

YA'THI NĒNĒ

SPRING 2020 | VOL 1

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



WHAT'S INSIDE?

MEET YOUR COMMUNITY
LAND TECHNICIANS

ESTABLISHING INDIGENOUS
PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

TRADITIONAL MEDICINES TO LOOK
FOR THIS SPRING

***SPRING
IS NEAR***

AND WE REMAIN
STRONG IN THE FACE
OF GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY.

THE FOCUS OF THIS SPRING 2020 ISSUE OF THE YA'THI NĒNĒ NEWSLETTER
IS FINDING HEALTH AND COMFORT IN COMMUNITY, NATURE, AND TRADITION.



PHOTO BY JOE BIGEYE

WHAT IS YA' THI NÉNÉ?

Ya' thi Néné is a non-profit organization owned by the seven Athabasca Basin communities of Hatchet Lake Denesuliné First Nation, Black Lake Denesuliné First Nation, Fond du Lac Denesuliné First Nation and the municipalities of Stony Rapids, Uranium City, Wollaston Lake, and Camsell Portage.

Our mission is to protect the lands and waters of the Athabasca Basin for the long-term benefit of its Denesuliné First Nations and Athabasca communities, guided by their knowledge, traditions, and ambitions, while being a respected partner in relations with industries, governments, and organizations who seek to develop the Athabasca Basin's resources.

A message from Garrett Schmidt, Executive Director of Ya' thi Néné:

Hello, and welcome to Ya' thi Néné's first-ever community newsletter.

Our goal with this newsletter is to share insight about activities happening in your traditional territory that could impact the land, water, and interests of the community members. In these newsletters, we'll be highlighting what's new at Ya' thi Néné and with our partner organizations, while also letting you know about opportunities that could benefit community members like yourself.

We understand, of course, that these are uncertain times we are living in. COVID-19 has impacted our work and many of our planned community meetings have been postponed while our staff work from home.

Though times are tough, we're proud that our recently hired Community Land Technicians have been able to provide some support to the First Nations Emergency Response Teams and that we were able to make a financial contribution to all seven Athabasca communities to support their operations.

We will continue to support the communities with our programs and hope that everyone keeps safe and healthy during these unprecedented times.

We are also proud to report that over the past 12 months Ya' thi Néné has grown and strengthened through our collaborative efforts with our communities and partners. We grew from two to eight staff, opening two new offices in the Basin for a total of four locations, including Saskatoon, Fond du Lac, Black Lake, and Hatchet Lake.

On the Lands front, we reviewed and responded to a total of 43 provincial permit applications since October 2019 (see map on page 9). One of our jobs is to help communities review permit applications and respond to the provincial and federal governments to make sure the rights of Basin residents are considered when issuing permits and licenses. We supported Basin communities to participate and have their voice heard in three Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission hearings (Cluff Lake, Beaverlodge and the Regulatory Oversight Report), and two Project Descriptions (Denison Mines and NexGen). We also participated in numerous Collaboration Agreement meetings with Cameco and Orano to support the Agreement's implementation.

And we are pleased to have awarded 22 post-secondary Athabasca Basin students \$55,000 in scholarships (\$2500 each) in collaboration with our partners Cameco, Orano, and Athabasca Basin Development.



Despite all that, we continue the administration of the Athabasca Community Trust (see page 8) and the development of management tools for ongoing accountability. Additionally, we recently established the Athabasca Education Employment and Development Committee (AEEDC) in collaboration with the Athabasca Economic 3 (AE3) planning committee to support training and employment initiatives in the Basin.

And last but not least, we are all very excited about our success in securing a three year contract with the Government of Canada to establish Indigenous Protected Areas throughout Nuhenéné. You can read more about Indigenous Protected Areas on page 10.

If you have questions about anything that you read in this newsletter, don't hesitate to reach out to our staff listed on the next page.

Yours in good health,
Garrett Schmidt



WHO IS YA' THI NÉNÉ?

Ya' thi Néné' Land and Resources' purpose is to protect the land, water, and air of Nuhenéné and to promote the people of the Denesuliné First Nations and Athabasca communities that reside there. To that end, we are always on the lookout for issues and observations from residents of the Basin. If you or someone you know has an observation, notices something, or hears a concern related to the land and water, we ask that you report it to your local Community Land Technicians (CLTs).

