

NORTH SLAVE MÉTIS ALLIANCE

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October 7th, 2011

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Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
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Re: EA 0809-004 NICO Project, Fortune Minerals Limited – Information Requests

Please accept the following first round information requests on behalf of the North Slave Métis Alliance.

IR Number: NSMA 1-1

Source: North Slave Métis Alliance

To: Fortune Minerals Limited.

Subject: Heritage Resource Impact Assessment – Heritage resource identification

References: Annex M HRIA, TOR 3.4, TOR Appendix K, MVRMA.

Preamble: Although archaeologists are trained to recognize artefacts of human culture, few specialize in Métis culture, and even fewer study the subarctic Métis. Without a good background in subarctic Métis history and culture it is difficult to understand the values and interests that give significance to Métis Heritage Resources or Métis Heritage Sites. It is crucially important to utilize appropriate expertise and experience in heritage resource impact assessments because professional judgement is used to ascribe value, importance, interest, or significance to an heritage resource. Professional judgement is strongly influenced by the culture and perceptions of the researcher.

The North Slave Métis have a long history of involvement in prospecting, exploring, mining, surveying, hunting, trapping, guiding, trading, transporting, trail and road building which they are proud of, and which they have rights to continue doing. Evidence demonstrating where, how and when Métis practiced their rights throughout the past few centuries is of great significance from the perspective of cultural pride and identity as well as of high economic value in terms of land claim settlements, resource royalties, and so on. It is quite possible that mining claims, hunting camps, and relatively recent trails may be of cultural or historic interest, importance or significance to the Métis.

At the same time, there are others whose interests are, unfortunately, in conflict with NSMA's interests. Governments are motivated to minimise the number of Aboriginal Peoples they must settle Aboriginal Claims with. Other First Nations are motivated to gain, and retain, exclusive control of jointly owned territory and resources. Industry is motivated to minimise the amount of compensation and mitigation it must provide.

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The NSMA is concerned about the inadequate involvement of subarctic Métis expertise in Fortune's Heritage Resource Impact Assessment, and fears that Métis Heritage Resources may have been missed or misinterpreted due to the expert's unfamiliarity with subarctic Métis culture, history, values and interests and/or their conscious or unconscious bias against Métis interests.

Request:

- ∞ Please explain why "relatively recent" trails, mining claim posts, hunting camps and other cultural use sites have been designated as having limited or no heritage value, specifically with respect to the Métis heritage values? How was the Métis perspective on site importance, interest or significance relative to age and type of site determined?

IR Number: NSMA 1-2

Source: North Slave Métis Alliance

To: Fortune Minerals Limited.

Subject: Heritage Resource Impact Assessment – Cultural Context

References: Annex M 2.4 and 3.1 and 5.2.5, TOR 3.4, TOR Appendix K.

Preamble: Appendix K4a of the TOR requires Fortune to report on consultations with all traditional knowledge holders, archaeologists, anthropologists and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Center during its cultural impact assessment, indicating how such interactions influenced survey locations, identification of locations, heritage resource management plans. Fortune is also required to describe how residents of Wek'eezhii will be involved in assessments and monitoring of impacts on culture.

It appears that Fortune's consultant did not adequately consult with traditional knowledge experts or anthropologists specializing in subarctic Métis heritage or culture when locating or assessing the significance of sites.

In the section detailing cultural context, there is no mention of the important role that the Métis played throughout subarctic North America during the transition from the Taltheilei Shale Tradition to the Reliance Complex 220-160 years ago, and there is no mention that an indigenous Métis community had its ethno genesis in this area during that period.

There is also no mention in the DAR of any plans to include the Métis residents of the Wek'eezhii Settlement Area in cultural impact assessment and monitoring.

As a result, it appears that the DAR and the HRIA is missing a very significant component – the identification and management of potential impacts on Métis heritage resources and culture.

The archaeological record reported on for this project contains numerous examples of probable and possible mis-attribution of Métis sites to Tlicho. Decorated dog harnesses with bells, for example, are distinctively Métis artifacts. Cemeteries and marked graves, other relicts of Catholicism, log cabins, stone chimneys, foundations, tent frames, enamel cups and bowls, blazed trees, metal traps, guns and ammunition, metal cooking utensils and tools, fabric clothing, tin cans, buttons, dog sleds and many such items characteristic of the Reliance Complex were introduced to the area by Métis. Sites containing such articles should not automatically be attributed to the Tlicho, or based only on information of Tlicho assistants.

The mis-attribution of Métis sites to D`ene' or Euro-Canadian cultural groups could lead to incorrect interpretation and assessment of significance, importance and/or interest of the site. In the context of unsettled land claims, misattribution could also lead to the exclusion of rightful owners of the site from decision making processes with regard to the management of the site.

