

North Slave Métis Alliance Traditional Land Use, Occupancy and Knowledge of the Thor Lake Project Area



DECEMBER 2012

DISCLAIMER:

This report represents a strictly limited effort, and must not be taken as an exhaustive or comprehensive study. The archival review component of the study only scratched the surface of the available information. Although there is much information available, it is widely dispersed and not adequately catalogued or addressed in the academic literature.

The North Slave Metis Alliance (NSMA) has a large collection of original materials, most of which still need to be inventoried, digitized, filed, and processed for use in the Geographic Information System. All aspects of the research were hampered by the ongoing and severe capacity shortages of the NSMA.

The information contained in this report remains the property of the NSMA, and shall not be used without written permission from the NSMA, for any purpose other than environmental assessment of the **Thor Lake Project** as described in the May 2011 **Developer's Assessment Report**, submitted to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Review Board for **Assessment EA1011-001**. Any changes in the project description will require a re-assessment of the adequacy of this report.

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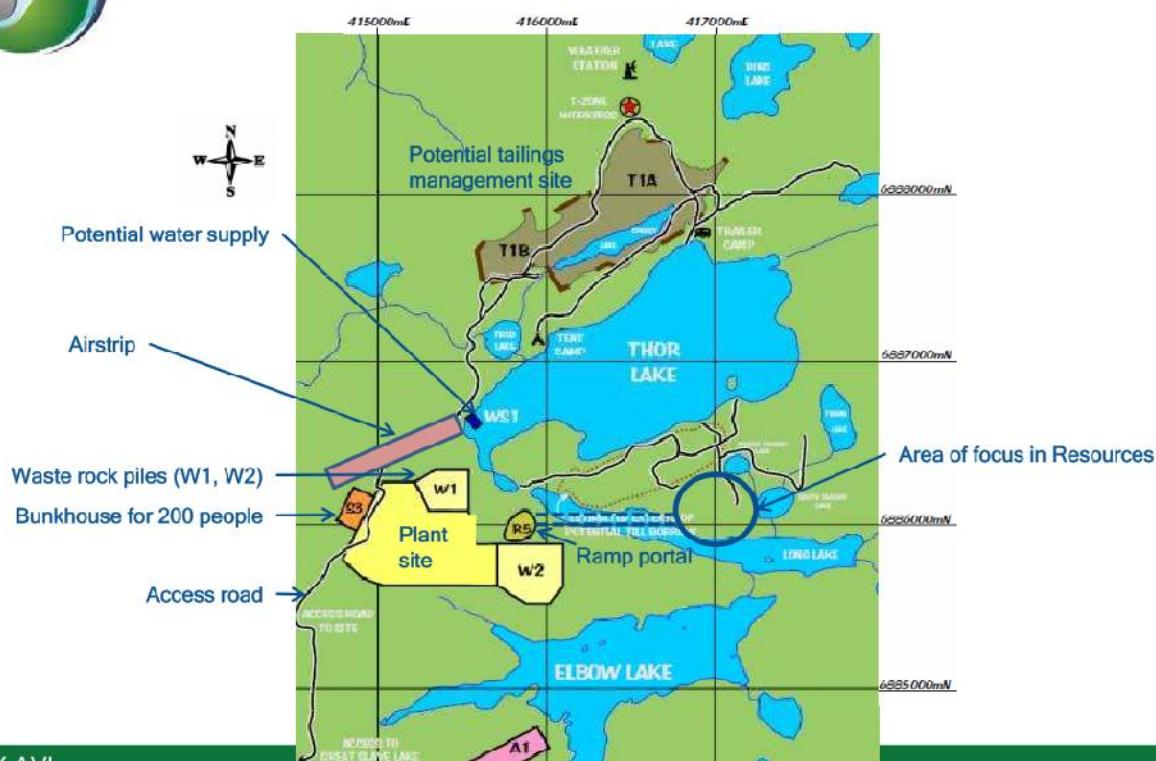
INTRODUCTION:

The Thor Lake Property has six rare earth metal bearing deposits, and the Nechalacho deposit is the largest of them, at about two square kilometers in size. Avalon Rare Metals Inc. wishes to mine, mill and produce a rare earth carbonate and oxides, zirconium, niobium and tantalum oxides from the Nechalacho Deposit on the Thor Lake Property. This proposed development is called the Thor Lake Project.

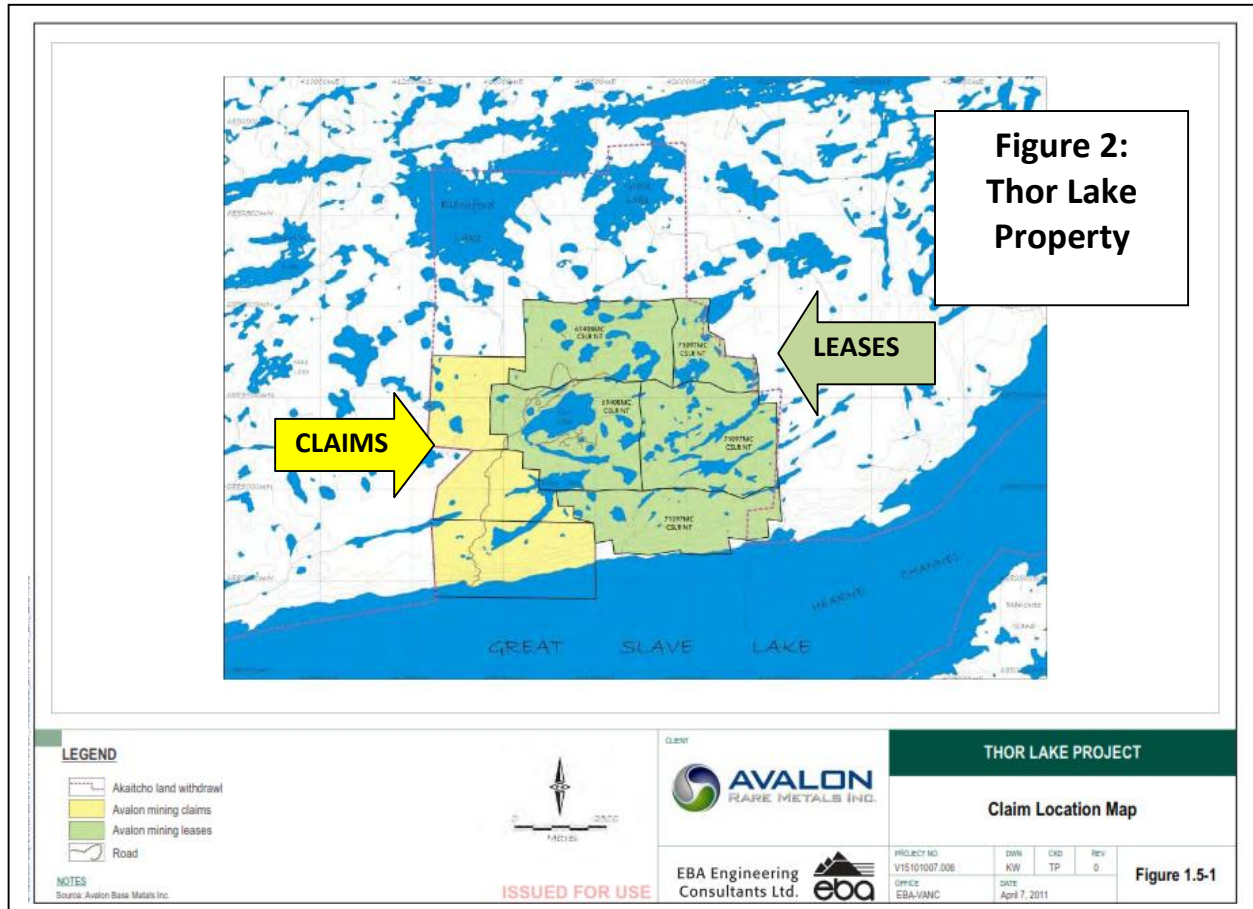
An underground mine and flotation plant is to be located on the Thor Lake Property, while additional processing would occur at a hydrometallurgical plant to be located on the far side of Great Slave Lake, at the former Pine Point Mine site. About 2,000 tons per day would be processed through the mill (flotation plant), for about 18-20 years (although a much longer mine life was frequently hinted at), then taken by barge to the Hydrometallurgical plant for further processing. There is to be an airstrip, access roads, camp facilities, and dock facilities at the Thor Lake Property on the north shore of the east arm of Great Slave Lake.



Figure 1: Nechalacho Deposit and Proposed Mine.



The property consists of five contiguous mineral leases, totalling 4,249 ha (10,449 acres) and three claims totalling 1,869 ha (4,597 acres). The mining leases date back to 1985 and 1987, while the claims were staked in 2009. Avalon owns 100% of the mining leases, subject to two royalty agreements, which came with the property from the original developer, Highwood Resources Ltd., whose interest, from 1976 onward was primarily the beryllium deposit northeast of Thor Lake. Calabras (Canada) Ltd. is entitled to 2%, Lutoda Holding Ltd. to 1%, and J. Daniel Murphy to 2.5% of the Net Smelter Returns.



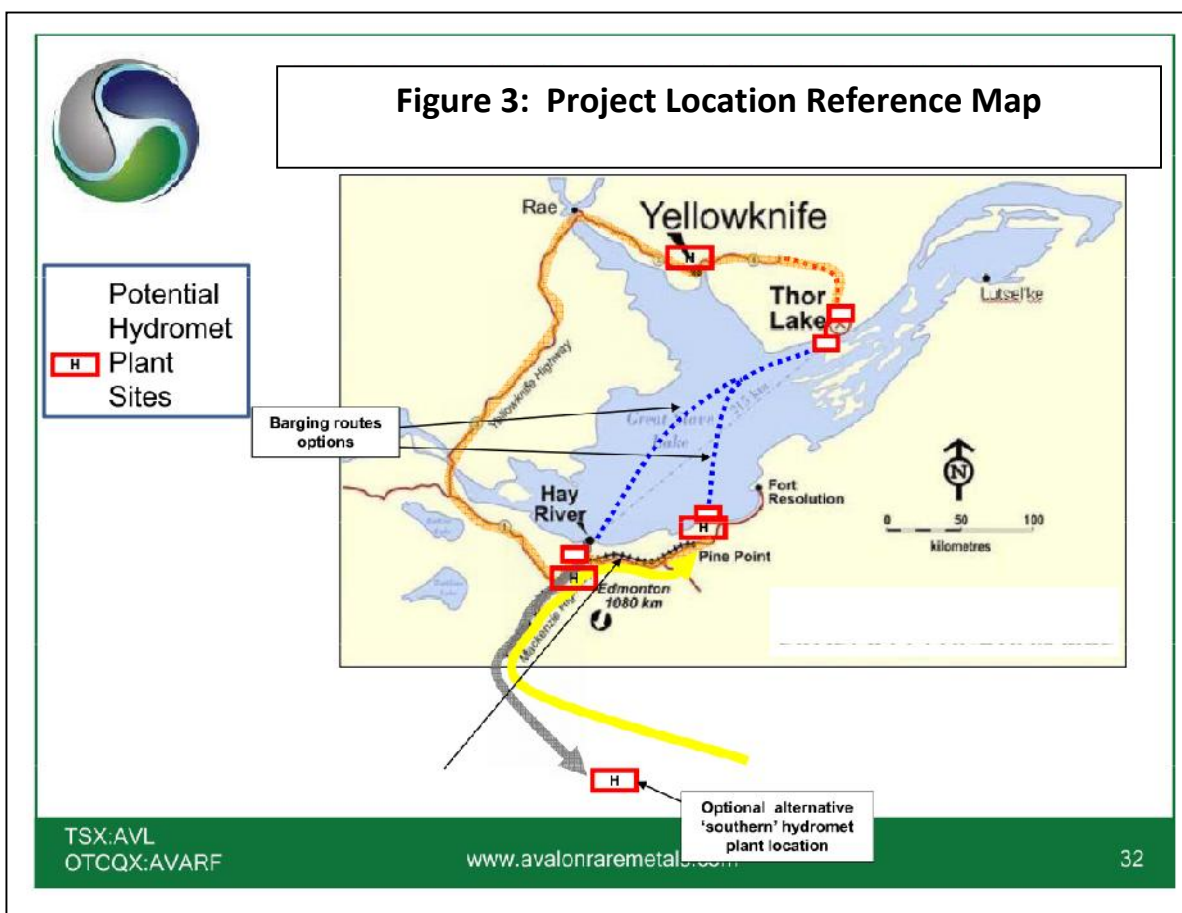
Exploration of the property was conducted by Avalon between 2007 and 2011, and a production water licence and land use permit were applied for, with a detailed Project Description Report, in 2010. As expected the project was referred to environmental assessment. Scoping sessions occurred in 2010, and the final Terms of Reference for the Developers Assessment Report were issued in 2011.

