



Oral presentation

Exposé oral

**Written submission from the
Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation**

**Mémoire de la Première Nation des
Chipewyan d’Athabasca**

In the Matter of the

À l’égard de

Cameco Corporation, Beaverlodge Project

Cameco Corporation, Projet Beaverlodge

**Application to amend its licence to allow
release of 18 Beaverlodge Project
properties from CNSC licensing**

**Demande de modification du permis de
Cameco visant à retirer 18 propriétés du
projet Beaverlodge du contrôle de la CCSN**

Commission Public Hearing

Audience publique de la Commission

March 24, 2022

24 mars 2022



Eglànet'e,

Background

We are writing to you in response to your call out to indigenous communities to share their concerns regarding decommissioning the remaining 18 Beaverlodge Project properties.

To understand the importance of these lands to ACFN, we must look back at our inherent rights. There is archeological evidence demonstrating our occupation of these lands for at least 9,000 years, meaning our connection, and understanding of these lands, their flora, fauna, and natural resources run deep. The knowledge of our Elders has been passed down through their teachings since our people have been in community with one another. Over time, this traditional knowledge has adapted as our lived experiences have changed, and our traditional knowledge has grown and maintains its relevancy to this project.

ACFN's traditional way of life has been heavily impacted by the continued expansion of resource development projects. Any more extraction or industrial activity threatens to affect our already fragile ecosystem. We have seen our treaty and land rights eroded time and time again; our ability to hunt, trap, fish, and enjoy our lands gets harder to do with each new approval. ACFN Dene Lands and resource management's review of the proposal raised a few concerns, and through information sharing with our members, we have an increasing number of concerns that have been raised thus far.

As you are aware, Cameco's facilities are within our traditional territory. Many of our members come from and continue to reside and exercise their Treaty rights in Uranium city and its surrounding areas and have strong ties with the land and water. We appreciate CNSC allowing us to share our concerns about the potential release of Cameco's 20 Beaverlodge properties from CNSC licensing.

Upon reviewing *Cameco Corporation Request for release of 18 Beaverlodge properties from requiring licensing under the Nuclear Safety and Control Act*, elders' meetings, and prior communication sent by ACFN to CNSC, there are some of our numerous notable concerns.

Concerns

The percentage of people who were interviewed is recorded as 62%, which is a high volume of participants. However, the percentage of active land users was not clear. ACFN wonders if any effort was made to contact former land users or former residents. It's important to contextualize the data; our Elders noted that many sustenance users were driven off the land because of the mines' expansion phases, which drove animals away. Secondly, there was no mention of pre-development baseline data, nor does it appear that those who would have preindustrial information were invited to participate in the data collection. Drawing conclusions using only modern baselines established following development leaves gaps in the data. ACFN

recommended that tours be given to those with preindustrial knowledge to better attest to the extent of the impacts on-site and downstream of the project sites.

Additionally, the only animals mentioned were fish and humans; this shows a limited understanding of the lands and animals that were present and have disappeared over time. It is not clear whether communities were able to give their input on what appropriate indigenous indicators would be to determine the adequate performance of the sites before their licenses are released. The restoration of Treaty rights that have been impacted by industry cannot be fulfilled without meaningful engagement with communities.

There were concerns about whose perspective was centered when 'features of interest' were being determined. Again, this speaks to the necessity of community involvement from the outset. Features of interest for a caribou differ from one that would be of interest to a human and so on. The use of roads as a measurement of connectivity does not speak to land users' traditional modes of transport.

ACFN's involvement in developing standards is insufficient, and there has been little done to rectify this. The perspective of the original stewards of the land has not been fully accounted for. The integration of Indigenous knowledge has been excluded, and the late involvement of communities is an oversight that must be corrected moving forward as more hearings and reviews are conducted. ACFN appreciates the opportunity to raise these concerns and is looking forward to better understanding what CNSC will do to bridge the current information gaps that disregard ACFN's Rights.

