

'We're done': Nahanni Butte pulls out of Dehcho First Nations

1 less band means less leverage for Dehcho First Nations during land claim negotiations

By Hilary Bird, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 04, 2017 8:09 AM CT Last Updated: May 04, 2017 8:09 AM CT

The chief of the Nahanni Butte Dene Band says the community is pulling out of the Dehcho First Nations.

Chief Peter Marcellais made the announcement during a Dene leadership meeting in Colville Lake, N.W.T., on Wednesday. Marcellais said it has become clear that the regional organization isn't looking out for the best interest of his people.

"This is it," Marcellais told the meeting. "We're done with DCFN."

The Dehcho First Nation was created in 1999 to be a regional voice for First Nations groups in the area. It has been negotiating a land claim settlement for the entire region for nearly two decades.

The Acho Dene Koe First Nation in Fort Liard was the first community [to pull out of the organization almost 10 years ago](#). It has since begun its own land claim negotiations with the federal and territorial government.

Marcellais said the dispute is about a proposed all-season road that would run from the Liard Highway to the Prairie Creek Mine, cutting through Nahanni National Park Reserve. The project is currently tied up in a lengthy environmental assessment.

Marcellais says both the Liidlii Kue First Nation in Fort Simpson and the Nahanni Butte Dene Band are claiming the proposed road lies on their traditional territory.

He says the community recently asked the Dehcho First Nations to remove the area from its current land claim negotiations with the territorial and federal governments until that boundary dispute with Liidlii Kue is settled.

Marcellais claims the Dehcho told him it would think about it. He said that was the last straw.

- [Growing impatient, Nahanni Butte starts building own road to mine](#)
- [N.W.T. government turns to courts to stop Nahanni Butte road construction](#)

'I know I'm not going to be liked'

The community of Nahanni Butte held a meeting on Sunday and Marcellais was instructed to present his position to the leaders at this week's meeting,

"I know I'm not going to be liked. But my people said go ahead and do that," he said.

"I'm not here to make friends. I'm not here to make enemies. I'm just doing what my people tell me."

One less band means less leverage for the Dehcho First Nations during its land claims negotiations with the federal and territorial governments.

Marcellais says he plans to make a more formal announcement at the Dehcho leadership meeting in Hay River on Monday.

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