Once the environmental assessment approves the project, all regulatory approvals must implement any recommended terms or conditions of approval.

The mining of beryllium has been specifically scoped out of consideration, as Avalon is not proposing to mine the radioactive mineral known to exist on the property, and has stated that radioactive ore will not be mined. As well, the other five deposits of rare earth metals; the North T Zone, South T Zone, R Zone and Fluorite Zone are also not included as part of this assessed project.

The North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA) participated in the scoping sessions and raised a number of community concerns, including of course land, water, air, fish and wildlife issues, but also socioeconomic and cultural issues such as non-renewable resource depletion and interference with the exercise and enjoyment of NSMA members' Aboriginal Rights. The proposed project is in the North Slave Métis Traditional Territory, and the NSMA is recognised by Avalon as an affected community.

In 2010 Avalon agreed to provide some funding to the NSMA to collect some Traditional Land Use, Occupancy and Knowledge to assist with the environmental assessment, and this report is the result of that effort. The intention is for the NSMA's study to be incorporated into, or appended to the Developer's Assessment Report.



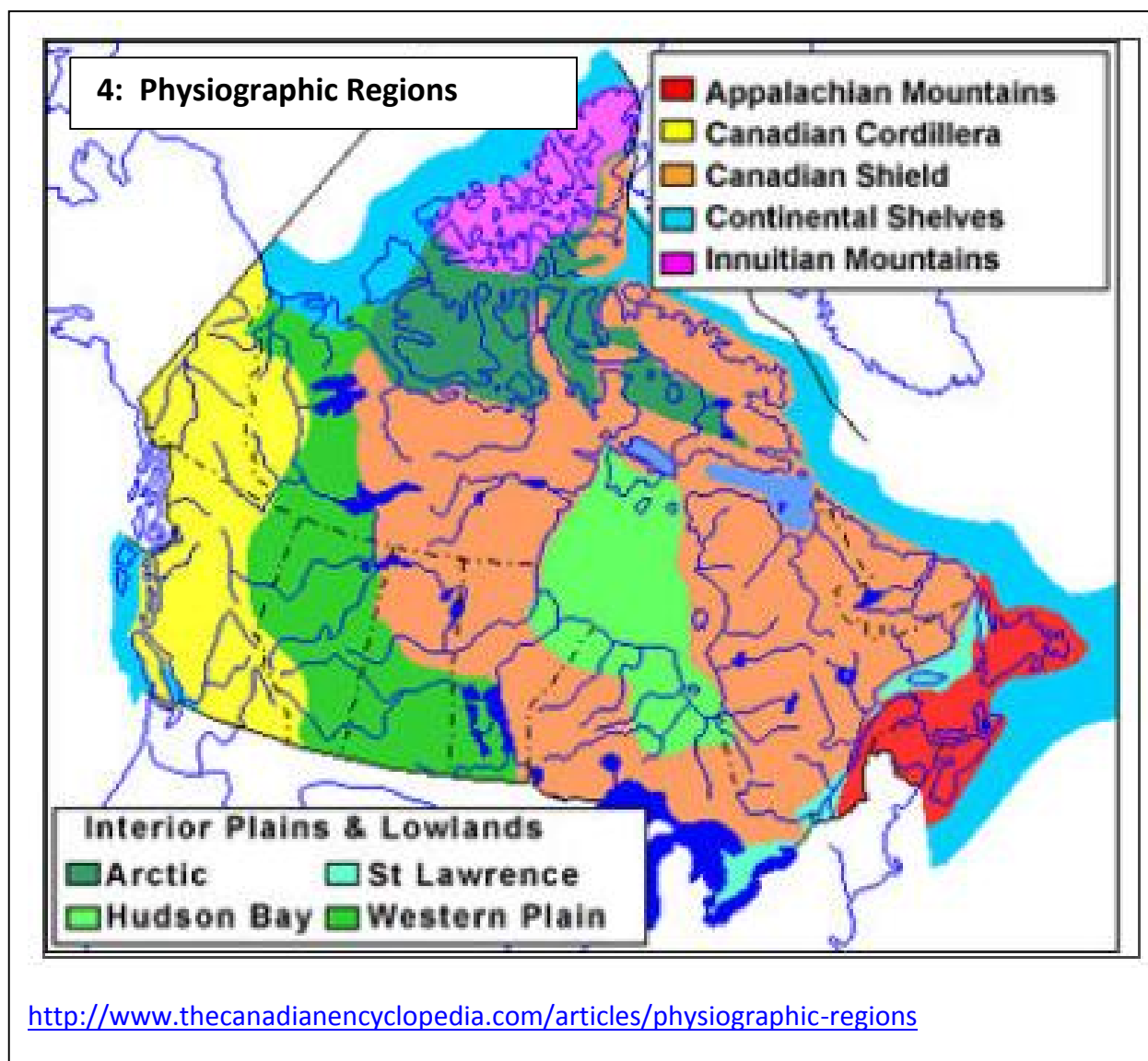
METHODS:

- NSMA and Avalon cooperatively developed a questionnaire guide for the interviews.
- NSMA GIS technician prepares maps to be used during interviews, which showed Avalon's project location in relation to NSMA's existing cultural inventory.
- NSMA environmental assistant arranged 15 interview participants. (please note, participants were not selected based on qualifications but on availability.)
- NSMA researcher interviewed subjects individually and in small groups. The interviews started with a review of the archival information on the maps, the project description. Then the purpose of the interviews and consent forms were explained, and the consent forms filled out.
- Of the 15 interviews scheduled, there were two no-shows, and one interviewee declined to give informed consent. Therefore, 12 interviews completed.
- 24 paper maps, marked on during the interviews, were digitized by NSMA's GIS technician, and thematic maps were produced showing :
 - hunting
 - trapping
 - fishing
 - gathering
 - cultural areas
- NSMA's environmental assistant and environment manager produced a draft written report addressing the themes identified and requested by Avalon:
 - Vegetation, terrain, climate.
 - wildlife
 - fish and water
 - cultural areas
 - community values and concerns
- The Draft Report received an internal review by the NSMA leadership and interviewees. It contains information summarized from the survey forms as well as from the community review meetings, and follow up clarifications, as well as input received during and after previous meetings with Avalon, and the existing cultural inventory GIS.

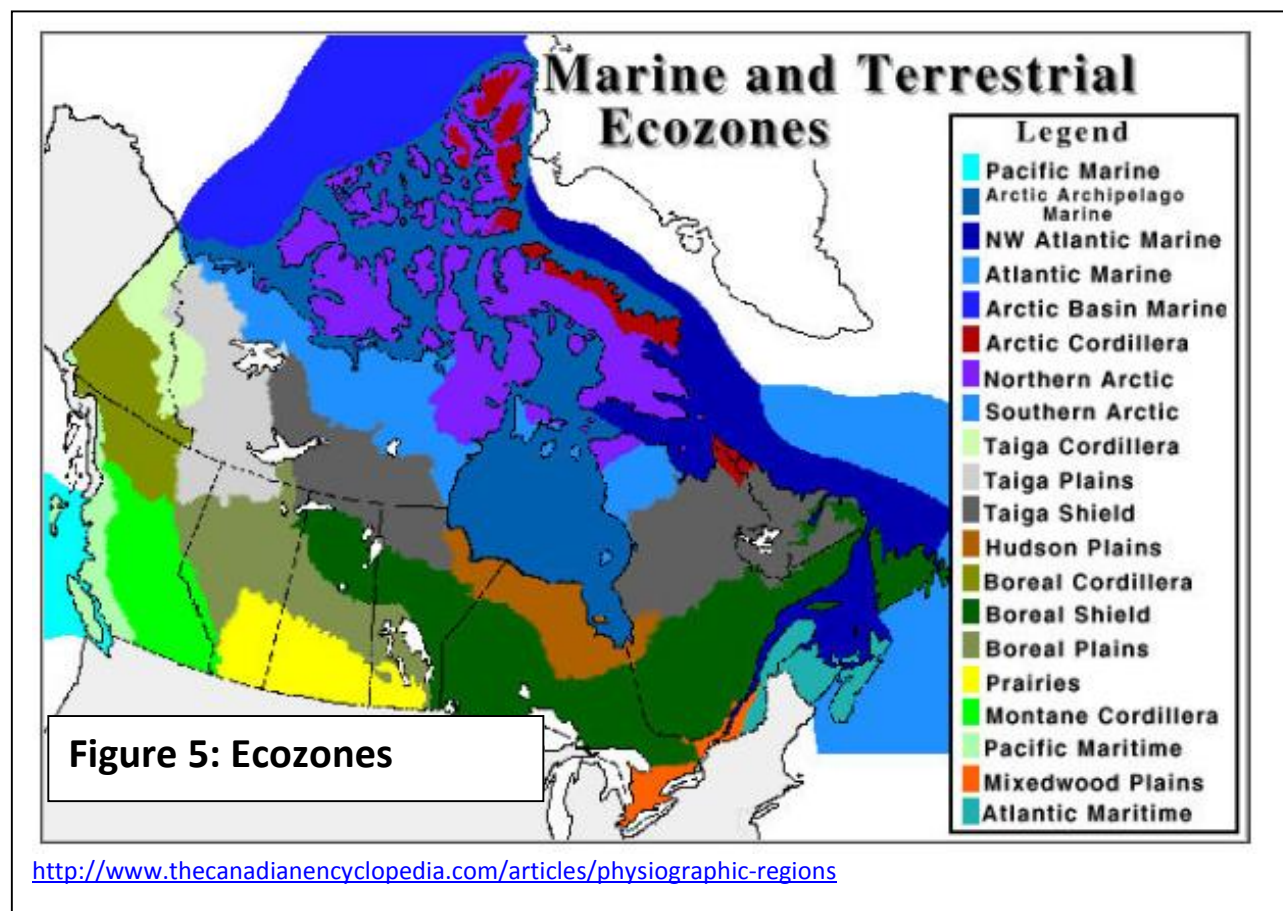
VEGETATION, TERRAIN, CLIMATE:

The Nechalacho Mine, flotation plant, airstrip, access road, laydown area and dock will all be on the north east shore of Great Slave Lake. Partially processed ore will be transported across Great Slave Lake to a hydrometallurgical plant and transportation facilities on the south west shore. Great Slave Lake is the 9th largest lake in the world by surface area and the 10th or 12th largest by volume. It is the deepest lake in North America.

