

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 10, 2025

Indigenous Entrepreneur Launches Hunger Strike to Protest Industry's Broken Promises

Fort McMurray, AB – After more than 20 years of building one of the most successful Indigenous apprenticeship programs in Alberta, **Mike Deranger**, President and Founder of **Derantech**, and a proud member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN), will begin a peaceful hunger strike on **Saturday, August 10, 2025**, to demand fair treatment for Indigenous-owned businesses.

In 2005, Suncor approached Deranger with a vision to train Indigenous youth. With their initial support, Derantech grew into a program that flew Indigenous youth from across Canada to Fort McMurray, providing hands-on training in the skilled trades. By 2012, outside of Syncrude, Suncor, and CNRL, Derantech was recognized as perhaps the most successful Indigenous apprenticeship program in Western Canada.

Today, that legacy is under attack. Despite decades of proven results, industry has cancelled long-standing contracts, cutting off vital opportunities for Indigenous youth and threatening the survival of a business that has been a cornerstone of local workforce development.

“This is not economic reconciliation—it’s economic displacement,” said Deranger. “Industry is funneling contracts to partners and outside companies posing as Indigenous businesses, while real Indigenous entrepreneurs are being forced out of our own traditional lands. We are being erased from the very economy we helped build.”

For six months, Deranger has worked to negotiate solutions with industry leaders to save Derantech and protect the opportunities it provides. Those efforts have been met with silence. Now, he has decided to take the protest public.

“My company has never been a threat to the big players. We have always worked to fill a need—Safety, Quality, Cost & Schedule.

For industry to walk away after 20 years is not only a betrayal of our partnership, but also a betrayal of every young person who ever believed they had a future here,” Deranger stated. To support our client we started two unionized companies and we have never failed.

Deranger is calling on all corporations operating in Treaty 8 territory to **honor the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #92**, which urges the corporate sector to:

“Adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.”

This includes ensuring equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities for Indigenous peoples, and meaningful long-term participation of Indigenous communities in business development.

The hunger strike started Sunday August 10, 2025 and will continue until there is a concrete commitment from industry to practice true economic reconciliation—supporting authentic Indigenous businesses. These corporations must not forget their socioeconomic responsibilities.

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