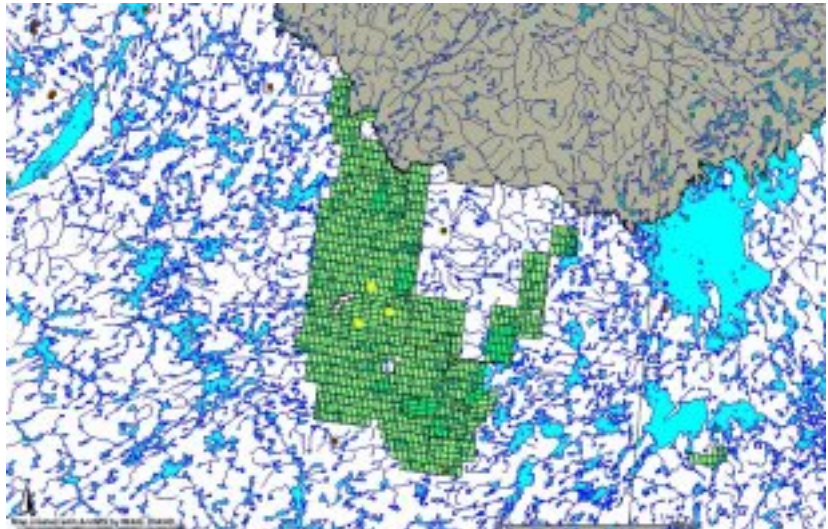


Baker Lake MVEIRB Intervention
on
the Ur-Energy Incorporated Proposal
to
Explore for Uranium East of Łútsël K'é, NWT
EA0607-003 Ur Energy Screech Lake

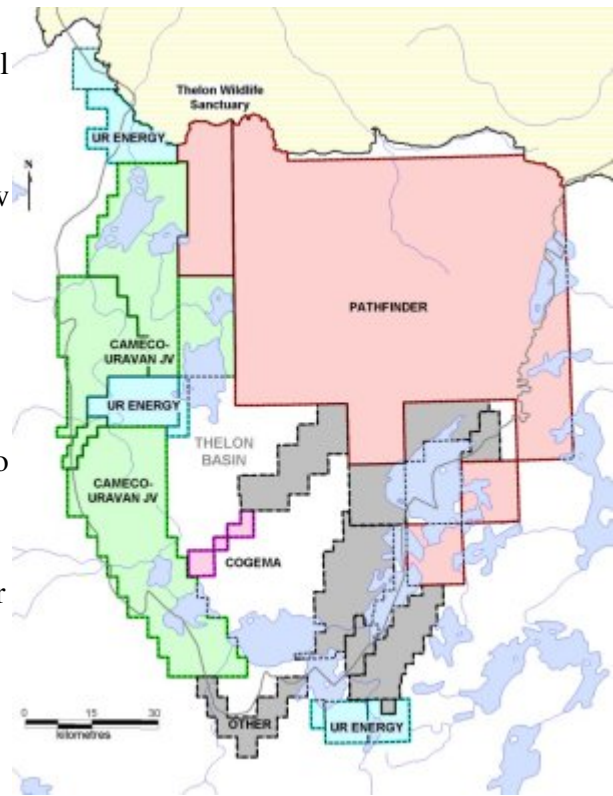
Orin Durey
P.O. Box 38
Baker Lake, Nunavut X0C 0A0
(867) 793-2389
do440@ncf.ca

What a difference a land claim makes. We must not repeat the mistakes of 30 years ago and the wild frontier cowboy uranium exploration boom of that era. The Upper Thelon Watershed is a part of the vast Baker Lake/Chesterfield Inlet watershed that includes the Thelon, Dubawnt and Kazan Rivers as well as the Quoich River watershed emptying into the west end of Chesterfield Inlet. Baker Lake maintains a long-term interest in the whole watershed going back 1000 years. 30 years of the evolution of case law and regulations around mineral exploration and aboriginal title as well as accelerating public support across Canada for environmentally-sound development support the interest of the people of Łútsël K'é and Baker Lake in their objective to protect the Land of the Upper Thelon Watershed and its renewable resources. In today's climate of heightened environmental awareness, the people of both communities can cooperate and demand that the companies minimize their cumulative impacts on the Land on both sides of the NWT/Nunavut border.