Marsi cho.

Kg Banjoko

Regulatory and Industry Relations Coordinator



Translation from Dene to
English of the presentation
from Elders Jimmy Deranger
and Horace Adams

Traduction du Dene à l'anglais
pour la présentation des
Anciens Jimmy Deranger et
Horace Adams

00:53 Elder Jimmy Deranger

1:45 My name is Jimmy Deranger, I will be talking about my homelands, our lands were given to us by the creator, Our creator has provided this land for us, and that is how we continue to live, we have been given a huge piece of land to look after, and in turn it will look after us, we are the only ones that can look after this land, creator has put everything on this earth so we can live harmoniously, the caribou, the bear and everything else from the land, berries, fish, ducks, the creator provided all this so we can live off the land,

2:40 our land is vast, the people from the east, the denesųline from the east, dene from the barren lands, the dene from the ocean, dene from the main rivers, dene from the mountains, this is how we lived on the lands of the dene, we were nomadic, we travelled the best way we know how,

3:25 that is what the creator provided for us, besides that, we've had visionaries, very smart people, people who have practiced ık'ązi since time immemorial
If we needed anything, these people were always there, we were doctored with medicines from the land, they did what they could to help the people, and that is how it has always been

That is how we the denesųline have always survived

We have survived and travelled the vast lands forever

In British Columbia, BC a place in BC, in the northern parts, and in Alberta, and different parts of Saskatchewan, including Manitoba, and in some part of the Inuit lands, this is how far we have travelled, we have travelled afar

4:17 We are in charge of our homelands, no one told us to come here, absolutely no one, if we wanted to travel somewhere, we'd go, year after year, we'd all get together, and begin our travels, that is how we travelled, the denesųline are very powerful and strong

4:38 the government, the people who work in this field of work, there are many government people standing behind these people, people who are in charge, we had our own government as dene people, but we never thought of it in this way

5:01 this is how we've always governed ourselves, finally the white man came onto our homelands, and when they arrived, they came from across the oceans,

there was a war on their lands at that time, they came with things, they looked at the way we were dressed, we were all dressed in beaver pelt clothing, when they were looking at our beaver pelt clothing, all they saw was money, that was all they saw, nothing else, and that is when they began harvesting beaver

5:44 so they began taking and taking beaver pelts, then they began on the fish, after that, then came people who began looking at rocks, they began writing things down, and took their information back to the government, they knew we had resources on our homelands, then after this came the priests, when the priests came, they saw how we lived, and they brought nothing but unhappiness, they lived with us, and the saw that everything and then more white people began coming onto our homelands

6:43 the white men were crazy about money, they saw money on our homelands, that is how they made their homes on our homelands, after that a treaty was signed, after the treaty was signed, the white man began searching out our homelands, its like we sold our land to the white man with the signing of the treaty

7:05 today that money, because of the signing of the treaty, we were still in charge of our homelands, its like we let the white man be in charge of our homelands, when the treaty was signed its in writing

7:19 if we were to go back to our homelands, if the white man come onto our homelands we should be the final decision makers, they consult with us and it should be up to us dene to have the final say, up until then they have no business to bother our home lands

7:38 that's the way its supposed to be, as long as the sun shines the grass grows, and the river flows, it is up to the creator with the way the treaty was signed, this is the future for our children,

7:55 it should be in the best interest for everyone, so with the way we were put on this earth, we are in charge of our own homelands and we take care of her,

8:05 as long as the sun shines the grass grows, and the river flows, we the denesųline are the ones to protect and look after our homelands, not for one second should the white man make decisions regarding our homelands, we have to speak up about our homelands in order to protect it

8:22 our creator set the homelands for us, we are the ones in charge of it, not for one second should the white man have any say regarding our homelands, 1930 Saskatchewan was formed,

