

February 17, 2010

Ms. Bren Kolson
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Mr. Rick Edjericon, Chairperson
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
200 Scotia Center
P. O. Box 938, 5102 – 50th Avenue
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Re: “The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board's mission is to conduct quality and timely environmental impact assessments that protect the environment and the social, economic and cultural well being of the residents of the Mackenzie Valley and all Canadians.” – MVEIRB Web-Page Site Feb. 2010

The following is a written submission to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact review Board regarding the Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project and my rationale for opposition to the placement of electrical towers at the location of Fort Reliance on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake.

Personal Background

I was born at Yellowknife, Northwest Territories in 1950 and except for years away from the North for education and living in southern Canada I have lived in Yellowknife and the North, all my life. My great-great-great grandfather signed Treaty on behalf of the Rocher River (Tso'Tine) – Talston River people. When the school burned at Rocher River the Talston River Dam was put in to serve Pine Point. However, many Rocher River (Tso'Tine) people never received benefit for their ancestors' land and major economic development that has since taken place on the lands of the Rocher River people. The Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project will neither, provide benefit to the Rocher River (Tso'Tine) people.

The Rocher River people, the original inhabitants of the Rocher River-Talston River region of the South Great Slave Lake have never been consulted about major development or proposed development and have never received benefit, as other Aboriginal groups have, for compensation of lands used in the North where Dene and Metis lived or live. There still has been no recognition or consultation from the Rocher River people and yet major studies have been done to bring the proposed hydro electric dam to the point it is today. What financial and other by-product benefit will the Rocher River people receive from the Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project? It is not a matter of other Aboriginal Bands allowing the Rocher River people to participate and negotiate amenities. It is up to every corporation to know the history of the area or region they are doing business, and ensure they have contacted everyone whose land they want to put proposed projects.

It is regrettable the Tso' Tine Rocher River people have not been recognized as participants in major development on their lands. I personally regret my daughter will never know her grand-parents and great-great grand-parents original lands, will never know her heritage or culture, Aboriginal language and have little to pass onto her children. It is a serious history of acculturation and genocide. What else can a lack of recognition of the Tso'Tine or Rocher River people, be called since there are over 600 Rocher River people displaced from their history, heritage and culture because the Federal Government chooses to put the Tso'Tine on a No Band Land list and refuses to recognize the descendants of the Rocher River people. Following in the foot-steps of the Federal Government are multi-national corporations even though there are Aboriginal groups on Corporations.

History and Culture

Because of special circumstances our family has never received any benefit we are entitled to and, we have subsistence rights to the land and have out General Hunting Licenses to prove our subsistence rights. However, our history, heritage and culture is gone but our Rocher River lands still stand.

It has been a displacement and disregard for our family and all families who are the original inhabitants of Rocher River. I copy the Review Boards' intent: "The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board's mission is to conduct quality and timely environmental impact assessments that protect the environment and the social, economic and cultural well being of the residents of the Mackenzie Valley and all Canadians." – MVEIRB Web-Page Site Feb. 2010

I am happy the Mackenzie Environmental Impact Review Board's mission "...is to conduct quality and timely environmental impact assessments **that protect the environment and the social, economic and cultural well being of the residents of the Mackenzie Valley and all Canadians.**" The statement is committed to protecting the environment and the social, economic and cultural well-being, therefore, of the Rocher River people also. What will be done to protect the environment ...social and cultural well-being of the Rocher River people? Have the Rocher River people in all communities where Rocher River people live, been consulted?

Environmental

Born at Yellowknife in the Northwest in 1950 I have seen, heard and read hundreds of pieces of information about scientific studies, environmental studies, socio-economic studies and all types of studies. In the 1960s and 1970s there was little consultation with the citizens of the North or with Aboriginal inhabitants of the land when major development was proposed and in some cases "just went ahead" without consideration for the people who have always lived here prior to Non-Aboriginal people populating the North.

Throughout the decades of being "studied to death," as many northerners used the adage, I never believed and still do not believe southern "experts" can compare what they have studies at universities or on-the-job with the Traditional Knowledge of Aboriginal northerners. If we say a certain area is not good for development, it is for reasons to safe-guard the future. What I am saying, is a location is stated for non-use by Aboriginal people because they know the history of the land – the faults, the crevices, the stability of the rock, flora, fauna, foliage, lakes, rivers and all the land comprises. There has been damage to the land because the southern "experts" refuse to listen to the Traditional Knowledge of the Elders and the Aboriginal people of our northern land.

