

Public voices thoughts on road

Sessions held to hear from people who could be affected by the proposed all-season road for Prairie Creek Mine

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LIIDLII KUE/FORT SIMPSON

More than 30 people filed into the recreation centre early last week to hear a presentation and give feedback about the proposed Prairie Creek Mine all-season road.

"When we wake up in the morning and we open our eyes the first thing we want to hear are birds," said Hilda Tsetso, a Fort Simpson resident who said she was concerned about migration patterns and how the proposed road might affect them at the meeting.

The technical session was hosted by the Mackenzie Valley Review Board.

Alan Ehrlich, manager of environment impact assessment for Canzinc, said the point of the session was to hear from the people who might potentially be affected by the proposed road.

"The board has always taken traditional knowledge on par with Western scientific knowledge," he said.



Wilbert Antoine, left, and Alan Taylor from Canzinc give a presentation about the benefits of an all-season road compared to a winter one. Joanne Barnaby who was hired to independently coordinate the sessions, stands next to them. The presentation was held at the recreation centre on July 5. - Joseph Tunney/NNSL photo

Following an introduction presentation from the review board, Canzinc, the company behind the project, also made a presentation that outlined the details of the

proposed project and how the all-season road compares to the already approved winter road.

The proposed all-season road is supposed to come up from the south, past Fort Liard and Nahanni Butte and then cut into the Nahanni National Park Reserve until it gets to the Prairie Creek Mine.

While the point of the meeting was not to come to any conclusive decisions, opinions on the road were mixed.

"As far as Nahanni, we did our (traditional knowledge) study and I'm comfortable with it," said another meeting goer.

Other comments brought up were questions regarding when the road would become publicly accessible, the effects that would have and whether it will change people's ability to harvest in the area.

It was also brought to the public's attention that the road will be removed once the mine closes.

Ehrlich said this is the first time the review board has held technical sessions based on cultural impacts that focus on traditional knowledge.

These technical sessions came after the review board met with Nahanni Butte and Fort Simpson community members to hear what should be prioritized, resulting in Canzinc releasing an assessment report the review board deemed adequate.

After these meeting Ehrich said there is going to be a round of written information requests followed by the hearings which will decided the fate of the project.

He said while the time until the hearings are done may vary, the board is mandated to finish them in a timely matter.

"The decisions available to the board will go to the (federal minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)," Ehrlich said.