

Correction

Peyton Moore's name was misspelled in the Community Clips in the Jan. 31 edition of *Deh Cho Drum*. The *Drum* apologizes for any confusion or embarrassment this may have caused.

NEWS Briefs

Hockey action in Fort Providence

Fort Providence is hosting its annual hockey tournament this weekend.

The Kingland Ford Hockey Tournament will begin on Feb. 8. Five teams have registered for the tournament including two from Fort Providence and one each from Fort Simpson, Lutsel K'e and Behchoko.

The finals for the tournament will take place on Sunday afternoon. Last year the Hay River Eagle 88s won the tournament.

Film road tour coming to Fort Simpson

Fort Simpson has been chosen as one of six stops on the Yellowknife International Film Festival's Road Tour.

Western Arctic Moving Pictures is bringing a package of films that were shown at the sixth annual festival to six communities. The tour features films from the NWT as well as Nunavut, Alaska and southern Canada.

At each screening one of three feature length films will be shown along with a selection of short films. The tour will be in Fort Simpson, the only stop in the Deh Cho, on Feb. 23.

Four teams in volleyball tournament

A one-day volleyball tournament will be taking place in Fort Providence this weekend.

The Co-ed Classic Volleyball Tournament will be held on Feb. 9. The tournament would have been longer, but only four teams have registered, said Lawrence Nitsiza, the Hamlet of Fort Providence's recreation co-ordinator.

The competitors are set to include two teams from Fort Providence and one each from Behchoko and Fort Resolution. Last year three Fort Providence teams competed in the event.

Electoral boundaries reviewed

The Electoral Boundaries Commission has released an interim report which provides recommendations to the legislative assembly on how the electoral boundaries should be drawn in the territory if there are 18, 19 or 21 electoral districts.

Each of the three options would mean changes for the Deh Cho electoral district that currently includes Fort Providence, Kakisasa, Enterprise and the Hay River Reserve.

None of the options effect the Nahendeh electoral district.

The commission will be holding public hearings across the North from Feb. 4 to March 13 to gather input into the three options. Territorial residents can also submit written comments by e-mail, fax or mail before March 28.



Fort Simpson resident Jonas Antoine speaks to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board about Prairie Creek Mine during the general public statements and questions portion of the hearing on Jan. 30.

Focus on water protection

Public hearing on Prairie Creek Mine permits and licence

by Roxanna Thompson
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Liidlii Kue/Fort Simpson

Balancing environmental protection while allowing for economic opportunities was the main focus during a public hearing on the Prairie Creek Mine at the end of January.

The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board spent three days in Fort Simpson from Jan. 29 to 31 listening to the Canadian Zinc Corporation as well as five other groups present on the mine. The hearing was for the two type A land use permits and a type A water licence that will regulate water use, waste disposal and other activities related to the mine.

The hearing was held following the conclusion of an environmental assessment by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, which found in December 2011 that the project should proceed to the regulatory phase. At the time, the board found that the mine, located 90 kilometres northwest of Nahanni Butte, "is not likely to have significant adverse impacts on the environment or be a cause of significant public concern."

Just as during the environmental assessment hearings, water quality was one of the main topics at the public hearing.

Significant seasonal variation

Many of the presentations to the four members of the board and the subsequent questions centred on what is the best way to release effluent from the mine into Prairie Creek.

In their presentation, which was on the first day of the hearing, officials with Canadian Zinc presented

their case for a load-based discharge approach. The approach would allow the company to vary both the amount of effluent – treated mine water and/or water from the mill – and its quality based on the amount of water flowing in Prairie Creek at the time.

Prairie Creek has a significant seasonal variation in its water flow. The load-based discharge approach would allow the company to release effluent in a way that adapts to the amount of water in the creek so variations in water quality in the creek can be minimized, said Dave Harpley, Canadian Zinc's vice-president of environment.

With this approach Canadian Zinc would still have to meet set water-quality objectives at a specified location downstream from the mine. The objectives lay out the levels of a variety of elements that can be present in the creek such as mercury, copper, arsenic and zinc that will be released in the effluent.

Representatives with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) argued against Canadian Zinc's approach.

"The strategy proposed by Canadian Zinc is complex," said Robert Jenkins, the acting director of renewable resources and environment for AANDC.

In the early years of the mine operations the approach would be difficult to assess and ensure that the mine is being compliant, he said. AANDC offered its own suggestions to the board that would involve an interim strategy for the first few years while more data is

gathered about Prairie Creek and the mine conditions.

All three groups agreed

Other presenters including Environment Canada and the Nahanni Butte Dene Band also offered their own variations on how the effluent should be released. All three groups, however, agreed that the mine must have sufficient water storage capacity to be able to store water while the water levels in the creek are low, such as in the winter.

Members of the public had an opportunity to address the board on Wednesday. Most cut through the technical language used by the presenters and placed the responsibility for making the right decisions that will protect the water quality in the creek directly on the board.

Chief Stan Sanguetz of the Jean Marie River First Nation said he supports the project, but that the board must do its due diligence so the environment is protected. The future of the region and of the youth needs to be considered, he said.

"We need to create a sustainable development in the Deh Cho for them," said Sanguetz.

A training system should be set up in the region to prepare the youths for possible jobs, he said. It is possible to find a balanced approach between economic development and the traditional way of life, said Sanguetz.

Jonas Antoine, who spoke on behalf of the Liidlii Kue First Nation's acting chief and band council, had a similar message.

The Dene people have done their share to protect the land and water and it is now other people's turns to do their share to ensure the water will still be clean when the mine is running, Antoine said. Clean water and land as well as the ability to live off the land is important, but so to is economic development and ensuring First Nations have a share in it, he said.

As long as Liidlii Kue First Nation can use the impact benefits agreement it has with Canadian Zinc and be assured the water will be protected, things will be good, said Antoine.

"We look forward to moving ahead and seeing great things happen," he said.

Kirby Groat, a local business owner and a representative of the Fort Simpson Chamber of Commerce, also addressed the board.

"This is a very big deal for Fort Simpson," said Groat.

Canadian Zinc has the full support of the chamber, he said. The chamber would also like to see Fort Simpson become a training centre for the region.

In addition to the three days in Fort Simpson, the board was also scheduled to hold a public hearing in Nahanni Butte on Feb. 1. Poor weather conditions, however, meant the board couldn't fly into the community. Instead, the board will be holding a tele-conference hearing on Feb. 8.

Once the hearings are completed the board staff will develop draft terms and conditions for the permits and licence that will be reviewed before being finalized.

The minister of AANDC is responsible for the final approval and issuance of the licence.

Roxanna Thompson/NNSL photo