

Youth camp moves forward

Nahanni Butte chief says progress made on agreement with Canadian Zinc

by April Hudson
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Nahanni Butte

Nahanni Butte Dene Band Chief Peter Marcellais says the band is more determined than ever to get a youth wellness camp up and running after reaching the final stages of a funding agreement with Canadian Zinc Corporation.

The band has been negotiating with Canadian Zinc since early this year for funding, which is connected to a proposed all-season road Canadian Zinc hopes to build to its Prairie Creek minesite.

Alan Taylor, Canadian Zinc's chief operating officer and vice-president of exploration, said in an e-mail the final amount is still being negotiated and at this time is confidential.

Marcellais said the band is happy with how negotiations for funding have proceeded.

"If we just go through the government, it's going to be years and years before we see that kind of money," he said, referring to an original plan from the community to look at funding through the GNWT as well.

"We want to make sure we run that youth camp. That's for the whole Deh Cho."

Band to co-manage studies

The agreement comes on the heels of a decision for the band to take a lead role in heritage studies, road surveying and wildlife monitoring for the proposed all-season road, which is currently in the stages of an environmental assessment.

According to documents forwarded to the *Deh Cho Drum* by Marcellais, Nahanni Butte's co-management of road-related studies comes after Canadian Zinc submitted a report on fish habitat to the



Nestled at the foot of this mountain, Nahanni Butte will be co-managing studies for a proposed all-season road to Prairie Creek Mine.

April Hudson/WNS photo

Mackenzie Valley Review Board on Sept. 6.

Marcellais said that report violated the band's policy in place that requires they co-manage any environmental and wildlife monitoring fieldwork on their traditional lands.

It also prompted an apology from Canadian Zinc Corporation's vice-president for environment and permitting affairs, David Harpley.

"We regret that, in our haste, we did not further inform the band of our plans," Harpley wrote in that letter.

"We have agreed that band members will accompany survey crews and lead the search for heritage resources. We will now also agree that band members will be involved in field studies related to stream crossings by the road on (Nahanni Butte's) traditional lands."

In an e-mail to the *Deh Cho Drum* regarding the letters, Mar-

cellais said they signify matters of importance to the people in the Deh Cho region as a whole.

"(They are important) especially since we are working with all parties on a framework for co-managing this important economic development project that hopefully could be expanded to include regional First Nations engagement," Marcellais stated.

Parks Canada seeks additional information

On Sept. 30, Nahanni National Park Reserve superintendent Jonathon Tsetso outlined a list of deficiencies in the existing studies related to the road and requested follow-up studies be done to address those deficiencies.

In particular, six wildlife studies completed between 1981 and 2016 failed to provide enough baseline data about migratory birds for Parks Canada to confirm which

species are present in the area, and in what numbers, he wrote.

Parks Canada is also asking for a survey of the collared pika, a species listed as special concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

Lastly, the department wants baseline vegetation surveys completed within the Nahanni National Park Reserve.

"Our request addresses the need to construct fine-scale field assessments in representative habitats and high priority areas for rare, valued and protected plants and assemblages," Tsetso wrote.

But Marcellais said Parks Canada's request will unnecessarily prolong the environmental review process.

"That's just going to delay everything," he said.

"We want to make sure they don't start messing around with the studies."