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Yellowknives Dene First Nation  
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April 8, 1999

Hon. Jane Stewart  
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

**Re. Closure and Reclamation of Giant Mine**

As you are no doubt aware, the future of Royal Oak's Giant Mine located on Yellowknives Dene Territory is very uncertain. Your department has been looking at various options for reclamation should the mine close and a strategy to deal with the estimated 260,000 tons of arsenic trioxide that is being stored underground.

We would like to provide to you a brief history of this troubled mine and its relationship with our First Nation. The Yellowknives Dene were neither consulted nor gave their consent for the mine to proceed in our traditional area. There was no environmental or socio-economic impact assessments, planing or mitigation measures taken to protect the interests of the Yellowknives Dene. Our elders distinctly remember this time, and the devastation it caused for our people. A prime hunting area was loss, and the water was contaminated to the extent that it caused the deaths of several of our community members in the 1950's.

Furthermore, there was no compensation made to our members as a whole for the continued loss of direct and indirect revenue from the territory. The ongoing extensive damage to the social, cultural and physical fabric of their lives and lands has never been addressed and there is an ongoing loss of their rights. Our members cannot continue to exercise their treaty and aboriginal rights as a result of the degradation of the lands and waters in and around the Yellowknives Dene traditional lands. We can no longer harvest wood, berries, medicine plants and traditional foods from this area. The water and the air continues to be contaminated by arsenic.

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For many years, the Yellowknives Dene have objected to the failure of the Government of Canada to adequately protect our interests. Not only have the communities not been compensated for their losses, but Canada has failed to take the appropriate measures to ensure that their treaty and aboriginal rights would not be interfered with.

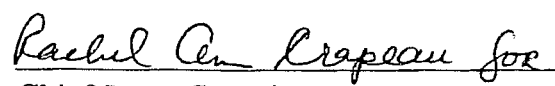
This in our view constitutes a breach of the Crown's trust obligation to the Yellowknives Dene and its members. We are filing a specific claim with your department for the loss of use, loss of life and environmental devastation to our lands.

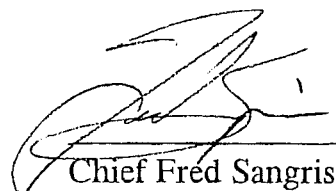
The government has an opportunity to address, in part, this situation and honor the commitment contained in *Gathering Strength* to build the capacity of First Nations. The economic arm of the Yellowknives Dene, Deton'cho Corporation, is uniquely suited to undertake the remediation of the surface and the rectification of the arsenic problem. Over the past several years, they have been awarded many contracts from DIAND for mine assessment and reclamation for abandoned mines located throughout our territory.

As you know, the problems surrounding Giant Mine have received national attention. By involving the First Nation that has been so disastrously affected for over sixty years by this mine in the restoration of the mine site could be viewed as a positive step. We wish to be involved in reclaiming this important part of our territory.

We fully endorse and support the proposal by Deton'cho Corporation to undertake the clean-up of Giant mine and all other mines in our territory. We would be pleased to discuss this in greater detail with officials from your department.

Yours sincerely,

  
Chief Jonas Sangris  
Dettah

  
Chief Fred Sangris  
Ndilo

c.c.: Chief Bill Erasmus, Denendeh National Office  
Robert Overvold, Regional Director General, DIAND NWT Region