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**UNION LAKE SEEKS A STAY ON THE MINISTERS APPLICATION TO FORCE COMPLIANCE WITH THE FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT**

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**(Saskatoon, Treaty Six Territory)** In Federal Court this week, Union Lake Cree Nation supported by Thunderchild, Ochapowace, Athabasca Chipewyan and Sawridge First Nations have requested a stay on Minister Valcourt's motion that seeks to force compliance to implement the *First Nations Financial Transparency Act* (FNFTA) – it requires the First Nations to publish their Consolidated Financial Audits. “The Minister is imposing this legislation on First Nations even though its constitutionality is in question before the courts. Canada inherited a longstanding treaty relationship and the heavy handed actions taken by the Minister through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada brings into question the honour of the Crown,” stated Okimaw (Chief) Wallace Fox.

“As we have always stated, it was made clear in the Court proceeding that monies flowing to First Nations are “Indian monies” allocated by Treasury Board. These funds do not come from the public purse therefore the treaty relationship is paramount between Union Lake Cree Nation and the Crown. This was made clear in the Affidavit evidence given by the federal government” said Okimaw Fox. Furthermore, the Federal Court decision in *Montana Band* case determined that these consolidated audits were to be “private and confidential” between the Band members and the Minister (acting on behalf of the Crown). In order to get around the 1988 *Montana Band* court case regarding audits, the FNFTA was introduced by the Federal government and imposed without First Nations consent or without any appearance of consultation as required by their laws.

“We are the only Peoples in the country who have no right of privacy. The federal government removed it with the passage of this legislation. First Nations have always complied with all the requirements of being transparent and accountable to our citizens – that is our public. In addition, we have been transparent and accountable for the transferred Indian monies as set out in the agreement between the First Nations and the government” added Okimaw Fox.

“The issue in court is about publishing our confidential financial information on the World Wide Net for anyone with a computer to see. This violates of our rights protected by the Constitution of Canada and breaches our Treaty with the Crown” concluded Okimaw Fox.

At this time, there are approximately 250 other First Nations across Canada who have not submitted their financial audits and the Minister is threatening to withhold their monies until they comply. “It is the old residential school tactic - if you don't send your children to school, the government will withhold the rations. Not much has changed with government tactics – reconciliation can't take place in this kind of atmosphere despite our best efforts to find a solution” lamented Okimaw Fox.

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