Many damages to the land whether under-ground in mining land locations such as Ekati Mines or with oil and gas at Norman Wells have done unreported damage to the land and the public does not know and will never know because each monitoring, evaluation and assessment is done by the same people and same companies each year: and the damages under-estimated when reported and so the damage to treat the land is never done.

There is more to an impact and environmental assessment, evaluation and monitoring than writing dialogues of information that doesn't inform the public or immediate location residents of the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is more economically and financially expedient to under-estimate damages done to the land. I have completed reports for Aboriginal groups who have provided recommendations which have to date, never been implemented. "We're doing something about it," or, "that recommendation has been addressed," doesn't mean it has been addressed or that the issue of concern has been corrected. I do not believe and do not trust the "southern experts," or some "northern experts," when northerners are told, "we will mitigate, lessen, moderate, diminish and alleviate before the project begins, any concerns, queries, questions, anxiety or apprehension you, the public have, about damages to the environment." There is no such thing as 'no damage to the land in large projects on the land.' If, there was no damage to the land prior to the start of a project, then there shouldn't be any damage when a project begins, progresses and is completed. But – there always is damage to the land so the proponents should be honest about what is proposed, the potential, probable or possible damages to the land and where and how the damages will be addressed for alleviation of the source damage. And remember there are many types of damage and destruction. What amount of dollars are calculated for potential damages and who is insuring (insurance) the project and future damages to the land and the people of the land?

I have lived at Fort Reliance and on the barrenlands and I cannot for the sake of me understand WHY anyone would consider building large humming metal towers across main areas of the main site of Fort Reliance, except, to destroy the pristine and Spiritual beauty of the location. And, to allow environmental damage to a sensitive landscape in the immediate main site area of Fort Reliance appears to be the goal of this proposed project. Three suggestions as examples of where transmission lines will be placed are not enough options.

There are other locations, within the perimeter of the Fort Reliance area that would be better than all the line directions being proposed. I do not believe all locations have been investigated.

I am totally opposed to transmission lines criss-crossing the main site location of Fort Reliance. Who thought of this ridiculous suggestion? The infrastructure is the only one on the East Arm that has been there historically for over 60 years with the introduction of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police stationed at Fort Reliance in the 1940s and 1950s. Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal trappers as well as Dene from Lutselk'e (formerly Snowdrift) also made – and make – Fort Reliance the distant hunting, trapping and fishing grounds as a part of their Aboriginal Rights and inherent right to live off the land - to do so.

I am opposed to any development at Fort Reliance and firm in my opposition to transmission lines destroying Fort Reliance, now and in the future. Historic sites such as Backs Chimneys and Old Fort Reliance as well as cabins by past-residents and current residents have to be protected. Every person living at Fort Reliance has the right to live in the style of life they have chosen and are accustomed to without interference and without interference from mega multi-national corporate projects planted on their door-steps. Year around businesses from the Hoarfrost River to Fort Reliance and vicinity should be not interfered with in any form by the Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project.

Economics

Money buys only materialism. Monetary benefit only lasts as long as the earth's product lasts. The earth's products have been good to many multi-nationals from gold to oil, gas, diamonds and many non-renewable resources, but when the product is no longer economical the earth is deserted and forced to replenish what was taken. The period of regeneration will take many human generations before the benefit returns to new generations of people. There is nothing that can be done once the land is destroyed, economically or aesthetically.

It may seem or appear there will be no adverse affect on the fish, animals and habitat of the land around immediate Fort Reliance but that is not true. In 1974 there was more of a presence of animals than today in the vicinity. In 1979 there were more large fish in Great Slave Lake in the Fort Reliance region than today in the waters around Fort Reliance.

Trophy fish are taken but it should be noted it has been eight years since a trophy fish has been taken by a tourist from Fort Reliance. When I lived on the land at Fort Reliance and on the barrenlands the Elder we lived with said to me: "When you take a huge fish, don't take them all. These fish are ancient fish and have ancient sperm. It is the ancient sperm that gives the younger fish their strength and to be good fish for future generations of fish."