The project will span two physiographic regions; the Canadian Shield and the Western Plains.

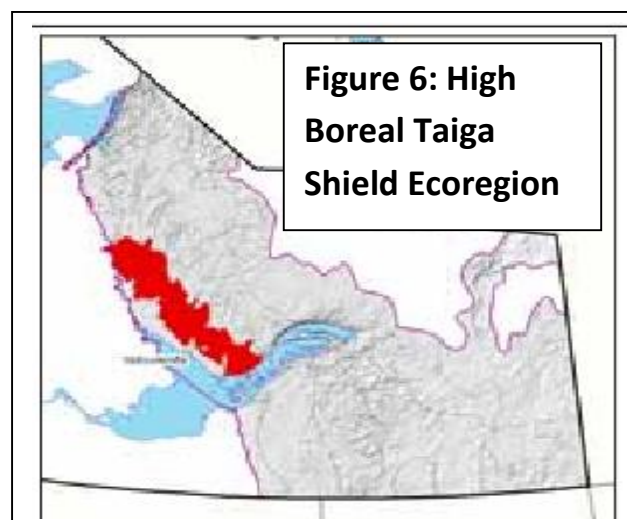


The Thor Lake Project also spans two Ecozones - the Taiga Shield and the Boreal Plains, which are subdivided into ecoregions.



The Nechalacho Mine site is within the High Boreal Taiga Shield ecoregion. This is a transitional area between boreal and tundra ecology. The topography on the north side of Great Slave Lake is a complex mix of hilly terrain, with frequent exposed outcrops of bedrock ridges and knolls as well as many shallow bays and lakes.

The north shore of the northeast arm of Great Slave Lake is extremely rugged and characterized by high cliffs with only a few spots where the steep cliffs open up to provide boat moorage, easy access or beaches with good camping areas.



“Spectacular cliffs drop 180 metres into the tenth largest lake in the world. The scenery is primeval, the result of glaciation in North America and a clearly visible fault in the earth’s crust.” (photo left)



Figure 7: Cliffs

Terry Parker

<http://www.spectacularnwt.com/wheretoeexplore/northernfrontier/eastarm>

The hydrometallurgical plant and transport facilities are located in the Mid Boreal Taiga Plains ecoregion, on the site of the now abandoned Pine Point Mine.

The town that grew around the Pine Point Mine is now gone, but the photo below illustrates the landscape, and the land use ~40 years ago.

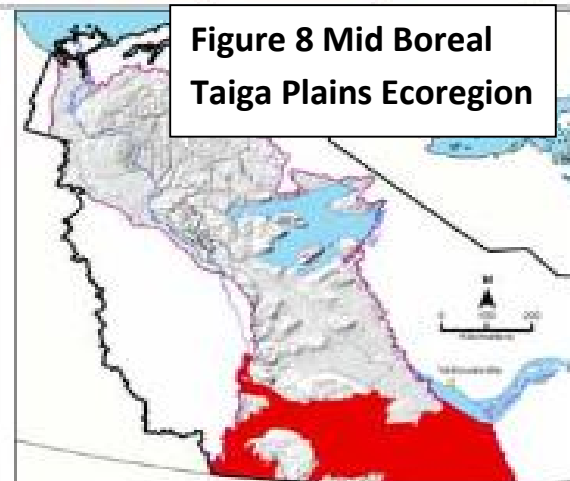


Figure 8 Mid Boreal Taiga Plains Ecoregion

Figure 9 Pine Point area



http://pinepointrevisited.homestead.com/Photos_of_Pine.html

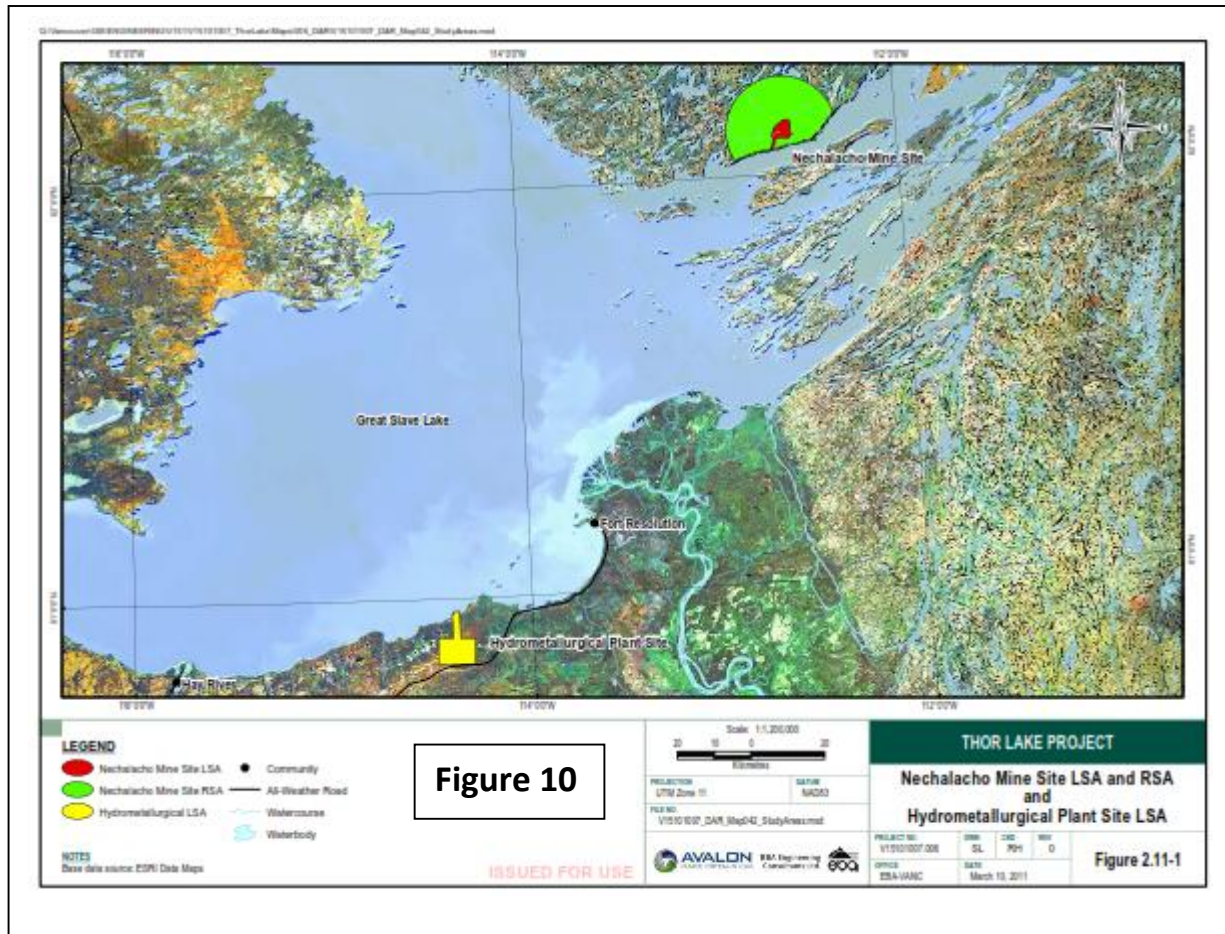


Figure 10

The most common comment received from the members interviewed in this survey with respect to terrain was that the entire Great Slave Lake and the East Arm particularly, were very beautiful and should be left in a natural condition. The “Hole in the Wall” was mentioned as one very important landmark.

In group discussions some members mentioned the rumours about radioactivity around the Thor Lake, but expressed uncertainty about the truth of the rumours, given the contradictory information coming from different sources. The remote possibility of earthquake was also identified, since Great Slave Lake is on several fault lines. Frost heave was identified as a more serious and realistic concern. The freeze and thaw cycle, in combination with moisture, can break rocks, push rocks up in the air, and allow cracks to form. This is a safety issue and a water management issue for underground miners and a constant headache for road builders. Because the climate is changing, and becoming less predictable, it is not known whether frost heave will become worse. The bathymetry of Great Slave Lake was mentioned as being inadequately known, and being a potential hazard to boat traffic if depth sounding equipment is not functioning properly, especially since the water level in the lake has been decreasing over the

years. The area around the islands is considered to be especially treacherous in bad (windy, foggy, poor visibility) weather.

The warming climate is thought to have something to do with the drop in water levels observed for the big lake, especially over the past 10 years, although one member suggested that it had more to do with the dam on Peace River. There are areas at the entrance to the east arm, near the islands between Gros Cap and the mouth of the Talston River where the water does not freeze in winter. These areas will likely become larger, and new areas may develop. This can be a hazard when travelling over ice.

All the survey participants agreed that the climate is getting warmer overall. Most agreed that summers and winters are both getting warmer and wetter, but one member suggested that the winters were getting colder, despite getting shorter and wetter. Members have noticed that they can access the East Arm, by boat, earlier in the spring, and later in the fall. Some also felt the late fall weather was getting better for travelling, which would indicate less wind. This would be good news for the Nechalacho project, as the risk of sinking a barge is significantly reduced when the lake is less windy. However, several members commented that the weather is not consistently warmer and calmer, but rather more variable and less predictable. It is felt that the winters have less snow but more freezing rain, and more wind.

It is difficult to say whether the warming climate will lead to more fires. The climate does affect the frequency of thunderstorms, which cause forest fires. Fire is an important aspect of ecology in this area. Fire occurs naturally and regenerates the forest, and has been used by indigenous peoples (including the Dene and Métis) to manage habitat. NSMA survey participants identified several historic fires in the vicinity of the Nechalacho mine site, but did not give precise locations or dates. More than one survey participant felt that "the bush" is in good condition because it is regularly regenerated by fire.