You can read more about your CLTs on page 3.

While your CLTs are on the ground in every community (with offices in Saskatoon, Fond du Lac, Black Lake, and Hatchet Lake), Ya' thi Néné is supported at every step by the staff listed below. Ya' thi Néné is also supported by an appointed board of four directors, including Victor Fern (chair, Fond du Lac), Elizabeth Denechezhe (secretary, Hatchet Lake), Raymond MacDonald (director, Black Lake), and Al Sayn (director on behalf of the Athabasca Permanent Resident Organization).

Don't hesitate to reach out to any of these staff or board members with any specific concerns that fall under their area of expertise.

Shea Shirley (B.Sc. [RRM], MES, PAg)

Environmental Land Use Planner

With a background in environmental sustainability and resource management, Shea's job is all about permit applications, land issues, and mapping for Ya' thi Néné's environmental and land based projects.

You should reach out to Shea if you want to report a land issue, have questions about the Provincial Government's permit applications, or the land-use plans for the Athabasca Basin. Read more about this on page X.

You can reach Shea at shea.shirley@yathinene.com, by phone at (306) 291-6397, or you can fax land issue information to (306) 802-4895.

Vickie Nilghe

Administrative Assistant

Vickie has been with Ya' thi Néné for six months this spring. She is originally from Fond du Lac, but now resides in Saskatoon with her husband and children.

You should reach out to Vickie if you need to get in touch with Ya' thi Néné with general questions or concerns, or if you want to learn more about the Athabasca Community Trust.

You can reach Vickie at vickie.nilghe@yathinene.com, in office at (306) 477-1251, on her cell at (639) 998-0941, and by fax at (306) 802-4800.

Dene Cree Robillard (B.Ed.)

Development Coordinator

Dene's job is to facilitate the training and employment of Basin residents. He's also around to support new businesses and the growth of community workforces.

You should reach out to Dene if you have questions about our scholarship programs, training and education initiatives, workforce growth, and business development.

You can reach Dene at dene.robillard@yathinene.com, in the office at (306) 477-1251, on his cell at (306) 203-1812, or you can fax documents to (306) 802-4895.

Garrett Schmidt (P.Eng, MBA)

Executive Director

Garrett works under the supervision of the Board of Directors on managing Ya' thi Néné's operations and administration. He is responsible for working with the Board, employees and contractors on managing lands and resources, upholding the community's interests and collaborating with Ya' thi Néné's numerous partner organizations. Garrett is passionate about developing Ya' thi Néné into a strong, independent and professional organization that serves the Athabasca residents.

You can reach Garrett at garrett.schmidt@yathinene.com in the office at (306) 477-1251, on his cell at (306) 370-3358, or you can fax documents to (306) 802-4800.

MEET YOUR community LAND TECHNICIANS

Jean Tsannie

(Hatchet Lake & Wollaston Lake)

Jean grew up hunting, trapping, and fishing with her parents in Wollaston. Now, she has three kids and four grandkids, and works hard to pass these traditional values on to her own family. Jean has had many jobs, and is also a Canadian Ranger who conducts search and rescue and disaster relief when needed. She is excited for spring and all of the opportunities that getting out on the land this season will present.

Reach Jean at jean.tsannie@yathinene.com or by phone at (306) 980-8551. She can be found in the Ya' Thi Néné Lands and Resources office in the Hatchet Lake Economic Development building.

Nathan Lidguerre

(Uranium City & Camsell Portage)

Nathan has a background in safety and emergency response planning. He lives in Fond du Lac and has two kids, who he likes to take out on the land to pass on the traditional knowledge. He is looking forward to building a log cabin for them this summer, and to using his position as a CLT to go out into the bush and be the eyes and ears of the community.

Reach Nathan at nathan.lidguerre@yathinene.com or by phone at (306) 930-0717. He can be found in the Ya' Thi Néné Lands and Resources office by the band hall in Fond du Lac, and will be travelling to Uranium City and Camsell Portage regularly.

Derek Cook

(Fond du Lac)

Derek is the father to three daughters and three sons, and has lived in Fond du Lac for the past 20 years. He is passionate about working with youth and Elders to gain knowledge about the land, and to pass important skills and learning on to the next generation. Derek is looking forward to using his role as a CLT to bring Dene people and the Far North together and to make positive change.

