

Dene trappers holding the line in Saskatchewan

By Mari Reeve

LALOCHÉ – On November 19th, 2014 a road block was established north of LaLoche, Saskatchewan by the Dene people of Ducharme. The people of this area have lived off the land for centuries, practicing trapping as a way of life.

After six years of mining and oil companies trying to intimidate and deny residents access to their own territory by erecting security gates blocking their traplines, the trappers have had enough and are making a stand.

Don Montgrand, who has been trapping his whole life, details the issues he faces: "When I drove up to my trapline, a helicopter followed overhead of me, all the way. That's 106 kilometres."

The province has also set their forest fire policy to "let it burn," which has



Dene trappers are blocking a highway to their traditional territories in protest of destructive oil and mining projects in Northwestern Saskatchewan. SUBMITTED PHOTO

destroyed wildlife ecosystems and cabins used for shelter while trapping, creating more barriers for these trappers.

The Mayor and Council

of LaLoche along with Chief and Council of Clearwater River Dene Nation have made deals with certain companies. Information about these

deals is not made public to the people due to confidentiality agreements, and there has been no compensation for the trappers hit hardest by

mining and oil exploration.

These companies are invading and then polluting their lands, with not even a notice of their intrusion and presence on the land, let alone consent for their destructive oil and mining activities. Companies have also half-completed exploration work and littered their lands with abandoned work camps, deserted construction materials and random barrels containing unknown substances.

"We've had enough," says Montgrand. "The animals are disappearing. Even the minnows are dying in the lakes. All of the chemicals they are dumping and burning in our local landfills are what they are leaving in the bush and running into the lakes. Even the people are dying of cancer and some are pretty young. We buried six in the last few

months when we used to see maybe one person die of cancer in a year."

Trappers are concerned with companies like Cenovus from Calgary, Alberta, who are driving the people off of the land.

"It is taking food off of our table. When companies are done destroying our north there will be nothing for our children to live on," says Bobby Montgrand.

The group invites supporters from all nations who would like to come experience the life of a trapper making a stand against big oil companies. For more information, check out their Facebook group titled "Holding the line - Northern Trappers." You can also call 306-822-3181 to speak with spokesperson Don Montgrand or email susnaghe@sasktel.net.