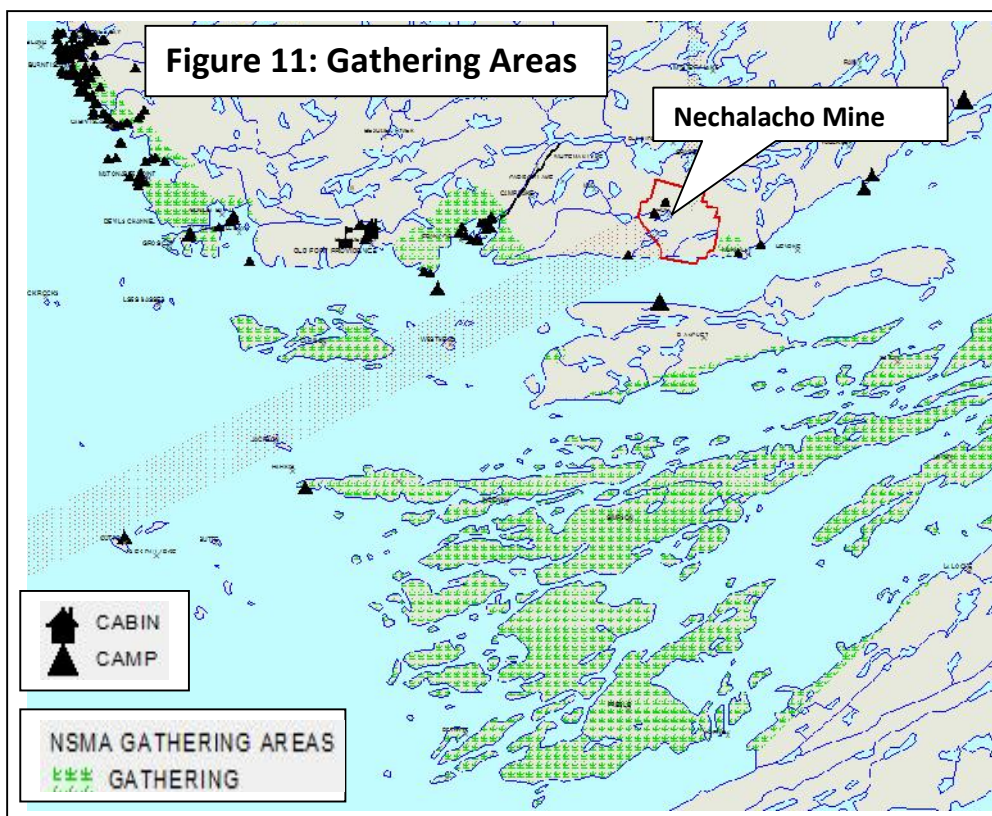
Comments were made about the fire management policies of the Federal, and now Territorial, government's negatively impacting caribou habitat. At first, fires were aggressively suppressed, which led to accumulations of old trees and dead vegetation. Then, fire fighting was discontinued in areas away from communities, which led to larger than natural areas being allowed to burn, and to burn hotter. In large areas of hot burns the caribou moss is not only burnt off, but the thin soil is also scorched so badly that the soil organisms, including insects and bacteria and so on are killed and the moss takes longer to recover.

About half the interviewees attributed the decline in caribou in the area to climate related impacts such as changes in vegetation green-up timing and species proportions, insects, ease of travel and ease of finding food, as well as ease in escaping predators. Episodes of freezing rain appear to be happening more frequently, and the ground gets colder when there is less snow.

Even though forest fires are a major source of air contamination, people generally accept forest fires as natural and regenerative. The dust and emissions from mines, however, are seen as unnatural, harmful and worrisome. Dust from road and airstrip use, blasting, and rock crushing cause discomfort, as physical irritants to eyes, nose and throat, but also emotionally, due to the fear of contamination and feelings of responsibility to respect and protect the land. Several members mentioned that the vegetation around local Yellowknife mine sites is noticeably dry, dusty and unhealthy looking. Most members do not want to harvest berries or medicines anywhere downstream or downwind of a mine, and want good baseline soil and vegetation measurements in advance of any mining activity, including exploration. They also do not think the animals like to eat plants that have been exposed to dust or emissions.

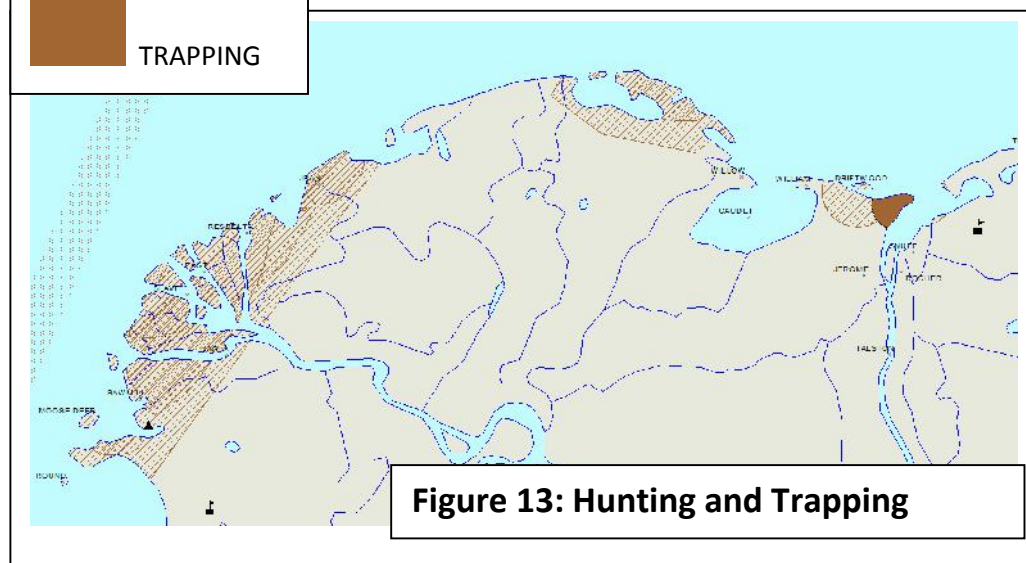
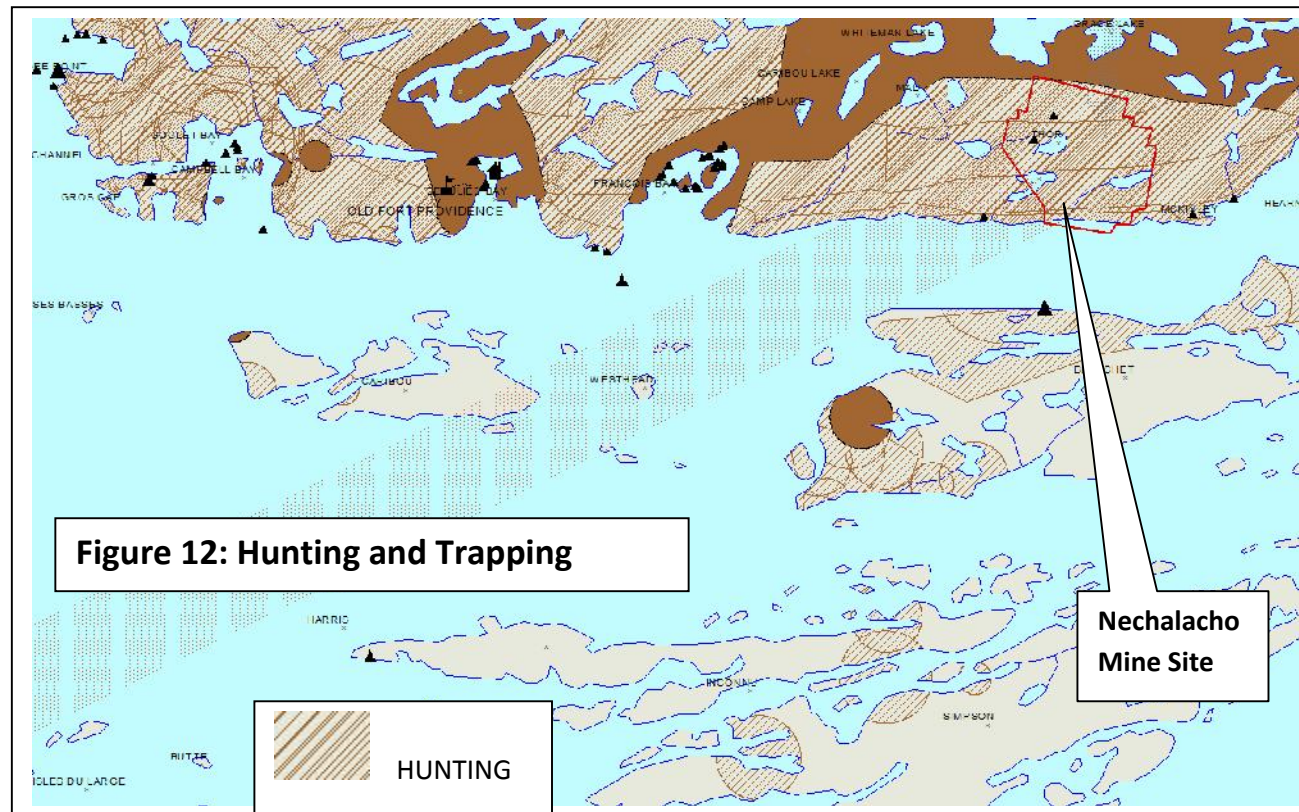
Despite the availability of affordable modern substitutes, people still value the traditional use of plants for cultural reasons, and wish to see them continue to exist in their natural health and abundance. Berries are gathered when they are in season, spring summer and fall, mostly on islands, to avoid the worst of the bugs. Some berries can be harvested in the winter, and may even taste better after they have been frozen. Cranberry, raspberry and gooseberries are all often used in jams and sauces. Spruce gum and rat root are still used regularly as medicines. Firewood and lumber/construction logs are of obvious and ongoing importance. Some plants were used more in the past. Kinnickinick was traditionally used as a tea, and as a tobacco extender. Moss was used for diapers, wound dressings and padding, also sometimes for chinking in log

cabins. Some types of lichen were eaten in soups or stews or used to make tea. Spruce roots and birch bark were used to make baskets and fish nets, and canoes, when hides and sinew were in short supply. Willow and alder were used for snowshoes and snares.



WILDLIFE:

The entire north side of Great Slave Lake, including the Nechalacho Mine site was identified by NSMA members as their hunting area, as well as some areas on the islands and south shore. Several trapping areas were also identified on the north shore, south shore and islands.



Quite often, when people call an area “beautiful”, they are referring to the area being rich and productive. The location of good wildlife habitat can be inferred from such comments, as well as from the harvesting information.

Areas that were specifically mentioned as being particularly good habitat for large game, small game and water fowl included Goulet Bay, Drybones Bay, and Matonnabbe Bay. Blanchet Island, Goulet Bay and Francois Bay were mentioned as particularly good moose habitat in summer and fall. There are notable populations of Eagles on some of the islands, especially near bays full of waterfowl and fish, such as Francois Bay, Beaulieu Bay and Goulet Bay.

One member expressed concern for pollinating insects, and suggested there should be a study about the bees.

Trapping was mentioned as being good on the north shore up the Beaulieu River and Blachford Lake, as well as around Rocher River and Ft. Resolution on the south shore.

Invasive species, such as magpies, cougars, deer, and grizzly bears, are becoming more and more common, and moose are rutting later in the year.