Reach Derek at derek.cook@yathinene.com or by phone at (306) 961-4809. He can be found in the Ya' Thi Néné Lands and Resources office by the band hall.

Ian Robillard

(Black Lake & Stony Rapids)

Though Ian is the youngest CLT, he has years of experience working on the land and keeping the traditional ways alive. From Black Lake, he has two kids and is a very family-oriented person. He is passionate about bringing his culture and the teachings of his Elders to the youth. In his spare time, Ian likes to get outside with his family and to teach his kids and himself more about the traditional ways of knowing.

Reach Ian at ian.robillard@yathinene.com or by phone at (639) 533-2015. He can be found in the Ya' Thi Néné Lands and Resources office in the Ventures trailer.

*From left to right:
Nathan Lidguerre,
Jean Tsannie,
Ian Robillard, and
Derek Cook.*





what does it mean to be a **COMMUNITY LAND TECHNICIAN?**

Our vision for the Community Land Technicians is to continue the proud and ancient Denesųliné tradition of being stewards of the land. By keeping close watch on the land, we ensure that there is always a Denesųliné presence within Nuhenéné (our land). The Community Land Technicians (CLTs) are also here to become mentors to our youth and respected community members who are held in high esteem by all.

While all of your CLTs currently live and work on the Saskatchewan side of Nuhenéné, what they represent goes beyond borders. They are here to act as a model of what a respectful and effective steward of the land looks like. Your CLTs are also all fluent in Denesųliné. Because of their bilingualism, the CLTs are fully able to communicate with all community members, and especially our Elders. It is only through the knowledge of our Elders in the language of our ancestors that we can keep our culture alive and protect Nuhenéné.

So what does a CLT actually do?

The answer to that is: a whole lot.

On the LAND side of things, their job is to monitor the land, water, and air, and ensure that it is healthy and being used sustainably. This means gathering data on culturally important species, critical habitat, and the potential impacts of human development and forest fires. They also monitor sacred areas for impacts and encroachment, and will evaluate any other land concerns brought to their attention on an ongoing basis.

Meanwhile, they put their fluency in Denesųliné to good use by collecting and documenting Traditional Ecological Knowledge for the good of future generations. They get out onto the land often, ground-truthing the protected areas that they collect from Traditional Knowledge (confirming locations of known burial sites, caribou crossings, overnight sites, spiritual sites, and other similarly important areas).

On the PEOPLE front, your CLTs are just as busy. It is their job to engage with the seven Athabasca Basin Communities on Ya' thi Néné's behalf, making sure that all community members are up to date on developments in the area. The CLTs will also be mentoring youth and promoting careers in science and resource management. This includes work in schools, passing on the Denesųliné language and ensuring that the youth are learning the words that describe the land and its protocols.

It is very important to all of us that the CLTs are involved with youth not only in schools, presenting and discussing in the classroom, but also out on the land, teaching firsthand skills and traditional values.

It's not just about kids though! Once the COVID-19 Pandemic has passed and regular programming can resume safely, Ya' thi Néné will resume frequent meetings with Elders where specific questions and topics are discussed for feedback and approval. These meetings are very important for the protection of Nuhenéné. CLTs play a big role in organizing and facilitating these gatherings.

And last but not least, the CLTs also participate in scientific studies and research in partnership with universities and government partners within Nuhenéné. It is only by working together both within our communities and with external partners that we can keep Our Land safe for our children and all future generations to come.

In these photos, you see the CLTs taking their Traditional Ecological Knowledge training course. This course was held on March 3-6, 2020 in Hatchet Lake. This training certified the CLTs in the proper methods of collecting traditional knowledge from Elders and Knowledge holders in their respective communities. During this training, CLTs were able to practice their new skills by interviewing community members on their knowledge of Woodland Caribou.



KEEPING HEALTHY IN TRADITIONAL WAYS



MEET LINDA:

Linda McNabb is a grandmother first and foremost. She is a mother, a wife, a daughter, and a sister. She comes from a long line of Denesųtiné healers and leaders, and was raised in a household that always used traditional medicine. Her careers have been many and varied, from mine operations to human resources, tribal councils to forestry and oil sands. Linda has a formal training in traditional medicines, and has retired to Saskatoon to be near her grandchildren. Her learning about plants and protocols and tradition is ongoing and lifelong.

