



**Oral presentation**

**Exposé oral**

**Written submission from  
Victor Fern Sr**

**Mémoire de  
Victor Fern Sr**

In the Matter of the

À l'égard de

**Cameco Corporation, McArthur River  
Operation and Key Lake Operation**

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**Cameco Corporation, établissements de  
McArthur River et de Key Lake**

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Application for the renewal of uranium  
mine/mill licences for McArthur River  
Operation and Key Lake Operation

Demande visant le renouvellement des permis  
d'exploitation de mines et d'usines de  
concentration d'uranium pour les  
établissements de McArthur River et de  
Key Lake

**Commission Public Hearing**

**Audience publique de la Commission**

**June 7-8, 2023**

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April 19, 2023

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Senior Tribunal Officer:

Edlanet'e – Hello.

Thank you for this opportunity to intervene in support of Cameco's application to renew the uranium mine licenses for the McArthur River, Key Lake and Rabbit Lake operations.

I am Victor Fern – I am a Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation band member. Before I start, I want to tell you a little bit about who I am. I was raised in Fond Du Lac and lived there all my life. At a young age I was taught my Dene culture and how to live off the land. I was taught to respect the environment because it provides for our family and our people. I believe the environment connects us with our community and culture. I am proud of who I am and where I come from.

I spent 30 years with Cameco at the Cigar Lake and Rabbit Lake operations, which are in the traditional Treaty 10 territory. I am a multi generational uranium mining worker. When I first started working at the Rabbit Lake mine, my sons were not even born. I am proud that they followed in my footsteps and now work for Cameco at the mines. I see how they balance their work life with their time at home and can continue practicing a traditional lifestyle.

I was able to see firsthand life at an industrial site and the safety culture and environmental protection in place and in practice. With this understanding, I encouraged my sons to pursue a career in mining. I believe the young generation should pursue careers in the industry because this provides an opportunity for long-term employment in the region and possibilities for advancement. To see for themselves that the environment is being protected and to be part of those strong management systems. To take the knowledge and skills they have learned back into the community.

Cameco has over a 40-year history in the region with its uranium mining and milling operations. Fond du Lac and Cameco have a long history of working together. The collaboration agreement we signed brought Athabasca Basin leadership closer together, created a way we can work along

side our industry partners. The seven Athabasca Basin communities and industry signed the Ya'thi Néné Collaboration Agreement in 2016.

When I was the Chief in 2005, I wanted to work with industry. I was Chair of the Ya'thi Néné Board that negotiated the Ya'thi Néné Collaboration Agreement in 2016. The agreement builds on the Impact Management Agreement signed in 1999. The Impact Management Agreement was a step forward on how things should be done with the communities. As a previous Chief of Fond du Lac, to serving on boards in support of the region, working in the mines, and currently, as the Cameco and Orano community liaison, I have had different opportunities to serve my community. I believe the agreement we signed confirms the partnership between the communities and industry for mutual benefit, in the development of the uranium resources in the basin.

I have seen the Athabasca Basin communities making the most of the benefits. The relationship is not always easy, but the intention of the agreement is to provide stability and predictability around 4 pillars: workforce development, business development, community investment and community engagement and environmental stewardship.

Living a traditional way of life is important to me. I am teaching my children and my grandchildren how to live off the land. I am teaching them our culture and our language.

As a Dene person our main diet is barren land caribou. I go on an annual hunt for caribou with my two sons. We often travel hundreds of kms on a snowmobile from Fond du Lac in sometimes minus 40-degree temperature. Preparation and proper equipment are important when traveling hundreds of kms in the wilderness. Sometimes, we travel 200km to 300 kms and up to 12 hours a day until we reach where the caribou are migrating.

My community has built cabins along our hunting trail that members now use. These cabins were a priority for our community, to create safe passage, and were made possible with the help from Cameco and Orano, monies into a Trust for the region. It makes it a lot easier and safer to go caribou hunting. The hunting cabins were our priority, an initiative we undertook to help preserve our culture and traditional practices.

My culture is part of who I am and connects me to the land and to my community. My family continues to thrive on hunting and fishing, we utilize the land and the water almost everyday.

I have learned a lot from my involvement in the Community-Based Environmental Monitoring Program (previously the Athabasca Working Group environmental monitoring program), which had been conducting monitoring in the region since 2000. I worked with the traditional land and resource users; I received training. Part of the 2021 program for Uranium City and Camsell Portage was to include a more inclusive role for Ya'thi Néné Lands and Resource Office that provides technical support to the subcommittee under the agreement. I conducted interviews and mapped out the areas with the Ya'thi Néné Land Technician. I have talked a lot with the land and resource users in my Dene language. I have discussed the 2019 CBEMP results with Fond du Lac leadership and community members in that the country foods remain safe; the water

remains safe. I feel comfortable with the knowledge that we can continue our traditional way of life and share that information with community members.

I also participate in AJES meetings as the community liaison but I wear many hats. Cameco met with the subcommittee to discuss its licence renewal application in 2021. I spoke with the representatives, my leadership and community members. I listened to the feedback as Cameco worked to provide more information to understand the concerns and questions raised. In November 2022, Cameco amended its application for a 20-year term in an effort to respond to the uncertainty from the communities and hosted meetings in the Athabasca Basin communities to engage with membership. I attended these meetings and heard questions and concerns around long-term licences and community benefits. In these discussions, it was explained by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission representatives in attendance that their recommendation to the commission was for a 20-year term with a mid-term review. I believe a mid-term review was well received by members.

I speak for my sons (Victor Fern Jr. and Marty Fern), myself and our families when I say we support Cameco's application to renew the uranium mine licenses for the McArthur River, Key Lake and Rabbit Lake operations.

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Victor Fern