



# DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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## **Dehcho First Nations Will Not Permit Exploration in Edehzhie**

On November 1, Canada unilaterally terminated the protection of the ecologically sensitive Edehzie (Horn Plateau) in the heart of the Dehcho Territory. The area, which is known to contain valuable minerals, had been protected from mining and exploration since 2002 under an agreement between the DFN and Canada.

The Minister of INAC's unilateral decision to open the Horn Plateau, known in Dene as Edehzhie, has infuriated the Dehcho. The Plateau was slated to become a National Wildlife Area under the Protected Areas Strategy. Dehcho First Nations have been working since 1999 with Canada and other partners towards an Agreement to protect the area.

Today, Dehcho leaders announced that they will not permit any prospecting or exploration in Edehzhie. The DFN will monitor activity and remove any prospecting stakes they find. Anyone found to be in Edehzhie for the purposes of staking or exploring for minerals will be considered a trespasser and will be dealt with accordingly.

Grand Chief Sam Gargan says, "We cannot stand by and allow sacred ancestral lands and the watershed to be destroyed. We will protect our land through the removal of illegal stakes and through the courts."

Many Dehcho harvesters rely on the Edehzhie for their livelihood. Jonas Antoine, former Chair of the Edehzhie Working Group says, "The Horn Plateau is a sensitive ecosystem. We have been working with Canada to protect it for years. Now Canada has just made a mockery of their whole Protected Area Strategy. Any development could destroy this unique area. We must do everything we can to protect it for our ancestors and for our grandchildren."

Legal Counsel for Dehcho First Nations have been directed to prepare to challenge Canada's decision in court without prejudice to the Dehcho Process.

-Ends-

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