Translations by Rose Pacquette, Fond du Lac.

by Linda McNabb

When I think about spring and the plants that are coming back, what immediately comes to mind is that spring is a time for cleansing and renewal. The days are longer and the flowers are in bloom, and it makes spring one of my favourite times of year. It's also a really important time with regards to our health. Over the winter, we tend to be more stagnant and less active, and we build up impurities in our bodies. Winter is a time of preservation and maintenance, and spring is a time of cleansing and renewal.

If you were to go outside right now, you would see that the snow is melting and the new life is sprouting— the crocuses and the new grass and the fresh greens— you would see that there is growth and transformation all around us. As nature wakes up after the long winter, you can see the different types of plants that are occasionally useful for cleansing and detoxing the body after a long winter.

In the early spring you get these new little sprouted raspberry leaves. In Dené they're *Tthekáł jíé t'áné*. These early spring raspberry leaves can be used to make into a tea that cleanses the impurities that have built up in your body over the winter and help build the immune system.

Another is bear berries. In Dené that's *sas jíé*. They grow in jack pine (*Ganł*) areas, close to the ground. They look like cranberries, but if you bite into them they're chalky, not like a cranberry. The leaves and the stems (and later on in the year, the berries)— these make a tea as well. They're an excellent cleanse for the kidneys, the liver, the spleen, the pancreas, all of the internal organs.

One of the early flowers are dandelions. Dandelions, the bright yellow flowers, the leaves, and even the roots can be made into a tea that also cleanses the liver.

There's muskeg tea, *nagodhi lidí*. It can also be made into a tea that's full of vitamins and minerals that are good for the body as well.

There's wild rose bushes (*edaghos t'acháye*), and those delicate pink little flowers that grow, and the berries— when those are boiled into a tea, it boosts the immune system and helps build iron and vitamin C stores in the body.

These are all early spring plants that grow around us, and these are just a few of them! I truly think it's time for us to rediscover which one of those plants can be safely harvested and used by us for health benefits. But we have to be cautious, as there are also plants out there that are not safe to eat or drink. We need to relearn the plants and the berries that our ancestors used to use.

This pandemic is an opportunity to return to some of our traditional ways of foraging and harvesting, to help us be healthier. Our ancestors lived closely to the land, and they foraged for berries and plants, and they hunted and they fished and they were healthy and fit because they worked hard and had to survive. They slept enough hours every night, they drank lots of water, and they were healthy people.

I think that sometimes we take for granted that we are truly blessed to live in a part of the world that has such a diversity of plants that grow right outside our back door, and they're there for us to use just as our ancestors did. And today we use far less plants for sustenance than our ancestors did.

Now, when people up north think of plants, they think "I'll go pick cranberries, or raspberries, or blueberries," but they don't think of all the other plants that are growing around us that our ancestors used. There's wild onions and there's cattail roots. There's so much out there that I think we need to rediscover.



One of the things that I was taught as a young girl was that, if you're in turmoil, either mentally, spiritually, or physically, you need to go and walk in the bush. You need to put your moccasins on and walk in the bush and reconnect. You can't be sad and down when you're out in the bush and all of this life is around you and the birds are singing and you hear frogs croaking and all of that will lift you. In all aspects of your life.

This spring, take a moment to connect yourself with the land. Go walk in the bush, and accept the transformation and the growth that is all around you. Learn from it, and let yourself be cleansed by it. Respect the land and all that it gives us, and remember how our ancestors lived not just on the land, but with it.

Masi-Cho.

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES FROM COVID-19

The year was 1918, and the acrid smell of smoke filled the air. Elders worked hard to keep their communities safe, building sacred fires and setting caribou hides and hooves alight in pathways and near the entrances to dwellings. This smoke, along with prayers and ceremonies, was our traditional way to keep illness from sweeping through our communities.

Next, the year was 1944 and the smell of burning hooves and hides filled the air once more. This time, new Elders (and some of the old ones too) built sacred fires and held ceremony in homes and in doorways once again. This time, there were more and bigger roads to build fires in.