One obvious example of the potential magnitude of negative impact on the Métis resulting from mis-attribution is the statement in the HRIA that the project is located on the traditional lands of the Tlicho First Nation, with no mention that the same lands are also the traditional lands of the North Slave Métis. Such misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the actual history of traditional land use, occupancy, and aboriginal title of this area has already caused the effective exclusion of the Métis from decision making with regard to the management of their traditional lands including their heritage resources. This is obviously an extremely significant impact on the Métis which effectively denies their identity and existence.

Request:

- ∞ Please expand section 3.1 to include a discussion of the Contact Period, particularly the important role that the Métis played in the transition from the Taltheilei Shale Tradition to the Reliance Complex 220-160 years ago, and the ethno genesis of an indigenous Métis community. This discussion should highlight the differences in material culture, land use, and resource use between the D`ene' and the Métis, and outline the diagnostic features used to differentiate a Métis site from a D`ene' site.
- ∞ Please expand section 3.1 to describe the current status of aboriginal claims, including the disputed property rights, in the area of the project. Please include a review of the resulting differential levels of involvement in heritage resource assessment and management between Métis and D`ene' groups, with and without land claims processes or settlements.
- ∞ Please expand section 2.4 to discuss how the incorrect or incomplete attribution of sites, in an environment of disputed land and resource ownership, potentially impacts the involvement of the disadvantaged or excluded group (the Métis) in the identification, assessment and management of their cultural and heritage resources.
- ∞ Please explain how the known or suspected ethnological or historical importance, interest or significance to the North Slave Métis community was evaluated for each of the sites located?
- ∞ Please review the list of archaeological sites that have been identified, so far, and comment on how many of them might be Métis sites instead of, or as well as, Tlicho heritage resources. Please justify why all the sites relating to indigenous historic activities have so far been ascribed to the Tlicho.
- ∞ Please explain why the Tlicho requirement to use a Tlicho field assistant was honoured, while the requirement of the North Slave Métis to use a Métis field assistant was ignored.
- ∞ Please explain why no specialist in subarctic Métis heritage resources was included on the research team to discover, identify, locate, and interpret Métis heritage resources

- ∞ Please explain the failure to include Métis experts in pre-field and field studies.
- ∞ Please comment on the possibility that Métis sites remain undiscovered and unrecorded due to the lack of Métis expert involvement in the field and pre-field studies.
- ∞ Please explain how interactions between Fortune and the North Slave Métis Alliance influenced survey locations, identification of locations and heritage resource management plans.
- ∞ Please describe how Métis residents of Wek'eezhii will be involved in assessments and monitoring of impacts on culture and heritage resources.
- ∞ Please describe the efforts made to meet with or interview Tom Andrews and to get a copy of his 1992 archaeological research report.

IR Number: NSMA 1-3

Source: North Slave Métis Alliance

To: Fortune Minerals Limited.

Subject: Baseline Description of Human Environment

References: TOR appendix K, DAR 16.2

Preamble: Fortune is supposed to assess the potential impacts on each potentially affected community, including the Métis community. Assessment requires an understanding of the existing conditions and any trends. There is no background or baseline information provided on the Métis community and no effort has been made to predict impacts or propose mitigation.

Although the NSMA acknowledges that the results of socioeconomic interviews conducted by the NSMA were not available at the time of publishing the DAR, there is still information available from government that could be used. Much of this information will not be included in the NSMA Socioeconomic Report, as the NSMA report will only reflect Métis perceptions and not statistical information.

Request:

- ∞ Please provide a break-down of the aboriginal population and changes in population in each settlement (geographic community) which includes the number of indigenous Métis, Tlicho, Yellowknives and other (non-indigenous) Aboriginal Peoples (cultural communities).
- ∞ Please provide a break-down of the baseline education, employment, business, income, and wellness conditions for each settlement (geographic community) which includes specific information for each potentially affected cultural community, including indigenous Métis and D`ene' .

IR Number: NSMA 1-4

Source: North Slave Métis Alliance

To: Fortune Minerals Limited.

Subject: Baseline Description of Human Environment - Language

References: TOR appendix K, DAR 16.2.2.11

Preamble: This two paragraph section discusses language use as the only indication of change to traditional way of life, but does not mention the indigenous Métis Peoples, their unique Michiff language, or their tradition of multilingualism. Since the North Slave Métis are a potentially affected Aboriginal People native to this study area, this section should include a reference to the status of the Michiff language, and the use of Michiff and other aboriginal languages in Métis households. The NSMA acknowledges that Fortune Minerals did not have the results of the Socioeconomic survey of North Slave Métis at the time of writing the DAR. However, there is a certain amount of publicly available information that could have been referenced.

Request:

- ∞ Please report the available statistics about the use of Michiff and other Aboriginal languages in Métis households in each of the settlements potentially affected by the NICO project.
- ∞ Please comment on the lack of formal recognition for the Michiff language in the NWT.

Many other information requests are needed, but due to time constraints these few are submitted now. We hope that additional information requests can be submitted as they are completed.

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