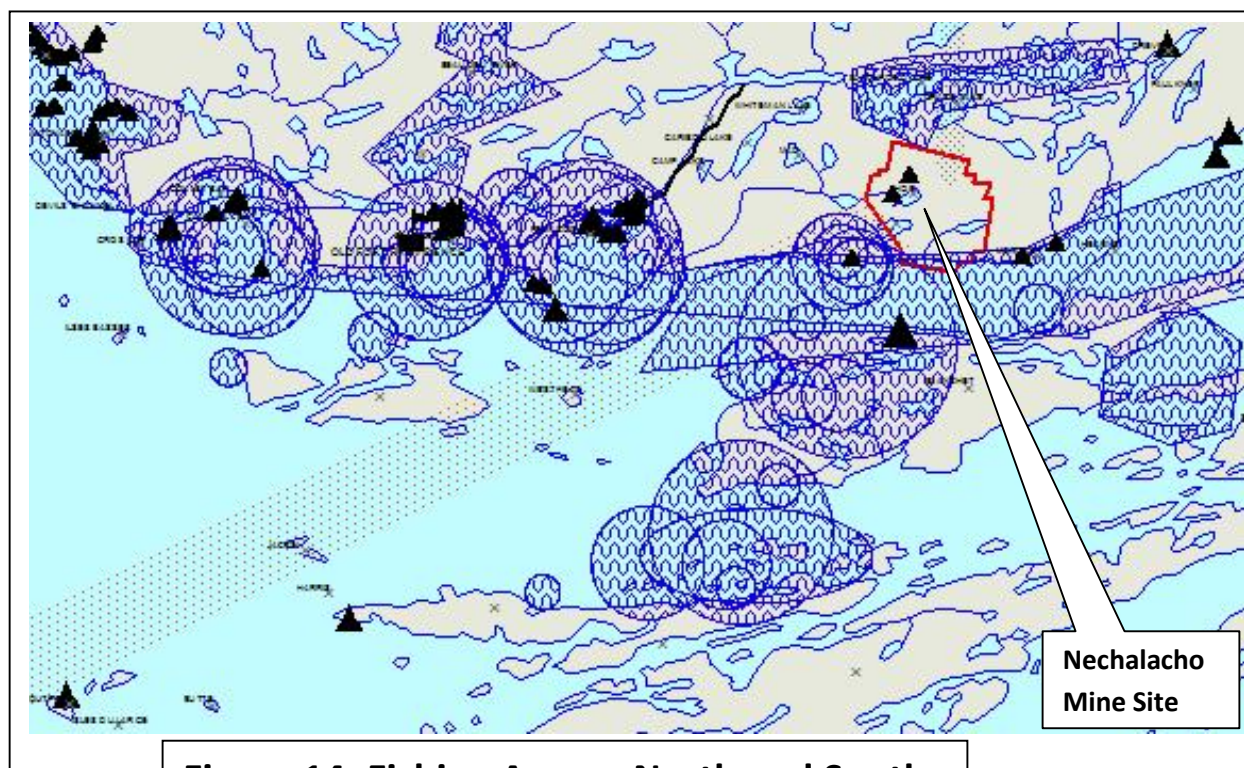
As mentioned earlier, about half the interviewees attributed the recent severe decline in caribou numbers to climate related impacts. It was also noted that caribou are staying farther north in the winter. Others blamed mineral exploration and development for the caribou decline, and pointed out we do not really know what caribou can smell, or how sensitive their feet are to injury. Elders often mention problems with caribou feet and legs, and suggest it has something to do with blasted rock and sometimes tailings ponds. We also don't know whether mine waste is an attractant or repellant.

Most members agreed that some combination of factors, including climate change, industrial activity, and predation has affected caribou numbers, but it was also suggested that the caribou have not died off to the extent government biologists suspect. It is also very likely that they have changed their migration pattern and calving grounds, as they are known to do periodically. Even the Government and its independent management program reviewer admitted that there are not enough satellite collars on the caribou to tell, really, where most of them are.

This raises the issue of how Avalon will be able to detect and measure any effects it has on caribou health and distribution? For that matter, how will the project differentiate climate related impacts from mine related impacts on all wildlife, and how will cumulative effects on wildlife be addressed? More comments and concerns about cumulative effects on wildlife are mentioned in the section below on **Community Values and Concerns**.

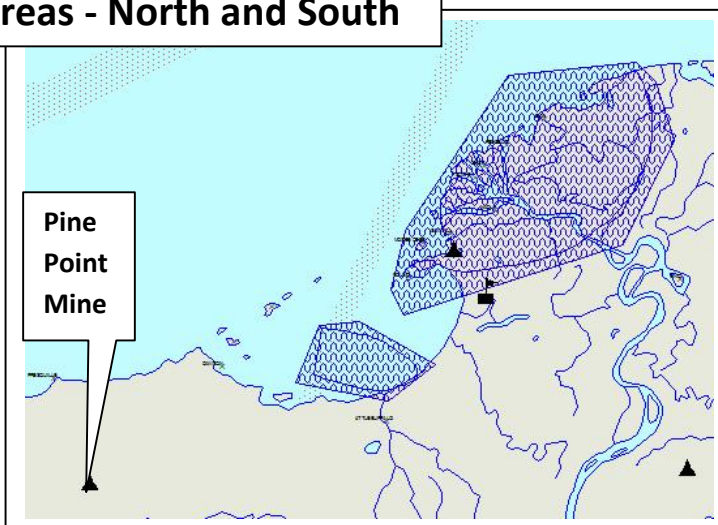
FISH AND WATER:

The extremely high value of Great Slave Lake as a pristine and beautiful water body is repeated frequently. Members describe their spiritual connection to "the Big Lake" and its extremely high aesthetic value. They also note the importance of fishing to their diet, to their cultural traditions, and to their heritage values. Few comments on habitat, per se, were provided, although good fish habitat and healthy fish can be inferred from "good fishing area" comments.



"Great Slave is very important, culturally, and should remain so – beautiful and pristine"

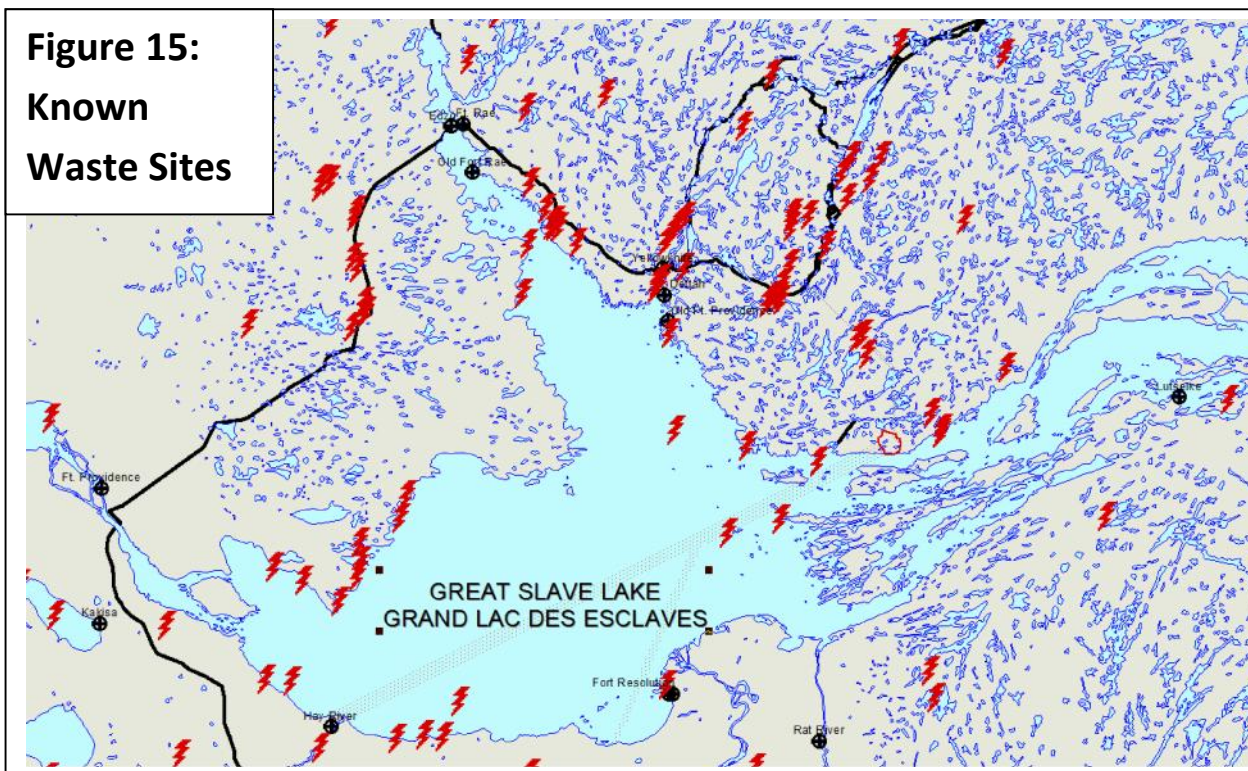
"The entire East Arm is world class fishing."



The most frequently mentioned fish species are whitefish, trout and jackfish. There is one location, known as inconnu channel, in between some of the Simpson group of islands where inconnu, a fish named by Métis voyageurs, are mentioned as always being easy to catch.

Many members are concerned about the water level going down in Great Slave Lake And question Government data which does not confirm this observation. As well, there is concern that the natural beauty and health of the lake could be impacted. There are already a large number of abandoned mine sites on islands in the lake and along the shore (Giant Mine, Con Mine, Pine Point, and about 30 others), and more proposed (Avalon Thor Lake, Gahcho Kue, Fortune Nico, and Tyhee Yellowknife Gold). The members specifically do NOT agree with the “remediation” standards set by government. They expect restoration, as is required in the legislation that allows the issuance of land use permits. In particular, the remediation of the Giant Mine Site to an industrial standard, and the perpetual storage of hazardous waste underground just a few meters away from Great Slave Lake is seen as outrageous, and causes significant concern and mistrust of Government commitment to “sustainable development”.

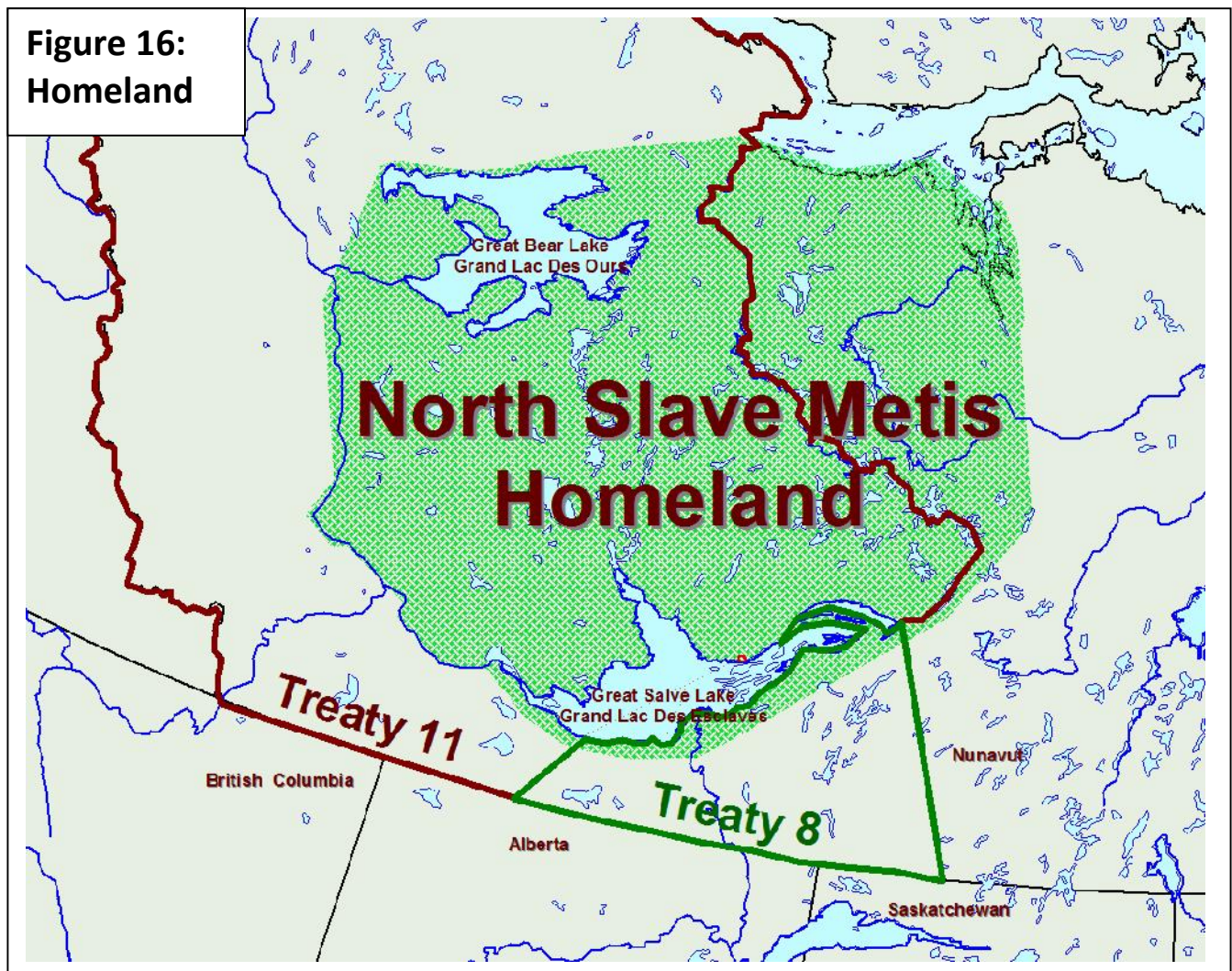
Specifically related to the Thor Lake Project, members have expressed concern about the radioactive deposit, and core, at Thor Lake as well as the permeability of the ground in the area around Pine Point. The danger of ground water contamination and surface or subsurface flow to the Big Lake, as well as the risk of contamination from sunken barges and waste lost (or thrown) overboard, or deposited on winter roads, docks, and landing areas was mentioned consistently.



CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT AREAS:

The proposed Nechalacho mine, flotation plant, airstrip, mine access roads, dock facilities and hydrometallurgical plant all lie within the traditional homeland of the North Slave Métis. This territory includes all the area surrounding and between Great Bear and Great Slave Lakes, and the Mackenzie River and the Coppermine River, and overlaps the Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 areas, including portions of Nunavut.

The Nechalacho mine site, airstrip, access road, docks, and barge transportation route options are all within the Treaty 11 area (signed in 1921), which includes the south shore of Great Slave Lake and northwards. The Hydrometallurgical plant is within the Treaty 8 area (signed in 1900), which extends from the south shore of Great Slave Lake southwards.



Obviously, the **entire area of our traditional territory**, where we possess Aboriginal Rights, including Aboriginal Title, and the Inherent Right of Self-Determination, which are protected under section 35 of Canada's Constitution, is a very significant cultural area. This is where our People experienced ethnogenesis, and where we will always be "at home". No matter how far we wander, or for how long, our roots, our families, our community and the bones of our ancestors are here.

There are two other Aboriginal groups with traditional territory that overlaps ours in the area of the Thor Lake Project. The Yellowknives Dene, represented by the Akaitcho Tribal Council, and the South Slave Métis, represented by the Northwest Territory Métis Nation. Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories are negotiating with both of these groups to clarify their Aboriginal Rights and Responsibilities, while the NSMA continues to wait for Canada to complete a "strength of claims analysis" and accept our claim for negotiation.

Great Slave Lake, as a whole, is a "significant cultural site" for many reasons. NSMA members who participated in this survey unanimously valued the whole lake for its beauty (**aesthetic values**) pristine naturalness (**ecological integrity**), productivity, size (**uniqueness**) and **spirituality**. The productivity of the lake, and its ability to sustain communities, is very closely tied to spirituality. One member referred to Great Slave Lake as "a very important entity in my life". Another member claimed that "the whole Big Beautiful Lake is a spiritual place" that is "culturally important" and "inspires humility". Another member stated that "Great Slave Lake in general is spiritual to our culture". The pristine nature of the "Big Lake" is due in part to its size, and the fact that there are no heavy industries or large cities discharging into it (although some mentioned the Tar Sands as possible threat). Several members commented that developments should be strictly prohibited from impacting any part of this lake in any way, and that full restoration, back to the way it was before the development, should be required. Any "development" that could not achieve full restoration at closure should not be allowed.

The **East Arm of Great Slave Lake** was singled out by several members as being extra **beautiful** and **spiritual**, and full of giant sized **fish**. It is also very rich in **wildlife**, and of "great importance, **traditionally**, for sustenance". People still "hunt and fish all over the east arm".

Drybones Bay was singled out by several interviewees as an especially **spiritual** place, containing graves, campsites, and significant heritage value. **Drybones Bay, Matonnabbe Point, "Hole in the Wall", Campbell Bay, Goulet Bay, Devil's Channel, Francois Bay, Shelter Bay and Inconnu Channel were mentioned as special places, and important landmarks.**

The **whole lake, the East Arm, and Hearne Channel** were mentioned unanimously as having **very high value for fishing**, "World Class", in fact. Species mentioned most often were whitefish, trout and jackfish. One member insisted that "**Great Slave Lake and all the rivers running into it** need to be protected", and another said "**the whole area all around the lake is**

special and important, and needs to be kept that way forever". Members interviewed specifically noted some of their most favorite spots to fish including:

- i) Drybones Bay to Gros Cap, and all the bays and rivers in between.
- ii) The area around Gros Cap, including Goulet Bay.
- iii) Beaulieu Bay and Beaulieu River
- iv) Francois Bay
- v) McKinley Point
- vi) Blanchet Island
- vii) North of Simpson Islands, to Blanchet Island.
- viii) North of Seaton Island.
- ix) Simpson Islands

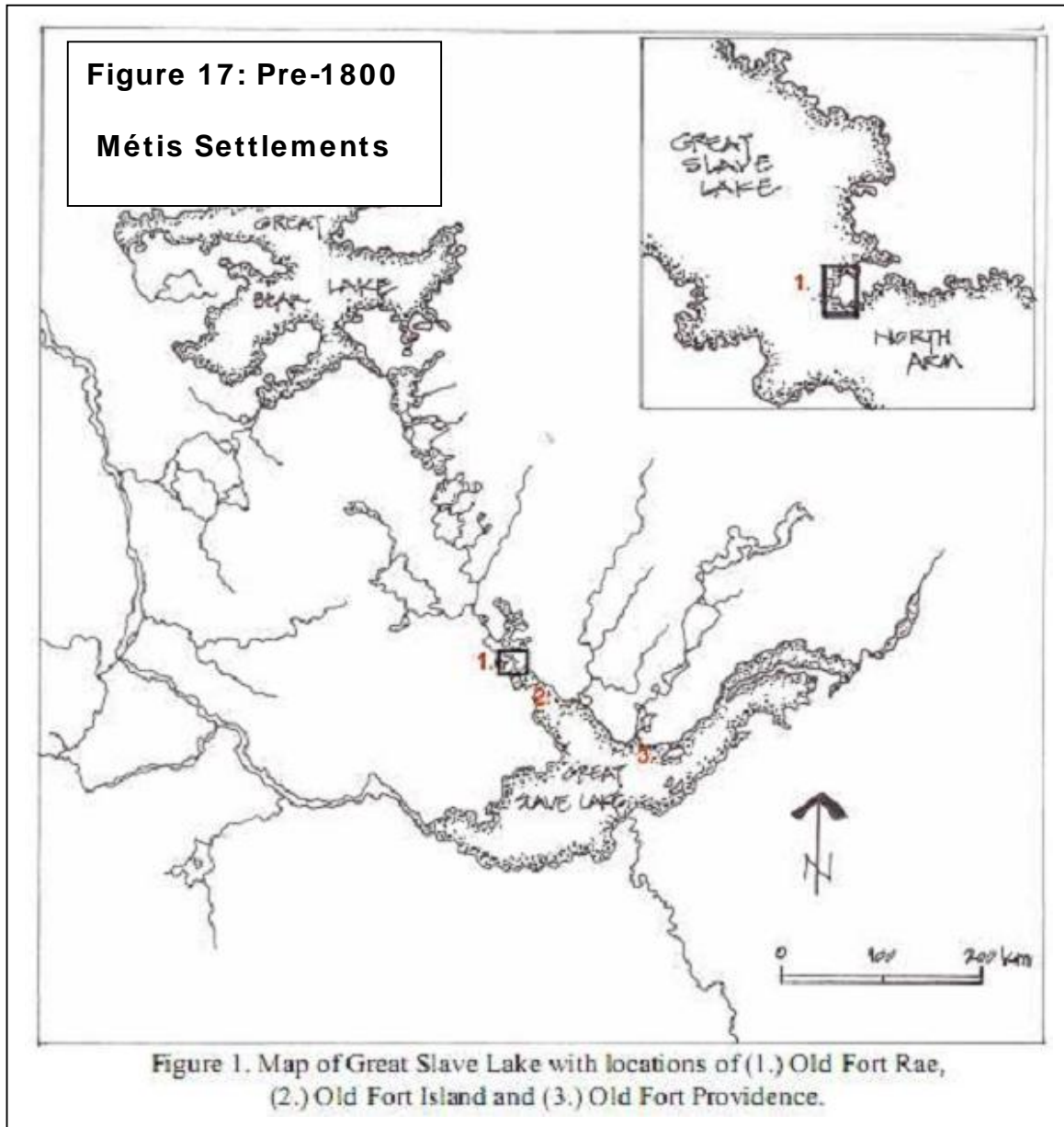
Goulet Bay, Drybones Bay and Matonnabbe Point Bay are important areas for **hunting large and small game**, including **waterfowl**. **Blanchet Island, Goulet Bay, and Francois Bay** were mentioned by several members as important summer and fall camp sites for **moose hunting, fishing and berry picking**. **Caribou** are hunted almost everywhere, in the winter, but especially during the spring migration, along the **edges of the east arm, in Beaulieu, Francois, Goulet, and Drybones Bay, and up Beaulieu River to Gordon and Mackay Lakes**. **Black bears** are hunted on **Blanchet Island, Simpson Island, and in the bays** where the berries and waterfowl also are. **Waterfowl** are hunted in the shallow waters in the bays during the spring and fall, mostly.

Trapping is done opportunistically in most bays and up rivers, but more regularly on **Beaulieu River and Blachford Lake, and on Blanchet Island**. Species trapped include **wolf, wolverine, muskrat, rabbit, grouse, lynx and black bear**. Gathering **firewood** occurs in all locations, as that is the way to keep warm, deter flies, and to make tea and cook food. It is also used to smoke fish, hides, and dry meat, although some do prefer drying in the wind and sun without smoke.

