



# Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation

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Ms. Bruce and Ms. Comeau:

The Łutsel K' Dene First Nation is the elected government of the Łutsël K'e Denesoline. We represent a people who have called our lands home for thousands of years. We entered into a Treaty relationship with Canada in 1900, and since that time have been working to honour the spirit of our Treaty by building partnerships with other peoples and other governments for mutual benefit.

One of the most important partnerships that we are building today is for the protection of Thaidene Nene – the Land of the Ancestors. This is a direction that we were given by our Elders, and we are working to establish a jointly designated federal National Park Reserve, Territorial Park and Indigenous Protected Area – with the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories. This process has been underway for nearly 20 years, and is very nearly complete.

We are writing to express our deep concerns over the Chamber's recent letters to Canada and the GNWT expressing opposition to Thaidene Nene. We note that is not a new position for the Chamber. In 2016, the Chamber wrote to the Government of the Northwest Territories opposing Thaidene Nene, describing it as a "reckless annexation" designed to "eliminate the resource industry", ignoring the fact that accommodating industry was a key consideration in the decision to significantly reduce the proposed boundaries for Thaidene Nene from 33,600 km<sup>2</sup> to 26,300 km<sup>2</sup> to exclude areas of high resource potential from the protected area.

Despite the inflammatory, ignorant and condescending tone of the Chamber's 2016 letter, our community sought to take the high road. We invited a dialogue between the Chamber and the Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation about our people's vision for Thaidene Nene. We hoped to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions that appear to fuel the Chamber's critique.

Notably, there was no follow-up from the Chamber on our invitation.

Now the Chamber has once again intervened. It is requesting not only an environmental assessment, but has put forward its own vision of a much smaller and fragmented park that would be open and accessible to resource development.

As was the case in 2016, the Chamber's recent letters express concerns about Thaidene Nene that are unfounded, exaggerated, or based on incorrect facts. Although we take issue with the Chamber's proposals to further reduce the size of Thaidene Nene, develop access corridors, and advance resource development projects that are incompatible with maintaining the ecological and cultural values that Thaidene Nene is intended to protect, we understand that the Chamber feels it necessary to support certain members who believe that little or nothing should stand in the way of resource development. While we strongly disagree on these points, we also recognize that the Chamber has the right to raise them, and to put them on the public record.

The Chamber's actions, however, are not without consequence. The Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation takes deep offense to the Chamber's claim that by opposing Thaidene Nene, the Chamber is being "respectful of our Indigenous communities". The Chamber is not being respectful, and the Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation are not one of "your" Indigenous communities. The Chamber has no right to speak on behalf of any Indigenous community, much less assume that it knows what it is best for us.

The Chamber also claims to recognize that "partnering with Indigenous Nations in economic initiatives through both industry and conservation is the future of economic independence." The Chamber clearly does not understand what partnership means. The Chamber claims to be interested in "finding a better way to work with the GNWT and Parks Canada", ignoring Łutsël K'e and failing to acknowledge that Thaidene Nene is fundamentally our initiative. If the Chamber truly believed in partnership with Indigenous Nations, the Chamber would have addressed your concerns to us, and made efforts to inform itself of some basic facts about both our proposal and our community's objectives. Instead, the Chamber completely failed to acknowledge or understand our role as an Indigenous government or our leadership in advancing Thaidene Nene.

Using the language of "respect" does not make the Chamber's approach any less colonial or disrespectful, particularly when it is actively advancing an agenda that is fundamentally adverse to our interests. Actively working to undermine our community's efforts to determine our own economic future is not "partnership".

The Chamber's opposition to Thaidene Nene strengthens our resolve to determine our own economic future, and our commitment to work with partners who share our vision. It is clear that the Chamber is not one of them.

Businesses and communities in the Northwest Territories would be far better served by an organization that is actually committed to working with Indigenous governments, rather than working to undermine our community initiatives.

Respectfully,



Chief Darryl Marlowe  
Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation

cc: Hon Bob McLeod, Premier of the Northwest Territories  
Hon. Wally Schumann, Minister, Industry, Tourism & Investment  
Hon. Lou Sebert, Minister of Lands  
Hon. R.C. McLeod, Minister, Environment & Natural Resources  
Hon. Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Akaitcho Leadership  
Gary Bailey, Northwest Territory Metis Nation  
Bill Enge, President, North Slave Metis Alliance  
Grand Chief George Mackenzie, Tlicho Government  
Michael McLeod, Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories  
Felix Lee, President of the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada  
Pierre Gratton, President of The Mining Association of Canada  
Michelle Swallow, Manager – Conservation Planning and Implementation, GNWT  
Lee Montgomery, Parks Canada  
Ms. Joanne Deneron, Chair, Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board  
Mark Cliffe-Phillips, Executive Director, Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board