I believe many trophy fish taken are almost gone because of so many trophy fish taken over the years, without proper monitoring by Governments.

I have flown over Fort Reliance to witness the merging of the Bathurst and Kaminuriak caribou herds. There were thousands of caribou and I counted 120 wolves surrounding the herd. With current 'caribou crisis' I note from a personal conversation with a former Renewable Resources employee of the Government of the Northwest Territories living in Fort Smith, N.W.T. that he has seen the female caribou aborting on the land below the helicopter the group was flying in. His contention is it is the very fin whizzing sound of the helicopter that the caribou cannot take because of fear, and caribou's sensitive ears. The sound he thought is the cause of female caribou aborting. The diamond mines helicopter pilots flying in and out of various locations on the land have caused a decline in the caribou herds because of a lack of reproduction of caribou calves. How many more caribou will not produce calves because of the work done at various locations on the land and at Fort Reliance (proposed) and the use of helicopters?

Who will bring the dead caribou back? Are caribou not a part of the Aboriginal tradition in the North? Original inhabitants of either the Talston River – Rocher River or Fort Reliance and area, seem not to have a right of decisions. An Environmental Impact Assessment and decisions made are for today, not for the future since the earth and nature changes but there is seldom continual monthly or yearly follow-up, once a project is finished. Monitoring is an interim measure that doesn't always bring complete or satisfactory research, assessments, evaluations, consultation, involvement or improvement of eventual disasters because it appears multi-nationals and Governments see immediate and interim solutions rather than planning properly for the long, long term. Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people are not involved in the long, long term with multi-nationals although it is the Aboriginal people who live here forever because it is our home.

It appears the third alternative route for the Talston River hydroelectric expansion project was proposed, based on expediency, rather than rationale. Governments, multi-nationals and banking institutes work together to develop five to ten year plans "for the betterment of the people of the country for the future." Is this consultation a mere exercise to appease the public, persons who call Fort Reliance their home, interested parties who may not live at Fort Reliance but have a vested interest in the integrity of its (Fort Reliance's) future?

Have decision not already been made, despite, what we say in our presentations? It is also expediency to get the project going because of the economy and money; mainly for southern workers.

The people who live at Fort Reliance should still have an important voice whether it is a small group of persons. The people who live at Fort Reliance should have the right to live, and live the life they chose. There are alternative routes that can be envisaged, I am sure. I have attached an alternative route in Appendix 'A' and wish it to be considered.

It doesn't make sense to place large towers in the middle and around the main location of Fort Reliance. If, there are plans to try to justify the metal towers and have extension electricity for the development of Fort Reliance into a community, there are better choices than the obstruction the metal towers will cause. If, there are plans to try to justify the hydroelectricity for expansion of Fort Reliance for the implementation of an East Arm Park, there are certainly better choices than obstruction, which will lead to destruction. The towers will not enhance the tourism industry.

Trophy Lodge has operated for decades efficiently and effectively without presenting cause for concern to local residents and without restriction from Government because the lodge has always catered to its tourist audience with respect and cordial accommodation. Electrical towers in the path view of Trophy Lodge customers is like painting black streaks across you living-room window and being told to live with it whether you like it or not. This project is effectively reducing the capacity of a long-term northern business (Trophy Lodge) to continue to do business in the future, as it has done in the past. What compensation do you give to a business ruined by industry: the corporations as proponents of the proposed project in question, because there is no compromise when corporation(s) intentionally destroy an economically viable business?

Fort Reliance should be left for the development of eco-businesses and current established business such as Trophy Lodge should not have to interrupt or justify its existence when it has already adhered for decades accountably. No power lines or tower lines should disrupt a business when alternatives can be found. I am totally against the interruption of business by Trophy Lodge in place of a 'metal view.'

It appears the long-term development includes implementation of John Diefenbaker's dream of Roads to Riches to see a road around Great Slave Lake but it begins with a hydroelectric infrastructure at Fort Reliance to open up the East Arm. There are always alternative political aspirations by Governments and multi-national corporations. Why does the North have to be the main-stay economic provider for the South, I have always wondered when the North is still a colony of the Federal Government and receives pittance of what has been extracted from northern lands?