Now, it's 2020, and a new group of Elders is taking the same action to keep our people safe. Our traditional ways are as important to us now as they were then, more than 100 years ago, and as they'll always be.

We burn the hides and hooves of the caribou who give their lives for the people, to thank them for their gifts and ask them for protection from the pandemic that is sweeping across the rest of the world. In our legends, the caribou asks that we respect him and pass on to our children our knowledge and our reverence for the caribou and for all that they give us.

A Story:

Back in the days when our ancestors walked this land, a virus came upon our Dene people. The father of a family that was suffering asked The Creator to send a spirit animal to protect and heal the people. A caribou approached him, and when the man asked why it was there, it said:

"You prayed to the creator to send a spirit animal for the protection of your people and our creator has answered your prayers. I am here to give my life to you so that you can use me to protect your people from sickness. Use my body for tools, clothing, blankets, whatever you need. Burn my hooves and my hide to keep the virus away. All I ask is that you have respect for me and pass on the knowledge— teach your children why I give my life to you."

That is why we burn the caribou hides and hooves, and this is why we must give respect to the caribou.

Thank-you Senator Simon Robillard for sharing your knowledge.



These photos display just one of many successful Trust projects that we've helped facilitate over the last three years.

In 2019, 55 proposals were received by the Trust and 30 projects were approved. The Community Garden in Fond du Lac is an example of a project that has received funding over multiple years. The garden operates from June until winter each year. Funds from the Trust are used to support Garden Workers and Students to plant, care for and harvest the fruits and vegetables produced as well as take care of and maintain the facilities. Produce has included strawberries, cucumbers, green peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, cabbage, romaine lettuce, celery, carrots, beets, green onions, pumpkins, apples, and broccoli.

UPDATES FROM YOUR development coordinator

FACILITATING WORKFORCE GROWTH, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, AND LIFE LONG LEARNING IN THE BASIN

It comes as no surprise that many ongoing opportunities have been cancelled or delayed because of the evolving COVID-19 situation. Please take note of the following updates:

The Orano Mill Utility Operator training (May 2020) has been postponed. Check in often for new opportunities once social distancing regulations have been lifted.

Ya' thi Néné Lands and Resources (along with Cameco and Orano) are in the development stage of establishing a Basin-specific skills database software application. This online application will highlight any and all available skills of Athabasca Basin residents, and provide information on employment opportunities as well as education and training programs offered by organizations operating in the Athabasca Basin, including Cameco and Orano. When the service is up and running, look for updates on how to use this application.

Meanwhile, the recent "team drilling diamond driller helper" training was a success, with eleven out of twelve course completions and hirings out of the program this past November. Unfortunately, all Cameco and Orano operations and summer hires are currently halted until further notice. The next Athabasca Interagency Group (AIG) meeting (which was set for May of 2020) has also been postponed until further notice.

We are, however, currently engaging all current mineral exploration company permit applicants for local procurement and employment opportunities. The Ya' thi Néné scholarship program is also proceeding as per usual, with the application deadline approaching quickly on July 31st, 2020.

You will be able to apply for the scholarship online at yathinene.ca/scholarships.

promoting THE PEOPLE.

The Athabasca Community Trust (ACT) administers payments received from Cameco and Orano under the Collaboration Agreement for the long-term benefit of the Athabasca First Nations and the Athabasca Communities. The Trust's guiding principles are protection of capital and growth of income over the long-term. It sets out strict rules about how funds can be invested, who can access funds, and what the funds can be used for. The Trust separates funds under its management from community operating budgets, enabling long-term planning for future community needs. The Trust is managed by one Corporate Trustee (The Canada Trust Company) and a Community Trustee from each of the 3 First Nations including Earl Lidguerre from Fond du Lac, Terri-Lynn Beavereye from Black Lake, Charlie Denechezhe from Hatchet Lake, and Margaret Powder on behalf of the 4 communities of Stony Rapids, Uranium City, Wollaston Lake, and Camsell Portage.

Trust Funds can be accessed twice a year by Community members through the submission of Community Proposals. Application deadlines are April 30th and September 30th. Please note that the April 30th 2020 application deadline has been extended to May 15th, 2020, due to COVID-19. Funds can be used for projects that meet the following criteria including community planning, health and well-being, community housing, community infrastructure, protection of language, culture and traditional land-use, community events/gatherings, educational/economic opportunities for members and community business development and capacity building.