There are about 1800+ mineral claims and several dozen permits covering the Upper Thelon Watershed around Ur-Energy Incorporated's Screech Lake prospect--not just the dozen that Ur-Energy is putting forward for this particular Environmental Assessment (EA). The people need to keep their eye on the regional cumulative effects of all the prospects that Ur-Energy holds as well as all the prospects in the Upper Thelon Watershed held by other companies such as: Uravan Minerals Inc.,

Camphor Ventures Inc., Southern Resources Ltd., Brian Weir, Diamonds North Resources Ltd., Ruby Hill Exploration Inc., Aurora Geosciences Ltd., Pathfinder NWT Resources Ltd., Areva Resources Canada Ltd., Trevor Teed, Phil Jackson, 37999 Yukon Ltd., Matthew Mason, BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc., Strongbow Exploration Inc., to name a few. Ur-Energy has mineral claims butting right up against the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary's southern boundary. It's not clear why all those claims aren't also being considered as part of this EA. Perhaps Ur-Energy is venturing forth to test the regulatory waters as part of a consortium of all the companies. If at least a small project by a junior mining exploration company can go ahead in the Upper Thelon Watershed, then perhaps the others will be permitted to do the same during future exploration seasons.



Many of these other companies have holdings on both sides of the NWT/Nunavut border and around the south, east and northeast sides of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary. All these companies in the Age of the Internet are competing with each other for the same investment dollars by posting vast amounts of information on-line for anyone who has the time and inclination to go looking through it.

30 Years Ago--The Last Uranium Exploration Boom

What is happening in the NWT Thelon River Headwaters now is reminiscent of the Kivalliq a generation ago during the last big uranium exploration boom around Baker Lake and two decades before the signing of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA). Something like 100 helicopters and 200 exploration camps operated around Baker Lake within a 200-mile radius of the community. Helicopters were coming and going all day every day, landing at the edge of town or in front of the Hudson Bay store. Hundreds of southerners came and went from Baker Lake every week. There was even a NorCanAir Fokker sked running a couple times a week direct non-stop from Saskatoon to Baker Lake. The Iglu Hotel was full to overflowing every night. Four guys would share a room--two on the two twin beds and two on the floor in their sleeping bags--everybody paying full price of course (\$100/night in 1981 dollars). The only Inuit involved in the exploration boom were the maids who cleaned the hotel rooms and worked in the kitchen. Nobody ever asked any Inuk what he or she thought about the whole operation. The people were never consulted on anything.

In contrast, today the companies are falling all over themselves trying to establish good relations with the community of Baker Lake. Both Cumberland Resources and Areva have set up permanent offices in the hamlet. They host community feasts, public information meetings, participate in job fairs, hand out baseball caps, hand out blankets to elders, hire Inuit for exploration as prospectors, core splitters, grid layout, etc., etc. There's constant promise of better higher-paying more technical jobs over the horizon. There are 29 Nunavummiut working on Masters' Degrees in southern universities. Because of the NLCA and its daughter agencies and hearing processes invoked by the NIRB (Nunavut Impact Review Board), the NPC (Nunavut Planning Commission), the NWB (Nunavut Water Board) and KIA/NTI (Kivalliq Inuit Association/Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.), the companies have been in the community many times to explain their plans at public meetings and to present environmental impact statements at hearings. They transport elders out to prospective sites to show off what they're doing.



Choppers used to be parked just up the hill from the edge of the village whenever they came to town to make phone calls and eat lunch at the then new Iglu Hotel. One morning somebody had smashed all the glass on an A-Star parked nearby. After that the hamlet passed a by-law that all helicopters were to park at the airport. In 1979 the Inuit of Baker Lake took the federal government to court over low-flying helicopters and their harassment of caribou and won. The Inuit insisted on some kind of control over the Land as well as the practices of the mining companies. The people of Baker Lake were hopping mad about low-flying helicopters and harassment of caribou. The federal government agreed that Inuit indeed continued to hold some authority over the Land and it invoked the Caribou Protection Measures (CPM) and their Caribou Protection Areas (CPA). Some of this sentiment has reared its head again during the past couple of exploration seasons.

The Current Uranium Exploration Boom

Éútsël K'é would do well to benefit from Baker Lake's uranium exploration experience. The price of uranium has recently risen from \$7/lb. to \$72/lb. Areva is absolutely huge compared to Baker Lake. Areva hypes its deposits west of Baker Lake as being 100 million pounds of U_3O_8 . That's about \$1 trillion of uranium. Areva is capitalized at about Euro\$19.9 or approximately \$30 billion. And it is wholly owned by AEC, the giant French government company that operates all 59 nuclear power

plants in France.