Consideration for using the existing infrastructure at Fort Reliance is only a multi-national corporations rationale for saying: 'We have the towers and cable in and there aren't many people living here if something does happen, and there isn't a park here yet, so let's dam Parry Falls. We'll widen the hiking trail so the tourists can see the dam better.' Let us hope that is not the intention of the proponents of the Talston Hydro-electric Expansion Project.

Spiritual and Aesthetics

There is only one way to "respect the land," and that is to be honest about what respect is given to the land. The land is the essence of creation given as a gift by a Higher Power to be used yes, but also to be loved as a Mother. When you take the Mother milk from the land in the provision of what the land provides, it cannot always be replaced.

Aboriginal people view the land from a different perspective than Non-Aboriginal people: from a world view perspective. Non-Aboriginal people believe since time immemorial that the lands of the Earth and especially in the Northwest Territories was and is for taking and controlling because it was a hierarchal politically correct way of life of their ancestors.

History is well documented of how Non-Aboriginal people and large well-financed multi-national corporations have believed the Aboriginal peoples were “nothing but uneducated savages living in a pristine forest.”

How ironic it is that Non-Native persons coming from the South to the North have had to not only learn how to survive the land, from Aboriginal people's Traditional Knowledge, but also contribute to Foundations in southern cities for the benefit of conserving and protecting the environment...and environment their ancestors destroyed and new generations of the corporate families who feel money will restore what their ancestors destroyed.

Respect for the land goes beyond words. Respect for the land goes to the heart of the Spirituality of the land and the heart of the human inhabitants of the Earth. It goes to the Spiritual presence and all that is provided on the landscapes of the Earth that cannot be replaced or saved once destroyed. There is no replacement for the aesthetics or ‘beauty’ of the land. Once it is scarred with non-natural pieces of concrete and clay or in this story, conglomerates of metal there is no natural beauty left because the natural view has been destroyed. Was the land and beauty meant to be obstructed and destroyed? I don't think so. There are phenomenal views and experiences I have had on the land. In 1977 we saw hummingbirds at our cabin door. We also saw a dark cloud begin to form from a large piece of rotten wood. We didn't know what it was but the bugs came out in droves and droves to cross Great Slave Lake and go toward Pike's Portage. I don't recall the name of the bug that looked part flying ant and part grasshopper but there were thousands of the flying bugs. We learned that type of flying species harbors in the wood for years and only makes it's entry to the world every ten years: approximate. When we canoed on the lake later in the evening (in summer) we saw thousands of the bugs on the lake who didn't make it to Pike's Portage and the fish were jumping all night eating the bugs. We could hear the splashes in the quiet of the night. There are some experiences that come once in a life-time and other experiences are ever-present for the pleasure of the eye and memory cells. Perhaps memory is God's way of not letting humans forget what beauty means and not to forget that beauty can be destroyed with the wrong decision or choice.

The East Arm is aesthetically beautiful and I am in support of a Park on the East Arm rather than elector – hydro towers scarring the beauty of the land. Don't put a Park on the East Arm if you are going to contradict the purpose of the Park by defacing the beauty of the land.

To deface the beauty of the land is to deface human understanding, wisdom and respect in support of a usurping and hierarchal admittance of conquer and control of the land and of persons who live at Fort Reliance and also of interested parties with positive vested interests.

In time, metal erodes and corrodes and seeps into the earth and it will be the same at Fort Reliance. The storms are fierce on the East Arm and cables will not with-stand the long-term churn of ice and rough waters over many years.

It is then the fish habitat will die out from Great Slave Lake, especially in the Fort Reliance area and a tourist economy and water eco-system will be dead. No cables should ever be put into Great Slave Lake or any lake on the fragile barrenlands. Having lived on the barrenlands I have experienced the quick weather changes on the barrenlands and lakes and do not recommend especially cables under Great Slave Lake.

There is Spirituality about the land and I believe we were a part of the Spirituality. As I have noted in the book I wrote about the barrenlands entitled *Myth of the Barrens* which was released December 07, 2009 and is on sale, that you do not absorb the land, the land absorbs you. If we eat the fish, the caribou and all we hunt, fish and trap then we are apart of what we eat and if the land has been untouched in its pristine and original state, then we are also a part of the Spirituality the land gives to persons who respect it. I am stating the East Arm of Great Slave Lake and especially Fort Reliance should not be interrupted and no hydro electric development in any state or manner or form is not considered or is not implemented.

