

NORTH SLAVE MÉTIS ALLIANCE

PO Box 2301 Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7

Interim Report

**North Slave Métis Alliance Site-Visit Summary for the Gahcho Kué Project
for De Beers Canada Inc.**

Monday, November 19, 2012



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Acronyms

De Beers Canada Inc.	De Beers
Gahcho Kué Project	Project
North Slave Métis Alliance	NSMA

Introduction

The North Slave Métis Alliance represents the Aboriginal rights-bearing Métis of the Great Slave Lake area who use and exercise their Aboriginal rights primarily in the area north of Great Slave Lake. As set out in our mandate, it is our obligation to assert, defend and implement the Aboriginal rights of all our members. The North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA) has been registered as a non-profit society in the Northwest Territories since 1996. The organization exists for the stated purpose of negotiating a regionally based comprehensive claim centered in the North Slave Region of the Northwest Territories. Prior to 1996, our members were represented in the 1975-1990 Dene-Métis Comprehensive Claim negotiation process by the Métis Nation of the Northwest Territories (MNNWT)¹, which was formed in 1972 to represent all indigenous Métis in the Northwest Territories. This organisation was disbanded after the Final Agreement was rejected, and the pan-territorial process was abandoned in favor of the pursuit of regional claims. The North Slave Métis Alliance was endorsed by the MNNWT as the North Slave Métis regional land claim organisation before the MNNWT was disbanded.²

The North Slave Métis Alliance Mandate

1. Unite the indigenous Métis of the North Slave Region.
2. Promote pride in Métis culture and heritage.
3. Exercise Métis responsibility to protect the environment
4. Promote and enhance Métis education and, economic, social and cultural development.
5. Promote recognition and Métis Aboriginal Rights.
6. Negotiate, ratify, and implement a comprehensive lands, resources and self-government agreement.

The North Slave Métis have continuously used and occupied the territory surrounding Great Slave Lake since the 17th century. Our traditional territory followed hunting, trapping, and trading trails north to the Great Bear Lake and east into what is now Nunavut. Historic Métis settlements, such as Old Fort Island, Old Fort Rae, Lac la Martre, Yellowknife River, Old Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Beaulieu Fort (now known as Lutselke'), and Fort Reliance, existed before colonial powers established effective control over the area.

¹ This is not the same organization as the current-day Northwest Territory Metis Nation (NTMN), previously known as the South Slave Métis Tribal Council, formed at the same time as the NSMA, also as a result of the decision to pursue regional instead of pan-territorial claims and the disbanding of the MNNWT.

² 1996-07-07 Metis Nation – Northwest Territories 24th Annual General Assembly Resolution #4.

The North Slave Métis people thus possess Aboriginal rights to their traditional territory, including aboriginal title and, rights to use and manage the renewable and non-renewable natural resources of the land. These rights are recognised and protected under Section 35 of *Canada's Constitution Act* (1982). In addition, their Aboriginal Water Rights are protected by sections 14(4)b and 14(5) of the *NWT Waters Act*.

Context

The regional study area surrounding Gahcho Kué has long been used and occupied by the North Slave Métis. Early European explorers, such as George Back, and late-19th century adventure biologists, such as Warburton Pike, relied on the North Slave Métis's experiential knowledge of the region. The Métis provided descriptions and routing around Great Slave Lake and the eastern tributaries and rivers into modern-day Nunavut.^{3,4} It has been well documented that the North Slave Métis were well established upon the arrival of explorers and colonizers. The Métis had maintained a network of trails and dwellings deep into the tundra east of the Great Slave Lake. There, they trapped fur bearing animals and hunted caribou. In addition, the North Slave Métis assisted in establishing, maintaining, and managing Fort Reliance at the mouth of the Lockhart River in the East Arm. The fort was used as a launching point for various expeditions into the north and as a stopover point for trappers on their way to the Thelon River area.

De Beers has acknowledged the ancestral traditional land use rights of the North Slave Métis. Consequently, members and the executive board of the North Slave Métis Alliance were invited by De Beers to visit and tour the Gahcho Kué mine site in 2011 and in 2012. On November 2, 2012, De Beers provided the North Slave Métis Alliance with funding to undertake a Métis traditional land use and knowledge study of the area. This promising traditional land use and knowledge study launched immediately and is expected to be completed by October, 2013. The final TK report will be submitted to De Beers and the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board by October 29, 2013.

³ Back, George. (1835). Narrative of the Arctic land expedition to the mouth of the Great Fish River, and along the shores of the Arctic Ocean in the years 1833, 1834, and 1835.

