



DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

BOX 89, FORT SIMPSON, N.W.T. X0E 0N0
TEL : (867) 695-2355/2610 FAX : (867) 695-2038
EMAIL: dcfn@dehchofirstnations.com



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Canada Opens Protected Lands to Mining Dehcho Take Legal Action

The federal government has terminated the protection of the ecologically sensitive Edehzhie (Horn Plateau). Those lands, along with other sensitive lands in the Dehcho, had been protected from development since 2002 under an interim agreement between Canada, the Dehcho First Nations, and other partners. That agreement was a critical step in the negotiations towards resolving the Dehcho land claim.

Last year the Edehzhie Working Group, which was made up of the representatives to the Agreement, recommended establishing a National Wildlife Area to give permanent protection from mining and exploration.

However, on Friday, October 29, the DFN learned that Canada has refused to adopt the recommendation and has decided to terminate the interim protection of the subsurface, opening the sensitive area to mineral exploration and mining. The decision was made without consultations with the DFN.

Dehcho Grand Chief Gargan says: *“Canada’s decision is illegal and threatens this important habitat for woodland caribou, leaving the whole area vulnerable to exploration and mining. We won’t allow any staking to occur. Anyone who tries to stake in Edehzhie may have his stakes removed, and will be seeing us in court. Our constitutional land rights have been abused long enough by the way Canada applies the Canada Mining Regulations.”*

Dehcho leaders met Friday afternoon to review Canada’s position. Grand Chief Gargan says: *“Canada is once again violating an agreement with our people and trying to open sensitive lands to industrial development. We’ll fight them every step of the way.”*

Gargan says Dehcho leaders see this move as confrontational and an act of bad faith. Gargan says Canada’s action threatens to de-rail land claim and self-government negotiations which are progressing towards an Agreement-in-Principle. The DFN Leadership have decided unanimously to direct their legal counsel to begin a court challenge.

The DFN are a tribal council of nine Dene communities and two Metis communities.

For further information contact:
Grand Chief Samuel Gargan 867 695-2355
867 699-4880

Government of Denendeh