Alternatives Choices

What will happen 100 years from now? It is 100 years from now is what we should be thinking about and not the next thirty years.

What is wrong with the picture of trying to bring southern models of infrastructure from the South and think they will work in the harsh, cold climate of the East Arm, which borders the barrenlands? Destruction is the only word to describe placement of cables under water on the East Arm.

When the lake storms it is very violent..... especially in winter...and the electrical storms can hit anywhere on the land, including high towers as 'first hits.' Furthermore, however it is written, any disturbance of Great Slave Lake at Fort Reliance by putting cables under the water, will, create a disaster for the water eco-system and for such a proposed project. If you have not completed a major project on the East Arm before which includes the waters of Great Slave Lake and the barrenlands which Fort Reliance is a part of because it is the gateway to the barrenlands, then you have no precedence from which to draw experience from, about what the East Arm is really about and what the land can and cannot do: to major development.

The reasons are because anything foreign put into the freezing cold waters of Great Slave Lake such as an electrical cable, will heat. The waters of Great Slave Lake churn violently with the waning and waxing of the moon and the churning of the water becomes opposite of what it usually or ordinarily was. After the tide has changed it changes back to what it was before it changed and waits for the next full moon. I have personally observed the coming of, the full moon and just after the full moon actually turn the waters of Great Slave Lake at Fort Reliance completely change to the opposite direction it was flowing and then change back to the direction it originally was flowing. On the occasions I saw the waters change to flow in the opposite direction it was always very windy and the color of the waters changed with the turbulence, washing huge rocks to the shoreline. We could see huge rocks and boulders tumbling in the water. There is good indication from what I observed that cable would be mashed and certainly swayed back and forth at a high rate of velocity.

The matter of hoarfrost and permafrost as well as heave doesn't elude the East Arm. Whoa frost and perma-frost and heave is not exclusive to the Mackenzie Valley. In fact, hoarfrost and perma-frost and heave especially has still not been adequately addressed nor has a solution for perma-frost and heave been adequately found, for oil and gas lines in winter: northern winters, even though projects may go ahead along the Mackenzie Valley.

The issue was addressed as a major concern during the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry which I traveled with during the 1970s, and again addressed for the current proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline and there still hasn't been a satisfactory solution to counter the damages that will be done by the perma-frost and heave of disturbed ie, water, snow once the perma-frost has been disturbed, over the long-term. You cannot tell a 'lead' on a lake where to form or form into open water: cold, cold water which raises the concern of varying temperatures.

There will be damages on perma-frost areas with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, and with any road down the Mackenzie Valley. As you progress down the Mackenzie Valley to the Mackenzie Delta the land becomes more like sand-muck once the perma-frost is disturbed because the perm-frost once disturbed, actually heats the land and melts the surrounding area which has a domino affect on nearby lands where the perma-frost has melted. With climate change and global warming melting perma-frost causing the heave and through at great weights, is a disaster waiting to happen.

I believe there can reasonable and rational alternatives to replace the third option as proposed. Let me be clear, I am not opposed to the Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project. I am opposed to the locations proposed at Fort Reliance for the implementation of the proposed Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project towers and tower infrastructure. I have stated my opinion and views and have stated there should be further options for the location of the towers. I have used one map taken off the web site to show what option I would choose. Option Four is less the line, does not pass by communities, would not disturb caribou or fish habitat and sensitive flora and fauna can be protected, even if there are signs stating so to tourist travelers of the barrnelands. Sensitive land products can be monitored and protected but should be monitored monthly and certainly yearly. The Option I suggest allows either side of the "hydroelectric line" to serve the "one-day" uranium mines to the right of my suggestion and leave land space to extend in the future (on the left side of the map) for extension to communities in the Tlicho region or beyond that region. I did not want to state my opinion without proposing a solution.

13/Kolson/MVEIRB

In conclusion, as an author, I offer my book *Myth of the Barrens*, released December 07, 2009 as additional information and awareness of what the East Arm of Great Slave Lake and the barrenlands of the Western Arctic is – and why it should be protected and a fourth corridor route for the Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project, seriously considered. Fort Reliance should never be a consideration for major development. We do want a 'pace of beauty' left in tact for our future generations and always remembered for its Ever-Spiritual presence.

I would like to have presented more information, but time was of the essence.

