

Nicole Spencer

From: Phil Lyver [LyverP@landcareresearch.co.nz]
Sent: January 11, 2010 2:39 AM
To: Tawanis Testart
Cc: lkdfn_lands@yahoo.com; Phil Lyver
Subject: Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project

Dear Sir/Madam,

It is with much concern that I learn the proposal to develop a transmission line route in the vicinity of the Desnethche (the Lockhart River) and Tsankui Theda (The Old Lady of the Falls; Parry Falls) as part of the Talston Hydroelectric Expansion Project expansion remains under consideration by the Deze Energy Corporation Ltd and the Environmental Review Board. Please accept this letter as my opposition to this proposed development.

I lived and worked with the community of Lutsel K'e as a researcher between 1999-2001 and was privileged to attend the Desnethche Spiritual Gathering at Fort Reliance during those years. Core to the teachings of the Lutsel K'e elders was the cultural significance and spiritual relevance of Desnethche and Tsankui Theda in the lives of the people.

Tsankui Theda is considered an ancestor and therefore a source of the community's identity. For Denesoline, Tsankui Theda especially holds a life force or essence from which the people seek guidance, wisdom and healing and therefore draw much of their strength as a community. The relevance of the guiding role that Tsankui Theda played in the lives of the Lutsel K'e people was highlighted in narrative by the late Mr Jonas Catholique in 2000:

"I was raised up in the barrenlands and sometimes the caribou would not migrate around Artillery Lake. In those times we would look to The Lady of the Falls to see if the smoke [spray] was rising from the falls. If someone could see the smoke rising from the falls they would pray and ask the Old Lady for the direction of the caribou. The way the smoke would blow or tilt would be the direction the people would go hunting. We always got caribou when we followed the direction of the spray. That is the way it used to happen."

To permit development in the form of transmission lines and accompanying infrastructure would be an extreme violation of the region's sacredness and naturalness. To permit the proposed development would result in disempowerment of the Denesoline people at many different levels. I recognise that spiritual components of indigenous peoples' worldview are more often than not treated as 'cultural constructions', which imply that they are symbolic, rather than real. For the people of Lutsel K'e the life force of Desnethche and Tsankui Theda and the social, spiritual, health, environmental and even economic benefits they bring to Denesoline and the wider northern community are very real and should therefore be given utmost protection.

In closing, I ask that in your consideration of this proposal that you direct Deze Energy Corporation Ltd to consult further with the people of Lutsel K'e and affected communities to find an alternate route for the proposed transmission lines.

Yours sincerely

Dr Phil Lyver
Ecologist
New Zealand

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