For more information on the Trust, interested applicants can go to our website (<https://yathinene.ca/the-trust/>) and apply online or they can contact our office (306-477-1251), fax applications in (306-802-4800), email to admin@yathinene.com, or speak to their community Trustee.



**ONE OF YA' THI NÉNÉ'S ROLES IS TO
SUPPORT THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
ATHABASCA COMMUNITY TRUST.**

Ya' thi Néné

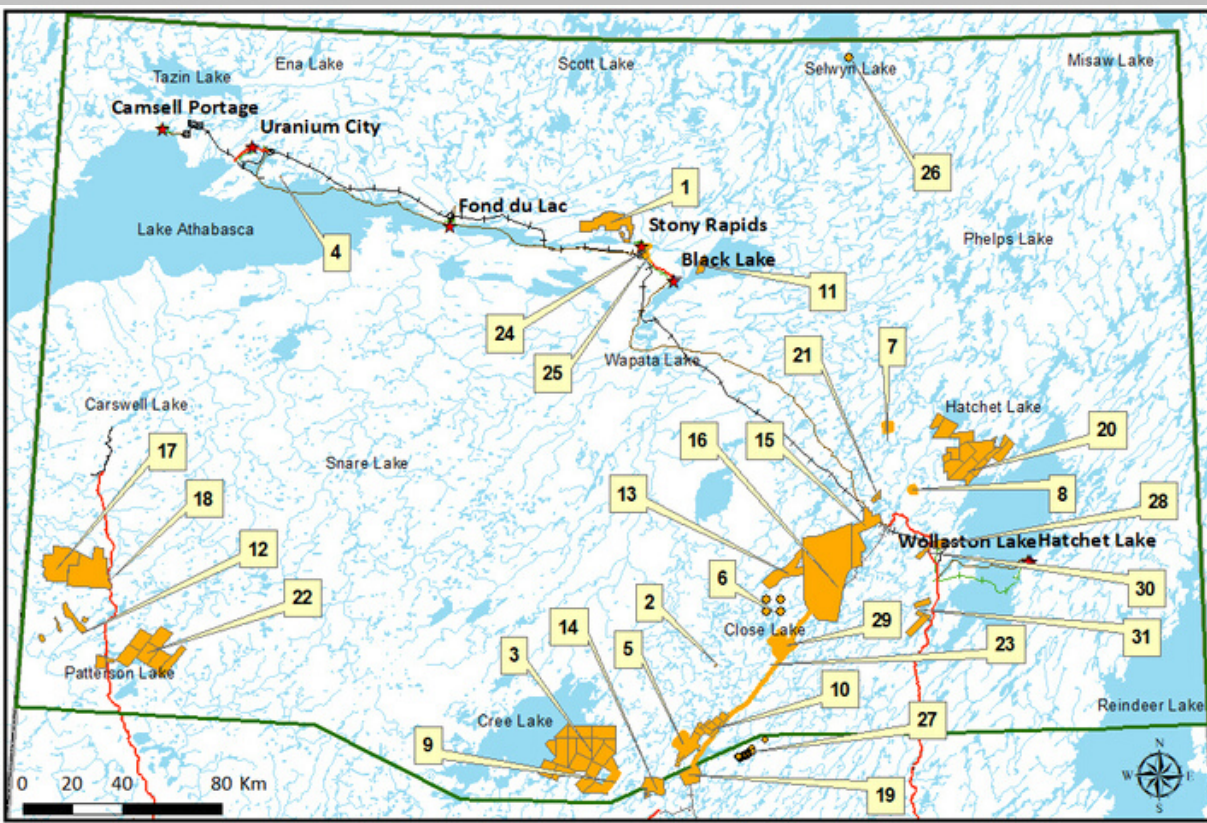
and the DUTY TO CONSULT

When Ya' thi Néné was formally established in 2016, one of its central mandates was to assist in the Duty to Consult process and ensure that the voices and concerns of the Athabasca Denesūliné were heard and taken into account every time government and industry wanted to develop in Nuhenéné.

Since October of 2019, we've been doing just that. Every time the Duty to Consult process is triggered by a potential project that may threaten a First Nations' right to hunt, trap for food, gather, or fish, the company or government that proposed the project must consult with the First Nations in question.