As mentioned in the section above, accessible camping areas, and access to travel routes northwards are scarce, and therefore, highly valued. These locations also contain artefacts of prehistoric and historic occupation by our ancestors and have **high heritage values** as well. **Beaulieu River** is culturally significant because it is named after François Beaulieu II, and has a high heritage value to the Métis as a traditional route used by one of their most famous ancestors since the early 1700's. Many other sites contained in NSMA's cultural inventory were reviewed and endorsed (or not contradicted) by interview participants, including:

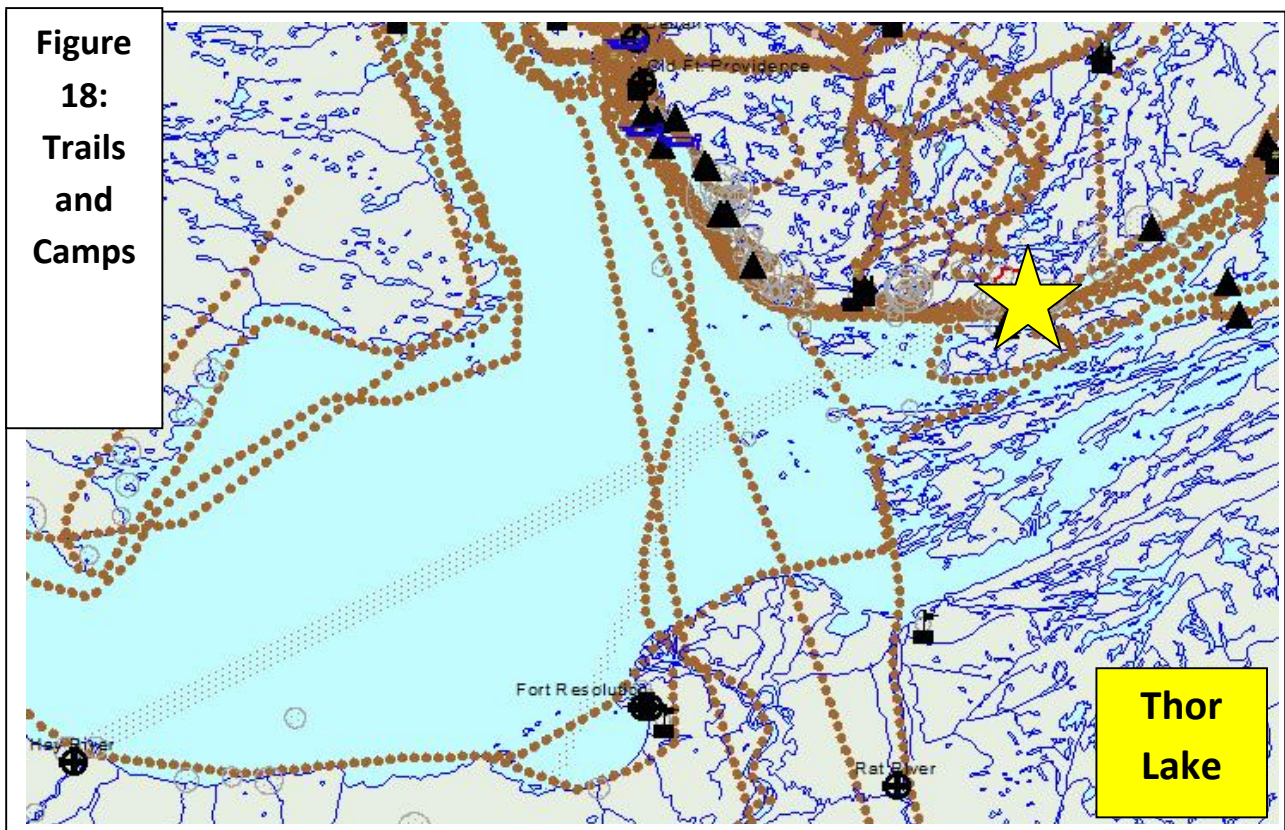
- i) camp near landmark McKinley Point (KaPb-5)
- ii) camp close to the location where Avalon plans to build a dock (KaPb-4)
- iii) camp on north shore of Blanchet Island.
- iv) Francois Bay is a culturally significant landmark, named after Francois Beaulieu II, also known as La Patriarch, and the most renowned of the founding fathers of the Northwest Métis. It is also valued for berry picking, gravesites, caribou hunting, moose hunting, fishing, trapping, and other cultural activities.

- v) camps on west mouth of Francois Bay (KaPd-6 and 7)
- vi) cabin and camps with graves and archaeological sites (KaPd-1, 2, 3, 4, 5) all around Beaulieu Bay, previously a fur trade settlement known by some as Old Fort Providence (see archaeological report 2000-902¹), and by some as Beaulieu Fort. Very important historic site where several local Métis men were hired by Laurent Leroux to build a Fort for the Northwest Company in 1786. Used frequently for hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping, and as a trail head to go caribou hunting inland.



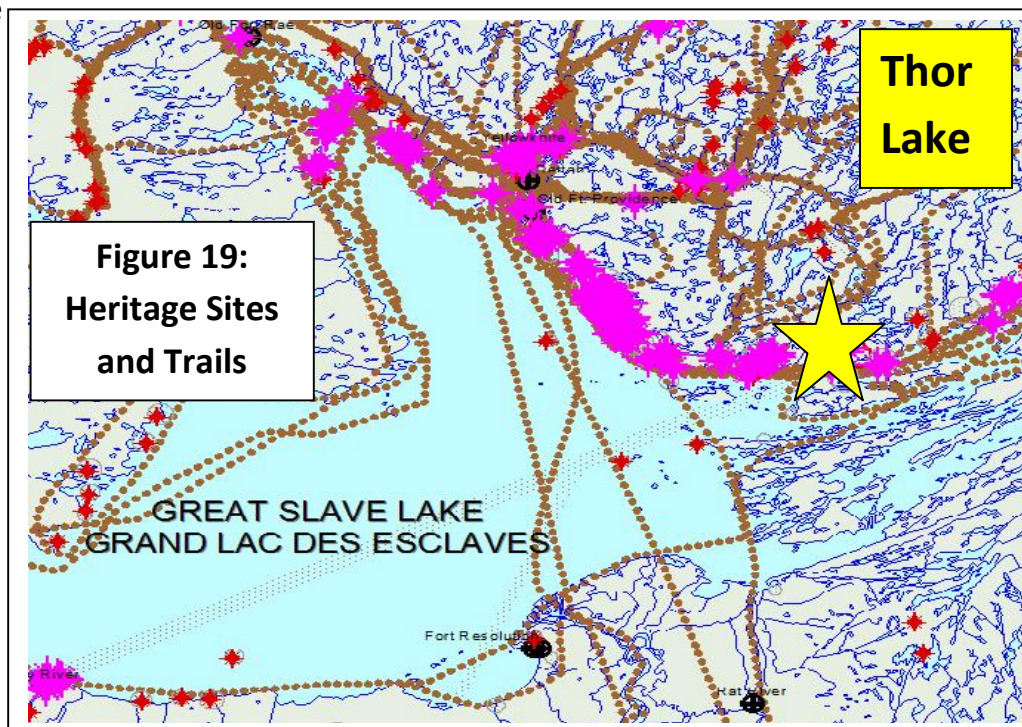
¹ Frank Russell (1898:69) in Stevenson, Marc. 2000. Old Fort Rae's "Old Fort", NWT Archaeological Report 2000-902, illustrated in figure 1.

- camps, cabins, cemetery, and old commercial fish plant at Campbell Bay, Devil's Channel, Goulet Bay, and Gros Cap. (JiPi-1, KaPe-1, 13,14,15, 16) are still used for all types of harvesting.
- vii) camps, cabins, ovens, quarry near Matonnabbe point, historic value, and current use for all types of harvesting. (KaPf-73, 79, 80, 81, KaPe-2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11)
 - viii) trail from North Arm to East arm passing by Yellowknife has heritage and cultural value (many stories), as well as still frequently used. This trail continues to Hudson's Bay and has high heritage value as the "old indian overland route" that was used before the Cree obtained firearms from the English on Hudson's Bay in 1690 or thereabouts.
 - ix) trail from Beaulieu Bay north to Gordon Lake, McKay Lake, Lac De Gras, Contwoyto Lake, Bathurst Inlet has huge heritage value to Canada and the Métis for its role in the exploration and development of Northern Canada, including guiding and provisioning Samuel Hearne 1772, Sir George Franklin in 1785, and building the original Lupin winter road. Still used for heritage and tourism dog team expeditions and canoe trips, as well as harvesting.
 - x) trail across the East Arm from Beaulieu Fort to Slave Fort, to Fort Reliance, passing across the Simpson Islands has heritage value, and is still used in summer and winter for travel, and for harvesting.



A number of old exploration and mining sites have **heritage** value to the Métis due in part to their role in prospecting, staking, diamond drilling and other involvement, but also, at the same time, the sites are also significant to the Métis because they avoid camping or harvesting nearby, or downstream due to concerns about **contamination**. One member recommended that water tests should be done as a baseline around both pristine and previously impacted areas in an attempt to delineate the areas that were safe and unsafe to use, and to reduce **community concerns**. The abandoned sites include:

- 1) Sunken barges around Simpson Islands
- 2) Old winter Road between Fort Smith and Yellowknife.
- 3) Winter road to Snowdrift (also known as Beaulieu Fort and Lutselke)
- 4) Thor Lake, Strathcona Camp.
- 5) Aurous Gold Mine
- 6) Phillmore Mine,
- 7) Outpost Island
- 8) De Steffany Mine
- 9) Terra Mine
- 10) Bullmoose Mine.
- 11) Moose Mine.
- 12) Best Bet Mine.
- 13) Norma Mine.
- 14) Vol Mine
- 15) Pine Point
- 16) Rod Mine



COMMUNITY VALUES AND CONCERNS:

Aboriginal Rights and Heritage

The North Slave Métis Alliance's mandate is to assert, defend and implement the Aboriginal Rights of its members. Our Rights are protected by the Constitution of Canada, and recognised in international law. We expect to be treated respectfully and equitably.

With the above in mind, we expect to be treated fairly by resource developers, especially those who propose to remove non-renewable resources from our homeland. We expect accommodation of our communal land and resource property rights, and our Aboriginal Right of Self Determination, including the right to meaningful participation in the management our own lands and resources.

One aspect of our Right of Self Determination is our right to maintain, protect, and control our own heritage and cultural resources. We do not expect others to conduct heritage impact assessments on our behalf, and specifically note that an archaeological investigation is only one part of a heritage resource assessment. We must be involved in pre-field and hands-on in-field research as well as a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the final report. Our culture, traditions, language, and history deserve commensurate treatment to other First Nations. We are very concerned that archaeologists who are not intimately familiar with our history and culture will miss or misattribute sites of importance to us. We are very concerned that the increasing traffic in the East Arm will lead to damage or destruction of sites of high heritage value to us.

The NSMA fully expects the Crown to require any and all companies applying to carry out projects on our traditional lands to perform human rights due diligence by conducting a formal Human Rights Impact Assessment, with specific attention to Indigenous Human Rights, as part of their environmental assessment. This expectation is based on the "Protect, Respect, Remedy" framework released by the U.N. Special Representative on Business and Human Rights, Professor John Ruggie, in 2008, and the operational guidance provided in the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, released in 2011. As a result, the World Bank's International Finance Committee has recently published (January 2012) Performance Standards and Guidance Notes on its Sustainability Framework. Performance Standard 7 relates specifically to Indigenous Peoples and states²:

"Indigenous Peoples, as social groups with identities that are distinct from mainstream groups in national societies, are often

² http://www1.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/Topics_Ext_Content/IFC_External_Corporate_Site/IFC+Sustainability/Sustainability+Framework/Sustainability+Framework+-+2012/Performance+Standards+and+Guidance+Notes+2012/

among the most marginalized and vulnerable segments of the population. In many cases, their economic, social, and legal status limits their capacity to defend their rights to, and interests in, lands and natural and cultural resources, and may restrict their ability to participate in and benefit from development.”

Not only are Aboriginal Peoples entitled to consideration of their Universal Human Rights, but they have additional rights specifically based on their aboriginality. Human rights experts recognise that an enhanced impact assessment process is required when aboriginal Peoples are involved. The process must specifically consider the human rights impacts of business that affect indigenous peoples differentially due to their unique circumstances, as well as business impacts on rights that are applicable only to indigenous peoples.^{3, 4, 5, 6}

In addition, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada have published the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, which has one chapter (9) devoted to research involving the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples of Canada. According to Article 9.1, in all research that seeks input regarding a community’s cultural heritage, artefacts, traditional knowledge, or unique characteristics, researchers must seek engagement with the affected community, and that engagement must be appropriate to the community and the research, and determined jointly by the researcher and the relevant community. This applies to wildlife research, archaeological research and other research.⁷

Aesthetics, Culture and Spirituality

Our members have very strong feelings about our land, and our wildlife. Our attachment to our land is spiritual, and is an essential component of our culture. We will not survive, as a culture, if our connection to our land and our heritage is broken. Upon closure of any project, we expect the land to be returned to the condition it was originally in: healthy and beautiful. Over and over again members reiterated that the whole area all around Great Slave Lake is special and important, and needs to be kept that way forever.