8:48 by rights when the treaty was signed, it is a written document on paper, if its going to be taken we should have the final say, we have to say yes before anything is approved, they stole our homelands that's the way it is to this very day

9:05 in 1867 when the government was formed, there was a document made, it was called the Indian act, the Indian act was formed to make us become assimilated like the white man, no consideration for who we are as the dene,

9:25 for a very long time we've been living like this, they gave us land but they conformed us with the Indian act, because of that there is a lot of uncertainty,

9:42 the land that is being talked about today, today in Uranium City, its also called beaver lake in Dene, this land is given to us by the creator and we are in charge of it, not even for one second should they talk about taking away our land, this is our land, they should consult with us first before making any decisions on our homelands,

10:02 in 1982 when the bishop/pope came there was a thing called aboriginal rights during the treaty days, that is what was discussed during that time,

10:16 the charter of rights is a written document, so we are the ones that are in charge of our own homelands, we should have the final say as a dene nation, not for one second should the white man make any decisions regarding our home lands

10:32 Elder Horace Adams

Thank you, Jimmy, I too am in full agreement of what was just said, I am a

Denesųline person, these dene lands that we are on,

11:04 the remnants and the landmarks of the dene are visible on these homelands, we have been on these lands since time immemorial, this is how we have survived, I am Denesųline person, my parents are Denesųline, we lived on the shorelines of this big lake Athabasca for as long as I can remember

11:23 every part of this land we have used and know, the land fed us, fish, berries, moose, caribou, this was our sustenance, as a child when they opened up the gold field, I was not born yet, this was in the year of 1935, when they found all that

gold, during that time there was no consultation with the dene as to how they expropriated the gold,

12:00 I was not born yet but from my recollection they expropriated without any consideration nor consultation with my people, this is my understanding, and this is what I know,

12:12 in 1934 the gold fields, was when the work began for gold expropriation, in 1937 they finished the job, in 1939 work began, people were running out of proper working gear, the money was going down, they closed the mine down in 1942,

12:45 I was 1 years old then, the gold fields, townsite may have been closed I'm not exactly sure, 1949 we arrived there I remember clearly, our many travels on boat took us there many times, where the fishing sites were, my parents worked at the fish plant there

13:14 there was a mine called the box line, the uranium was mixed and became poisoned with nitrate,

13:25 nitrate was used to expropriate gold, at that time we did not know nor understand many things, our people were not knowledgeable in this field of poison taken out of the land, it was called nitrate,

13:40 on the lake Athabasca there was a creek flowing out of it, it flowed into the main lake, what ever was being disposed from the poisonous site, when they took out the uranium, it was spilling onto our lands as they were taking them out,

13:55 there was nitrate that was flowing into our main lands and this is poisonous, it was killing off anything that it contacted,

14:07 in 1949, sorry I mean 1946, there was uranium mining happening during this time that I was unaware of, I was 5 years old at that time, there is a lot that I do not understand but I do my research, and that's how I began to understand it,

14:26 in 1949 many jobs opened up in the gold fields, a lot of main jobs were opening up, that's the way it was, my older brother worked there in the nickel mining,

14:54 in 1952, there was word that they were going to open up Uranium City, there started burning brush to open up a road leading to Uranium City, he started looking for a job so he went there, we packed up all our belongings on a vehicle and headed out to Uranium City,

15:17 when we got to this particular lake, we travelled across it on ice, my mother and my older sister Maria met them across the lake, on that particular day, I remember very clearly like it happened only yesterday, it was so beautiful the seagulls were back, the land was thawing and there were parts of land where the snow had melted, on the lake the ice was melting, it was so beautiful to see,

15:45 when we arrived there we pitched up a tent and set a net for fish, I was only 1 years old at that time, I was young I did not understand many things, all the things that were happening on our lands were unbeknownst to my people and me as a child did not understand a whole lot,

16:10 many things were being brought onto our homelands, Eldorado was being established in 1953 and 1954, there was a lot of development happening where the mines were being made, everything and anything that could be done they did,