Sincerely,



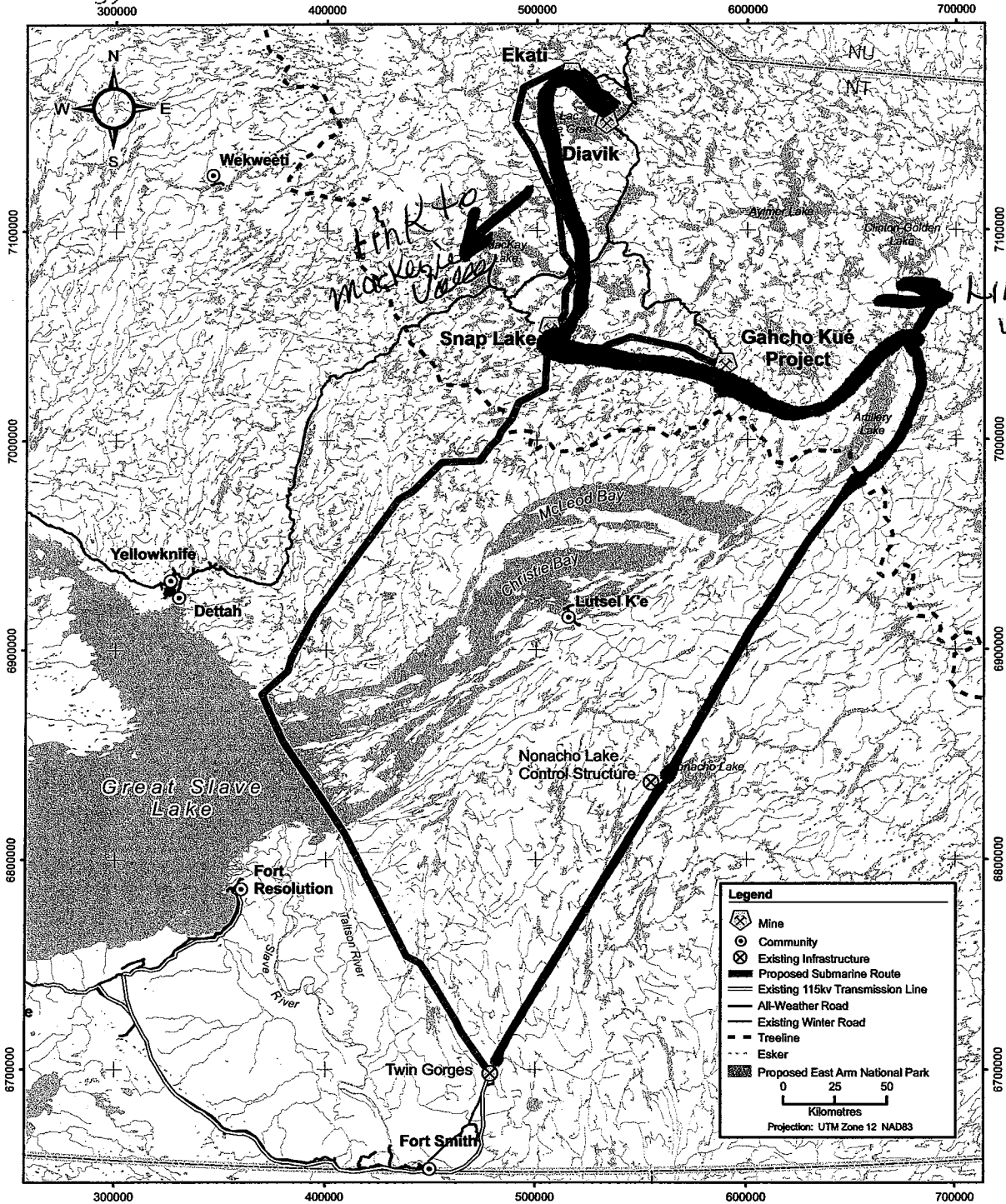
Ms. B.A. Kolson (Bren Kolson)
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

cc. File Copy
Dr. David Suzuki

Attachment: Map – “A”

Attachment: book *Myth of the Barrens* by Bren Kolson





TALTSON
Hydroelectric Expansion Project

Developer's Assessment Report
2009

Submarine Transmission Line Route Overview

Figure
8.4.3

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