“We owe it to our grandchildren”.

“Leave the land as natural as it was before they started”.

³ http://oncommonground.ca/?page_id=1485 and <http://www.right2respect.com/>

⁴ <http://www.right2respect.com/2011/08/human-rights-due-diligence-and-indigenous-peoples-what-is-required/>

⁵ http://www.humanrightsimpact.org/resource-database/toolsets/resources/view/75/user_hria_toolsets/

⁶ <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter9-chapitre9/>

⁷ <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter9-chapitre9/>

“Monitor to ensure there is little or no harm done to the environment”.

*“What they bring in they must take out when they are done
and leave no garbage behind”.*

They want the whole area reclaimed to its original quality by removing all contaminants and monitoring all animal species around the site until the land is returned to the way it was before the mine. That means there must be good baseline information before the project makes any changes. Any deviations to this standard must only occur with free, prior and informed consent.

In order to assist in making project jobs attractive to our members, developers should involve us in deciding on the aesthetic aspects of the project, including food, accommodations, lighting, noise, location and design of mine components, work schedules, and so on, so that employment on the project can be as attractive and culturally appropriate as possible.

Volume is not the only characteristic of sound that is important. The rhythm and tone are also very important. Some very quiet noises can be very irritating, while some very loud sounds can be calming or inspiring. Many people actually feel ill if they are exposed to unnatural light for extended periods, and some are sensitive to the rapid pulsing of fluorescent light bulbs and computer screens. Working underground is not an option for many for aesthetic reasons, and for some also for spiritual reasons.

Aboriginal people in general prefer much less salt and a lot more fat in their diet than non-aboriginal peoples, but not factory-farmed fat with accumulations of antibiotics, hormones, saline solutions, food coloring and other unnatural ingredients. North Slave Métis, like other aboriginal peoples, have an exceptionally strong preference for fresh food, and particularly for fresh wild meat. The Canada Food Guide recommendation for protein serving size is widely considered to be ridiculously small.

Gathering, Fishing and Hunting

Some of the species we share our land with are under great stress. Caribou and fish numbers are way too low. Additional pressure is now being put on moose and bison instead. Invasive species are competing with, and possibly infecting our wildlife and fish with new diseases. More and more habitat is being taken up with developments and settlements and contaminated or remediated sites. More and more people, with more and more money and leisure time, are camping on our campsites, and harvesting our fish, plants and wildlife.

The North Slave Métis wish to recover the knowledge that has been lost during the residential school era and then preserve our traditional knowledge and skills. We wish to continue practicing our traditional culture on our traditional territory. Maintaining bountiful and healthy fish and wildlife populations is essential to our survival, culturally and physically. Healthy and bountiful populations depend in turn on habitat protection.

We must participate in a land use planning process as part of the development assessment. We need better enforcement of fish, wildlife and environmental protection legislation, and we need protection from unfair and excessive competition. The area of the Nechalacho mine used to be part of the Yellowknife Game Preserve, which provided us with a core harvesting area where we would be free from competition.

Health, Safety and Sustainability

The main challenges identified for health and safety were the barge transportation and the risk of frost heaves and cracks causing underground flooding or collapse. Concerns were also expressed regarding possible radiation and earthquakes. There are also risks of cracks and frost heaves.

In terms of economic sustainability, we need business opportunities that are scaled and tailored to our capabilities, and guaranteed over a long enough term to justify investment. Community specific allocation of project related benefits is essential to ensure that NSMA members obtain an equitable share of the benefits of development.

Social Sustainability requires security of cultural identity, security of food supply, security of accommodations and education, community cohesiveness, justice, and equality. The fact that other Aboriginal groups receive far more government funding, taxes and royalties and have much more authority over land and resource use than we do is extremely unjust.

CONCLUSION:

The North Slave Métis are, and always have been, intimately connected with their traditional territory. The concerns they have mentioned within this report are based on over 200 years of Métis use and occupancy of the area in and around the Nechalacho mine site, making our living from the land by harvesting, transporting, trading, provisioning, mining and prospecting. Incontestably, as shown even by this very modest research project report, the entire Great Slave Lake and transportation routes leading to and from it are significant cultural and historical sites of priceless value to the North Slave Métis.

A consistent theme throughout this report is that social, cultural and economic development is welcomed, but ONLY if and when it can and will be done in a sustainable manner. Sustainable development requires the highest quality baseline data incorporating the extensive traditional knowledge of North Slave Métis.

The NSMA rightfully expects meaningful involvement in environmental research and monitoring that has the potential to affect its lands, its resources, its culture or its aboriginal rights. We also require adequate consultation on environmental management decisions. Anything less will leave the North Slave Métis community with uncertainty and cause a substantial fear of damage to their environment and interference with their traditional lifestyle and aboriginal rights.

The North Slave Métis community rejects the “remediation” closure standard that Canada and others have proposed. They obviously do not share our love for our land, our respect for our wildlife, our perpetual dependence on our natural resources, or our cultural values. Just as health must remain the goal of a health care system and justice the goal of our courts, so too must restoration remain the goal of mine closure. Any deviations from that goal must only occur with the free, prior and fully informed consent of the North Slave Métis. Again, adequate information, incorporating our traditional knowledge and the very best science, conducted ethically and according to international standards, is required.

We look forward to working together with all concerned towards our shared goals of health, prosperity, peace and happiness.

“Leave the land as natural as it was before they started”

Traditional Knowledge Interview Guide

These questions serve as topics and elders will be encouraged to talk about other information that they feel is important to know. Answers will be recorded on this form, on maps, and additional (backs of) pages as needed.

INTERVIEW NUMBER: _____ INTERVIEWER(S): _____

ELDER SELF-IDENTIFIES AS (DOGRIB, CHIPEWYAN, MÉTIS, OTHER): MÉTIS

ELDER'S AFFILIATION IS WITH (TLICHO, AKAITCHO, NSMA, OTHER): NSMA

Part A

Questions related to animals and plants in the Project Areas

Questions relating to animal and plant **harvesting** in the project area

- 1) Do you know where Métis **hunt** in the project areas? If yes, please:
 - a) Mark locations and species on the map, with time of year.
 - b) Note any cultural uses for particular species.

- 2) Do you know where are **special areas for large animals** in the project area (eg., birthing areas, mineral licks, migration routes, feeding areas, shelter areas, breeding areas, etc)? If yes, please:
 - a) Mark locations and species on the map, and time of year.
 - b) Note other information such as time of year (if relevant)

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- 3) Do you know where are the **special areas for small animals, birds, reptiles, insects, or anything**, in the project area (eg., nesting, breeding, hibernating, migrating, staging, etc areas)? If yes, please:
- a) Mark locations and species on the map, and time of year.
 - b) Note other information such as time of year (if relevant)

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- 4) Do you know where Métis **trap** in the project area? If yes, please:
- a) Mark locations of traplines and species trapped on the map
 - b) Note any **special habitats for trapped** species
 - c) Note any cultural uses associated with furbearing animals

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- 5) Do you know where Métis **fish** in the project area? If yes, please:

- a) Mark locations and species on the map, and time of year.
- b) Note any cultural uses for particular species, including subsistence and commercial.

- 6) Do you know where there are **special areas for fish** in the project area (eg., spawning areas)? If yes, please:
- a) Mark locations and species on the map, and time of year.
 - b) Note other information such as time of year (if relevant)

- 7) Do you know where Métis collect **berries** in the project area? If yes, please:
- a) Mark locations and berry species on the map
 - b) Note uses of berries (eg., domestic or commercial consumption, dyes, medicines,)

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- 8) Do you know where Métis collect other traditional **plants** in the project area? If yes, please:
- a) Mark locations and species collected on the map
 - b) Note uses of traditional plants (eg., medicines, crafts, building materials, heat, commercial or personal consumption, mushrooms, etc.)

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- 9) Is there anything else about plants or animals that we should know about?
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Questions relating to cabins, trails, and other special sites in the Project area

- 1) Do you know where there any **cabins** in the project area? If yes, please:
- a) Mark locations on the map
 - b) Indicate whether they are abandoned or still used and what they are used for
 - c) Indicate whether there is any historic, heritage or cultural values associated with the sites.

- 2) Do you know of any **trails** that cross through or near to the project area that Métis use? If yes, please:
- a) Mark them on the map
 - b) What is the best way to project them?

- 3) Do you know of any **gravesites** sites within the project area? If yes:
- a) Mark them on the map
 - b) Note identification features
 - c) What is the best way to protect them?

- 4) Do you know of any sites with **archaeological significance** within the project area? If yes:
- a) Mark locations on the map
 - b) Describe what they are
 - c) What is the best way to protect them

- 5) Do you know of any special **cultural or spiritual** sites within the project area? If yes:
- a) Mark locations on the map
 - b) Describe the importance of the sites
 - c) If any of these sites are in the Project area, what is the best way to protect them?

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- 6) Are there any **special features or landmarks** within the project area that are important because of oral tradition, stories, songs or traditional use? If yes:
- a) Mark locations on the map
 - b) Describe why the locations are important
 - c) What is the best way to protect them?

- 7) Are there any other aspects of the land, or culturally important sites that we need to consider?

Part B

Questions relating to changes in traditional land use as a result of existing projects

- 1) Have there been any **changes in the way the Métis use the project area** as a result of previous development (including Indian Act band offices and land claims) in the project area? If yes:
 - a) Please describe what changes have occurred in the ways that the project area has been used.

- 2) Over the years, have you or other people noticed **any changes in the health, palatability and/or behaviour of the animals that have been hunted or trapped?** (Note species, type of change, etc)

- 3) Over the years, have you or others noticed **changes in the health palatability and/or behaviour of fish?** (Note species, locations and type of change (appearance, taste) – quality?, quantity? etc.)

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- 4) Over the years, have you or others noticed **changes in the health palatability, distribution, or abundance of plants or other types of vegetation?** (Note species, locations, type of change – quality?, quantity? etc.)

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- 5) Please describe any **changes in weather patterns** that you or others have noticed over the years.
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- 6) Please describe any **changes in water levels or water quality** that you or others have noticed over the years.

- 7) Please describe any **changes in wildlife patterns** that you or others have noticed over the years.

- 8) Have there been problems with **other people interfering with Métis traditional use of the land**? If yes:

- a) Please describe what happened and where it happened
- b) How was this issue resolved, or not resolved?
- c) What recommendations would you make to prevent future problems?

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Any other comments? (Contaminated sites in area, illegal land use, Métis economic interests, etc???)

Part C

Questions related to the future use of the Project area

Due to the nature of the Project, there may be disturbance to the land. After the Project is finished, the Company plans to reclaim the land. How would the Métis like to see the land reclaimed?

Describe possible or hoped for future uses of the Project area, and features that will be important to have (Examples of future uses might include: hunting, fishing, trapping, plant and berry harvesting, ceremonies, raising and teaching children, prospecting, mining, hydro developments, farming, tourism, outfitting, etc.).

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