16:32 Denesuline were given many jobs in that time, they were trained in almost anything, millwright, they didn't know much about this kind of work so they had to be trained, all worked for the labour union, when they finished building the houses then they were all let go, so they all settled for menial work,

16:55 that's the way it was back then, the radiation poison was very strong at that time, not very many people knew about the poison back then and the way the men worked, even though people were working at that time, then in 1956 I'm not really sure about the year there was a catastrophe where a burst in one of the mines,

17:32 there was a barge carrying materials for the mines, the fish were beginning to taste like gas including the waters and anything that drank from the lake, due to the leakage that was entering into the main lake,

18:03 when the fish was caught and cooked it tasted like gas, like fumes, so for a very long time we could not eat fish, there were three mines operating at the same time, the water was being dumped into the eastern waters, these were the areas for trapping, so I clearly remember the impacts of the poison being dumped into our main waters

18:50 we had traps around the mine sites, the caribou loved coming to this area because of the natural salt on the land, they used to come and lick the salt, I went there once and it wasn't a nice place anymore, and I never ever went back there again.

19:10 there was this one other lake also where the poison as leaking into this lake too, they had repaired this lake they said, but I believe that the poison still sits at the bottom of this lake, the way they came onto our homelands where our land was pure with no toxins, everything was interdependent on one another and all lives were lived with peace and harmony, until the white man came without consultation stripped and raped our lands and poisoned everything and anything in its path,

19:43 they did the same thing with Eldorado, its been three years since I've gone there, they say they cleaned the lands, they buried most of their poison and covered it with white sand, but we know as dene that the harm and damages that have occurred will never ever regain its true essence of how the purity the land was before the white man came and destroyed it,

20:24 my trapline was in N-22 zones 11, this was my trapline, me and my dad's trapline, the river was called old man river, then it headed towards north, then to owl lake, then on higher land, everyone had their own area to trap and we were the caretakers of the land where we trapped,

21:17 I did not understand why there were many animals dying, things began to disappear, there were mink, martens, foxes, these animals began to hang out in the garbage dumps, I still did not understand why, there was no consideration for what was happening to the dene way of life nor the ecology

21:49 these traplines were my way of life, without consultation and any knowledge they took our way of life and left us with the land and the waters they poisoned, they gave us no compensation for what they have done to us, I was a child then and didn't fully understand a lot, nor had the strength to do a whole lot, I may have been ten years old at the time,

22:34 eventually I was given work there and I worked there for a long time, with Eldorado doing labour work, people continued to trap as this was our way of life and this brought food to our table,

22:51 we encountered hardship as there were times when there was no work, there was no food, so we used to go to Eldorado garbage dump in the early mornings, and gather food for our families, they took all our money from our lands and left us to scrounge for food from the garbage dumps to feed our families, we were left being laughed at,

23:12 its okay because this is still our homelands, we still have our dignity and our pride, we will prevail as a dene nation, they were supposed to clean up our lands

but it will never be the same again, it will bring a little bit of happiness to me but the damages they have done exceeds all,

24:02 the little bit of the land that is left intact, not including my trapline, I'm going to mention some mine sites: Fisher Bay mine, Nicholson mine, Box Mine, Gunner mine, Laredo mine, Sense Lake Mine, Frazer Mine, Micheal Mine, Hazer Mine, Nisbet Mine, Mark Lake Attic, Petro Lake Attic, Eldorado Feed mine, Verna Mine, Dave Mine, Malma Lake Attic, "at one time we had ten thousand people working there",

35:00 Elder Jimmy Deranger

I understand the white man's language and I understand the way the government operates, they speak to us as if we are nothing, in a condescending way to make us feel inferior, they have already destroyed our homelands, you understand how our lands are destroyed, you took our lands with consultation without compensation, you have given absolutely nothing back to us, you have to compensate us, you took our lands, this is not right and you know it,