Ur-Energy is including Saskatchewan guidelines for its uranium exploration drilling. Why not develop Nunavut guidelines and also use Nunavut federally-approved guidelines for CPM's and CPA's? Baker Lake's recent experience with companies like Pacific Ridge Exploration (where Pacific Ridge has proposed drilling for uranium inside the Piqqiq Fall Caribou Crossing National Historic Site (FCCNHS)) and Cumberland Resources (where NTCL has, without any consultation with the community, sub-contracted to store 5½ million litres of fuel in Baker Lake's community water supply) emphasizes the importance of on-going locally-controlled monitoring of all projects near Baker Lake, big and small. Where the NWB, NIRB, NPC and KIA/NTI do not look out for Baker Lake's interests, Baker Lake must be prepared to embark on monitoring and proposal assessment itself.



Ur-Energy mineral claims run generally north-south from the Ur-Energy camp depicted on the maps provided, right up to where they butt up against the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary boundary. Who is monitoring the TWS boundaries to make sure there are no incursions into the Sanctuary? Is the "honour system" good enough?

Areva and other uranium companies portray the geological Thelon Basin collocated with the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary in their website promotional literature. What kind of long-term threat does this represent to the TWS and the Upper Thelon Watershed?

The GN is committed to including TK (Traditional Knowledge) and IQ (Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit) in all its actions. What TK/IQ is being included in the applicants' proposals?

The UR-Energy hearings delineate procedures and evidence for on-going uranium exploration requests that set precedents and can also be used by other uranium exploration companies in the region. It's important to spend sufficient time considering Ur-Energy's application in detail.

What about including the upper Dubawnt River Watershed as well, since it is in the end, part of the Thelon watershed?

In addition to concerns about caribou being addressed by the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB), there are no definitive numbers for Barren-lands grizzlies. The

population is estimated to be 800 to 2000. The bears are especially vulnerable to contact with development. Any time I have encountered grizzlies on the Land, I have kept a wary distance. Any time they have appeared near a community they have been killed summarily. Barren-lands grizzlies need to be studied in greater detail to refine their status as a Species of Concern under the SARA (Species at Risk Act).

Land Claim Agreement and Monitoring

Even after you get a land claim agreement, you have to ever be vigilant, as NTI has discovered, finally recently filing a \$1 billion lawsuit against the federal government for lack of implementation of the NLCA. In addition, without any public input nor any mention during the EIA hearings, Cumberland Resources contracted with NTCL to store 5½ million litres of fuel in two barges in the ice all winter in Baker Lake's water supply. Surprise! Likewise, Baker Lake has just discovered that Pacific Ridge Exploration Ltd. has proposed to site its main uranium exploration drill camp for the 2007 season *inside* the Piqqiq Fall Caribou Crossing National Historic Site 65 km southeast of Baker Lake. This site is next to several caribou water crossings that are listed in the CPM's. INAC, NIRB, NPC and NWB have all OK'd Pacific Ridge's proposal without consulting with anybody in Baker Lake. Baker Lake only found out about it third hand by happenstance.

Nowhere across the North has the federal government ever volunteered from goodwill to negotiate a land claim. It's always a result of some outside impetus, usually focused on non-renewable resource extraction. Now the same process is unfolding in the NWT Thelon Headwaters. The UR-Energy consortium feels ill-used, I'm sure, by being tossed about between the Łútsël K'é Dene and the federal government. Well, if the federal government were a few degrees more proactive, we wouldn't all be going through this process now. A land claim would have been settled decades ago, maybe even a hundred years ago when the Łútsël K'é Dene first signed their treaty with the promise of a land claim some time in the future. The exploration companies would be consulting with the Łútsël K'é Dene on all aspects of exploration, including jobs and training, wildlife monitoring, consultation with the community, etc. In the meantime, now every mineral claim that's staked on the Barrens, every access road, every dam, chisels away at that land that's still available for the Łútsël K'é Dene to choose from. People who are concerned about long-term impacts on the Land should hold the federal government's feet to the fire now and extract as much as they can from any agreement, in order to increase the pressure the exploration companies will then apply to the federal government to finalize a claim.

International Reputation of Canadian Mineral Exploration Companies

Worldwide, mining companies and mineral exploration companies have a terrible reputation. In some places in the Third World people are beginning to rise up and run companies off sites that have become

the worst examples of poor mining practices, even when host governments have issued permits to the companies. Many of these companies are Canadian and reflect negatively on the Canadian federal government. These companies certainly are not seeking permission to explore these areas out of the goodness of their corporate hearts. They are willing to undergo these lengthy hearings here in the NWT and Nunavut in order to operate in a secure political environment, regardless of who owns what land claim, simply because they can bank on the end result being positive.

I urge the Board to carefully consider the ramifications of what is brought out in this hearing, keeping in mind the effects its decision will have on the neighbouring jurisdiction of Nunavut and the federal Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary.

Thank you, Orin Durey
Baker Lake