⁴ Pike, Warburton (1892). The barren ground of northern Canada. [Cover title: Journeys to the barren ground of northern Canada, 1889-1891; in search of musk-ox

Purpose of the interim report

De Beers has determined that three kimberlite deposits have the potential to be mined at the Gahcho Kué mine site at Kennady Lake. At present, De Beers is completing an environmental impact review. This interim report will be part of the consultation process and will be mentioned at the technical hearings in December, 2012.

The content of the interim report is a record of engagement for the 2011 and 2012 site visits. It is also a prerequisite of the initial activities for the NSMA's Gahcho Kué traditional land use and knowledge study. The report provides feedback on the Project with respect to the Project description and proposed monitoring. In addition, the report details the nascent North Slave Métis traditional land use and knowledge study that will occur over the next year (2013). The interim report provides the context and summarizes the salient aspects of the 2011 and 2012 site visits undertaken by members of the NSMA.

Results of the workshop

The North Slave Métis Alliance hosted a meeting on Wednesday, November 14, 2012. Attendants of the meeting included executive board members and members of the North Slave Métis Alliance. All attendants had been to at least one of the Gahcho Kué site visits. The meeting consisted of reviewing and discussing the Gahcho Kué project. A staff member from the NSMA facilitated the focus group and asked structured questions to all of the members present (see Appendix A). Results from the focus group were recorded, analyzed, and compiled by the NSMA staff.

The following results were broken down into themes based on the question rubric (Appendix A).

Adequate consultation

Generally, the members of the North Slave Métis Alliance are satisfied with the way in which De Beers has consulted with the North Slave Métis community with regard to the Gahcho Kué project. Members appreciated visiting the site and there was general consensus:

“Yes, indeed, De Beers have been fairly good at keeping us informed. They went out of their way to bring us on a helicopter and boat tour. The site visit was good for building context”

In addition, members discussed how De Beers has been setting a respectable precedent for future resource extraction companies:

“Yes, indeed, De Beers did an excellent job of informing us over the past two years with the two site visits. They have facilitated us in making informed decisions. Overall, they have set a good standard for the other mining companies to follow”

The members agreed that De Beers has facilitated the Métis in making informed decisions on the development of the Project. They felt that De Beers has kept the Métis adequately consulted and has facilitated participation and input throughout the development process.

Benefits of the Project

Overall, the members feel that the mine will benefit the Métis community by providing stable employment, education, and apprenticeship opportunities. Nevertheless, the Métis would like to be involved in the growth of the Project. The members had consensus when they felt that it would benefit both De Beers and the Métis if an *Impact Benefit Agreement* was negotiated and decided upon. The North Slave Métis are enthusiastic to work with De Beers on Project-related business opportunities.

Socioeconomic effects

Overall, the members were concerned about the cumulative effects that the mine would have on Yellowknife, particularly the perceived negative social implications of new wealth and the impact of in-migration on regional infrastructure.

Members were concerned with Métis who were not prepared with the appropriate life skills for money management that comes with new wealth. The members were worried that newly employed Métis would be unable to successfully manage their finances:

“Newfound wealth with the Métis has led to negative social effects in the past, such as substance abuse, gambling, marital issues, and family violence”

One member mentioned the increase of pay-day loan companies in Yellowknife. This brought the discussion into the concerns regarding money management and life skills for future Métis employees of the Project:

“They [Métis members] are living hand-to-mouth”

The Métis feel that it is important that De Beers continues to offer life skills training. One member suggested that during orientation, De Beers should continue to concentrate on the life skills training. They recommended that De Beers try and persuade people of the long-term benefits of money management, rather than make it seem *forced*, as was the case with other mines:

“De Beers should teach the financial benefits of wealth for the long run, rather than arm twisting techniques”

Furthermore, the members were worried that the influx of people will possibly cause strain on existing infrastructure. The members dwelt on the present hardships of finding a family doctor or affordable housing in the city. They worried that more arrivals will cause excess pressure on already overburdened services. The members would like De Beers to help finance a drop-in centre and fund other local agencies. This would be similar to the Betty House, which is financially supported by BHP Billiton.

One member mentioned the pressures that in-migration would have on the traditional harvesting of fish along the Ingraham Trail. They were rightly concerned that with more people moving into Yellowknife, there will be a strain on local fisheries:

“Too many Southerners are moving to Yellowknife. They are invading our harvesting rights. They have fished out the lakes along the Ingraham Trail”

The group commented that De Beers should stock the local lakes yearly during mine operations. This would provide an off-set to the habitat destruction of Kennady Lake.

