BEARSPAW
FIRST NATION

March 22, 2024

Jamie Brown
Regional Director General
Indigenous Services Canada
630 Canada Place, 9700 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 4G2

Re: Bearspaw First Nation Autonomy and 2024-2025 CFA

Further to our March 21, 2024, meeting with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) staff and our Band Council Resolution of March 30, 2023 (March 2023 BCR), Bearspaw First Nation (BFN) remains committed to creating a new treaty-based relationship with Canada beginning with our own Contribution Funding Agreement (CFA).

To date, BFN has worked transparently with ISC officials to resolve some of the logistics and challenges of moving forward with its own CFA. This process of dismantling the web of dysfunction imposed by the creation of the "Stoney Band" is proceeding step by step. The next step is for ISC to issue BFN its own CFA for the new fiscal year. As BFN continues to work with ISC officials, the scope of the CFA will expand where there is clarity, and it makes sense.

As stated in the BFN March 2023 BCR, we fully support the Chiniki and Goodstoney First Nations shedding the fiction of the "Stoney Band" and being recognized as the autonomous Treaty Nations that they are with their own respective contribution funding agreements. We also continue to be willing to work with the Chiniki and Goodstoney First Nations in a process for discussing options for a tribal governance framework to address common interests. To this end, BFN has been open and transparent with ISC, Chiniki and Goodstoney First Nations and Stoney Tribal Administration (STA) senior staff about recognizing the "Stoney Band" for what it is and about BFN moving forward with its own CFA and treaty-based relationship with Canada. However, it is not within the control of BFN to establish priorities for or to coerce Chiniki or Goodstoney First Nations into collaboration.

When Canada created the "Stoney Band" thereby tangling three independent treaty nations in ways they could not have imagined, it did not require an agreement or any community consultation regarding the consequences of the three independent Stoney Nations holding an undivided interest in common lands. No one Nation was offered a veto to prevent the creation of the "Stoney Band," and no one Nation now should be offered a veto to prevent its dissolution or the long overdue recognition of each Nation being autonomous, independent signatories to Treaty 7 with their own inherent rights.

In addition to working with ISC to identify obvious budget items to be included in a new BFN CFA, BFN's first steps in establishing management and fiscal control over its resources include bringing in all BFN businesses by April 1, 2024. STA will continue, however, to administer payroll while BFN builds capacity in this area. BFN will perform all management and fiscal responsibilities, including accounting, financial reporting, and the creation of financial statements, which will be audited annually. BFN will have control over its own bank accounts subject to modern financial and fiscal policies requiring effective management of cash, assets, and financial reporting.

As Eden Valley is a Bearspaw community, it makes sense that the next step will be to move the fiscal management and accounting of the Eden Valley Medical Center away from STA and Xyntax to BFN. BFN citizens at Eden Valley are often the "forgotten children" in terms of the delivery of core programs and services, and the next step will be to move the entire financial administration of programs and services at Eden Valley away from STA to BFN. BFN is currently applying resources at Eden Valley to assess administrative capacity and corresponding needs to facilitate discussions regarding how best to move forward toward this goal.

BFN has also deployed significant resources in looking at taking back income support and implementing a shelter utility recovery program to access the shelter component of income support. This is obviously a significant change in how things have been managed for many decades and needs to be phased in with the involvement of the community. This step would be to take back income support for BFN starting April 1, 2025.

Furthermore, BFN is in the process of developing several new BFN policies including a financial administration policy, a post secondary education policy, a membership code and an election code, to name a few. These are significant and necessary undertakings for BFN and BFN intends to share our new policies with both the Chiniki and Goodstoney First Nations.

Many of the larger common programs, such as Morley capital infrastructure, Morley O&M, Morley health, Stoney Education Authority, and Stoney Nakoda Child and Family services (CFS), will be the subject of next-step discussions. With the change in the law regarding CFS, BFN is interested in pursuing jurisdictional funding to develop its own CFS legal framework with the community's support. This may take one or more years as it may be the first step that has any significant impact on an existing program servicing all three Nations. We also support the Chiniki First Nation in their move to exercise their

Section 35 jurisdiction and examine establishing their own agency under Bill 92. We in fact recently signed off on Chinki's contribution amendment.

In conclusion, BFN looks forward to taking the next step of administering its own CFA beginning April 1, 2024, and remains committed to working toward a new treaty-based relationship with Canada as we directly expressed to Minister Hajdu when she visited Eden Valley in January of this year.

Thank you,

Robert Shotclose
Bearspaw First Nation CEO
Signatory to Treaty 7, 1877

Cc: Tamara Kane ISC
Chief Darcy Dixon
Councillor Rod Hunter
Councillor Keith Lefthand
Councillor Pierre Lefthand
Councillor Dacster Amos
BFN CFO Bob Taylor