That's where we come in. When the Nation is notified, so are we—and we begin immediately to make sure your interests are being safeguarded. We act as a go-between, making sure that every company is properly consulting the people. We analyze the permit, we examine our Traditional Knowledge database, develop maps, and consult the chief and council, land users, and wider communities.

The size of the permitted area does not imply the scale of the work. For example – there could only be 15 – 20 exploration drill holes in the entire permitted area. The 31 'Active Permits' identified on the map represent companies requesting permits from October 2019 to date of publication.



THIS MAP SHOWS ALL ACTIVE PERMITS FROM AUGUST 2019, LASTING FOR THE NEXT 18 MONTHS

ALX Uranium Corp.

- 1. Falcon Nickel Program (exploration)

CanAlaska Uranium

- 2. West McArthur (exploration)
- 3. Cree East (exploration)

Cameco

- 4. Fishhook Bay (remediation)

Denison Mines Corp.

- 5. Moon Lake (exploration)
- 6. Darby Lake (exploration)
- 7. Murphy Lake (exploration)
- 8. Waterbury (exploration)
- 9. Ford Lake (exploration)
- 10. Wheeler River (exploration)

Forum Energy

- 11. Fir Island (exploration)

NexGen Energy Ltd.

- 12. SW1 (exploration)

Orano Canada Inc.

- 13. Close Lake (exploration)
- 14. Martin Lake (exploration)
- 15. Waterbury UEM (exploration)
- 16. Waterbury/Cigar Lake (exploration)
- 17. Alexandra (exploration)
- 18. Nikita (exploration)
- 19. Getty Russell (exploration)

Purepoint Uranium Group Inc.

- 20. Red Willow (exploration)
- 21. Henday (exploration)
- 22. Hook Lake (exploration)

SaskPower

- 23. IP3 Transmission Line (vegetation maintenance)
- 24. ST511 Distribution Line (vegetation maintenance)
- 25. ST512 Distribution Line (vegetation management)

Selwyn Lake Lodge

- 26. Legitimize an existing lagoon

Skyharbour Resources Ltd.

- 27. Moore Lake (exploration)

UEX Corporation

- 28. Vixen Lake (exploration)
- 29. Christie Lake (exploration)
- 30. Lampin Lake (clean-up)
- 31. West Bear (exploration)

'Active Permits' represent which companies (e.g. Denison Mines Corp.) possess valid permits and may or may not be performing work. For more information on project status, Basin residents are encouraged to contact Ya' thi Nene directly (Shea Shirley, shea.shirley@yathinene.com).

The respective companies represented on the map (see List) have all granted approval for Ya' thi Nene Land and Resource Office to share their permitted areas. Other permits exist but would have been issued by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment before October 2019 and are not illustrated on the map.

DEVELOPING Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas IN NUHENÉNÉ

Since time immemorial, the Denesųliné have maintained a deeply abiding and long lasting connection to the land. To us, this land (the Athabasca Denesųliné territory) is referred to as “Nuhenéné.”

The protection of Nuhenéné is no small task. The Athabasca Denesųliné way of life is deeply connected to the health of the land and the way its resources are managed. Our cultural identity, our spirituality, and overall wellbeing are all tied to how we interact with Nuhenéné.

Part of that is the Athabasca Denesųliné's role as caribou people. It's no mystery as to why this culture is so deeply linked to the barren-ground caribou that provide the cornerstone of Denesųliné culture. And as the stewards of the caribou and of Nuhenéné, it is the sacred duty of the Athabasca Denesųliné to protect this land and preserve its resources for future generations.

It is undeniable that we live in uncertain times. The world is quickly changing, and it is important now more than ever that we ensure our place in it is not swept away on the current. The integral link between the Athabasca Denesųliné and Nuhenéné presents a promising opportunity in the world of conservation and environmental protection.

The establishment of an **Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)** in Nuhenéné is the perfect way to support the Athabasca Denesųliné's place as guardians of the land, water, air, and all the creatures that live there.

For questions, please contact IPCA Contract Project Manager Tina Giroux at tina.giroux@yathinene.com, by phone at (306) 930-7776, or speak with any of your local CLTs.

