnation.ca) with any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> The LMF is directed at the protection of a wide range of values including: i) traditional use areas and values; ii) riparian values; iii) wildlife and habitat values, including caribou and moose protection; and v) maintaining functional landscapes through the management of trees by age class, including old growth, natural young forest, as well as focusing on landscape connectivity. Forestry planning under the framework will also focus on the sustainable distribution of harvesting, both in terms of location and time.