Last, the members would like a commitment that Métis employees will be able to succeed in the mine operations. They are dissatisfied with being offered menial labour jobs and would like to be trained and allocated management positions. The members would like De Beers to continue to keep education and training levels high, allocating time for employees to pursue and complete educational advances. There was some disappointment with previous developments, as members were not advanced, offered, nor trained for management positions.

In addition, they would like the training to be transferable. Upon closure of the mine, they want De Beers to assist them, if necessary, in finding work with other mines, or with De Beers globally.

“If people are up here [in the NWT], speaking with their Australian accents, why can’t we be working at other mines that De Beers operates globally?”

Increased Métis cultural acknowledgement

The members would like De Beers to continue serving traditional food at the mine camp, as per their commitment. They would like the Métis people to be the caterers. They complained about the poor quality of food with past developments.

Furthermore, the members want to receive the same treatment as other aboriginal groups. They would like their own cultural and historical display of Métis people located at De Beers beside existing aboriginal displays. They would like it to display the traditional Métis symbols, such as a Métis sash. Included would be written documentation of the history of the Métis in the Gahcho Kué region. A member was clear that the Métis would like to have equal treatment for all aboriginal groups.

Environmental effects

Generally, the members agreed that there is a risk of environmental contamination at the mine site. One mentioned that it was the *“cost of doing business in the North”*. The members worried about this risk, with one member mentioning:

“De Beers will never be able to remove the fear [of environmental contamination]. They [De Beers], will never be able to mitigate 100%. There will always be a weak link somewhere”

The members were concerned with the road, and other parts of the mine, becoming submerged when Kennady Lake is refilled and leaching contaminants. Their primary concern was about chemicals, such as ammonia nitrate, leaching into the lake at the latent stages. A member suggested using biodegradable hydraulic oil for machinery at the mine site. All of the members present agreed that this is a must. The members want reassurance that prior to flooding the pits, all machinery and chemicals will be removed.

Evidently, the members are concerned with the declining population of caribou. They need De Beers to continue monitoring the migration routes and to make sure that the caribou are not being affected by the Project. The members discussed the tailings piles and what mitigation measures would need to be in place. Generally, the members want De Beers to make sure that the caribou

will not be injured if they get on the piles or near the pits. The members would like De Beers to further consult them when it comes to deciding and implementing caribou mitigation measures.

One elder was concerned about the effect post-closure would have on the Lockhart River watershed. He was concerned that, although isolated during the mine life, water behind the dykes may leach into the water shed. He was concerned that the dykes would not be able to keep all water out of the watershed and that the water treatment facilities would not be up to par.

Conclusions and recommendations

The members settled on a number of conclusions about the mine site based on their site visits in 2011 and 2012. They are generally pleased with the consultation De Beers has been providing to date. However, they are concerned about a few socioeconomic and environmental facets, primarily the effect of new wealth on Métis members, the impact of in-migration on regional infrastructure, and the dewatering and refilling of Kennady Lake. Ultimately, the North Slave Métis understand that development and jobs are imperative to the north, and thus, they eagerly await the creation of future reciprocal business agreements with De Beers.

The North Slave Métis members made a number of recommendations after their site visit.

- ∞ The members want an independent monitoring agency, similar to SLEMA (Snap Lake Environmental Monitoring Agency) to oversee the Gahcho Kué project development. They are worried about self-regulation by De Beers.
- ∞ The members would appreciate to continue to be invited to visit the site and be part of the Wildlife Monitoring Plan. They want to be involved in future fish monitoring and tasting.
- ∞ The members want De Beers to disclose how many Métis are or will be working for the mine. They want to know and keep track of Métis members who are working with De Beers.
- ∞ De Beers should commit to using biodegradable hydraulic oil for machinery on-site.
- ∞ The North Slave Métis reiterate that they want to be involved with business opportunities with De Beers. They need De Beers to develop, negotiate, and sign an Impact Benefit Agreement as soon as possible.

Appendix A

Focus group questions

1. Are you satisfied that De Beers has consulted the Métis community adequately about the Gahcho Kué project?
2. Do you feel that the Gahcho Kué project will benefit the Métis community? If so, how?
3. Do you feel that the Gahcho Kué project will produce negative effects on the Métis community? If so, how?
 - a. Can you suggest ways that De Beers might lessen these negative effects?
4. What can De Beers do to help maintain the traditional lifestyle of its Métis employees?
5. Are you worried about the effect mine development will have on your traditional land and water?
6. What kind of participation would you like the Métis to have in planning and monitoring the Gahcho Kué project?
7. Are you satisfied that De Beers will restore the land appropriately after mining?