What, exactly, is an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)?

IPCAs are usually defined as conservation areas whose creation and ongoing management are Indigenous led, with Indigenous Peoples having the primary role in determining what is important to that specific IPCA. That **includes** things like the values and objectives that the IPCA holds as sacred, the boundaries of the IPCA, the management plans for the IPCA, and the governance structures for the IPCA.

For the Nuhenéné IPCA, this means that the Athabasca Denesųliné decide what values and priorities will guide and direct all work being done to develop protected areas. The communities also all get participation in the process of determining where the protected areas will be located and their size.

When speaking with Elders about what protection of the land means to them, they often talk about the generations of the future and the responsibility of caring for and “watching” the land and water for *them*, and ensuring that the traditional ways of the Denesųliné and the rule of natural and indigenous laws will continue for many more generations to come.

It is with this in mind that the Athabasca Denesųliné have shown interest in developing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas within Nuhenéné in order to ensure that long term commitments by all governments and individuals are upheld in perpetuity. That is why Ya' thi Néné Lands and Resources is so excited to announce their success in securing funding over multiple years to assist the Athabasca Denesųliné in developing and implementing Protected Areas within Nuhenéné (Saskatchewan).

This IPCA initiative is so ground breaking because there are currently no other IPCAs within the province of Saskatchewan, and very few like it in the world. We have the opportunity to break trail for other First Nations across Canada that might also want to establish IPCAs and assert their right to steward their own lands.

But we are not alone in the development of this groundbreaking new way of keeping the land safe. Ya' thi Néné has partnered with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and with the provincial and federal governments to make this happen. With the guidance of the Athabasca Denesųliné, we will develop a path forwards to a successful project. We know that by working together with our communities and with our partners, we can make great and lasting change.

The Athabasca Denesųliné are being consulted at every step of the IPCA planning process.

Ya' thi Néné Lands and Resources is in the ongoing process of developing an Athabasca Denesųliné IPCA Development Framework to ensure that all of our Athabasca Denesųliné communities will have the control and the voice that they deserve in the project planning over the coming years. It is our job to make sure that you feel you have had complete participation and have received complete transparency from our partners.

Elders, youth, leadership, and land-users will be involved every step of the way. This is Nuhenéné, and it is important to us that you have your say.

**IT'S NORMAL
TO FEEL SAD, STRESSED, CONFUSED,
SCARED, OR ANGRY DURING A CRISIS.**



Talking to people
you trust can help.
Reach out to your friends,
family and your fellow
community members.

Your Community Land Technicians are here for you.

**YA' THI NÉNÉ'S PURPOSE IS TO PROTECT THE LAND, WATER, AND AIR
OF NUHENÉNEÉ AND TO PROMOTE THE PEOPLE OF THE DENESŪHINÉ
FIRST NATIONS AND ATHABASCA COMMUNITIES THAT RESIDE THERE.**

That's why we're always on the lookout for issues and observations from residents of the Basin. If you or someone you know has an observation, notices something, or hears a concern related to the land and water, we ask that you report it to one of our Community Land Technicians (CLTs). You can read more about our CLTs on page 3.

When you make a report to your CLT, they will take the time to listen to your concerns and ask you questions. After collecting as much information as possible they will refer the issue to our head office, where research and analysis will be done and actions to resolve the issue will be determined.

Updates will be provided to the person(s) who reported the issue on a regular basis. Issues that are successfully resolved will be communicated to the communities.

Some examples of issues that could be reported include:

- Seeing an outfitter abandoning an out-post camp, leaving debris and garbage
- Finding an abandoned exploration camp with waste left behind
- A sick or diseased animal (e.g. fish with unknown cysts)
- Observations on changes to the environment (animal behaviour, habitat, etc.)
- Issues with hunting/trapping/fishing/gathering

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY LAND TECHNICIAN
OR SHEA SHIRLEY AT [SHEA.SHIRLEY@YATHINENE.COM](mailto:Shea.Shirley@yathinene.com) OR CALL (306) 477-1251.**

WE NEED CONTENT FOR OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER.

Send your photos to
admin@yathinene.com with
the subject line "YNLR
Newsletter" to be featured in
our summer 2020 issue!



YA' THI NÉNÉ LANDS AND RESOURCES

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