

'It's all done': Nahanni Butte roadwork complete amid court case, says chief

Chief Peter Marcellais told CBC 'no trees have been cut' on logging road cleared near community

By Hilary Bird, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 03, 2017 11:45 AM CT Last Updated: May 03, 2017 11:45 AM CT

The chief of Nahanni Butte Dene Band in the N.W.T. says the community has finished clearing brush on an old logging road in the area, nearly two months after the territorial and federal governments issued two stop-work orders.

"We're all done. We've done what we want to do," Peter Marcellais told CBC during a Dene leadership meeting in Colville Lake this week.

"Our vehicles were getting stuck. It's not like cutting a whole new road. No trees have been cut, just willows."

Since January, the band has been clearing the road across the river from the community. In March, [the territorial government filed a notice of motion with the N.W.T. Supreme Court](#) seeking an injunction to prevent community members "trespassing" with heavy equipment on territorially managed Commissioner's land.

The N.W.T. government alleges the work is an attempt to speed up the development of Canadian Zinc's Prairie Creek Mine.

- [Growing impatient, Nahanni Butte starts building own road to mine](#)
- [Nahanni Butte plans to move ahead with road construction despite court case](#)

The mine, which is in the advanced stages of development, is located in the heart of Nahanni National Park.

I told the councillors, let them take me to court. If I have to go to jail it doesn't matter. -
Chief Peter Marcellais

Marcellais said the brush-clearing had nothing to do with the Prairie Creek Mine but he takes issue with another government telling the community what to do on their land.

"I told the councillors 'let them take me to court. If I have to go to jail it doesn't matter. I need a break anyways,'" he said.

"They didn't expect a chief to stand up to them, I guess, but we're willing to."

It's not known if the territorial government will be withdrawing its court action now that the brush clearing is complete.

Still no all-weather road

Locals have been waiting almost three years for a proposed road connecting the Fort Liard highway and the mine to make its way through the Mackenzie Valley Review Board's environmental assessment

process.

But Marcellais said there is still a lot of work to be done before the community signs off on an all-weather road to the mine.

"We want to do all our studies first. We want to walk the land. See every creek. Take all the pictures we need. Do all our tradition studies. We're going to do all that to see if we want the road or not."

The community is planning to set up 12 trail cameras along the logging road they built to survey the animals in the area.

Meanwhile, the Mackenzie Valley Review Board is preparing a report for the territory's Department of Lands on the proposed road connecting the Fort Liard highway to the Prairie Creek mine.

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