

Mackenzie Valley Highway Project (EA1213-01)

Insights into the Pehdzéh Kǐ Community Session held by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board



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Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Pehdzéh Kí community members for your expertise, thoughts, insights, recommendations, and time during the community sessions held on October 17, 2024. Your contributions offer key understandings into the Mackenzie Valley Highway Project that must be considered if it moves forward. We especially appreciate the youth who made a special effort to participate.

We are grateful for your trust in our team to facilitate the session and we hope we got the words right in this report. We welcome any comments you might have and hope that we have interpreted your words respectfully and accurately. Please reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

You're sitting amongst some very influential people here today; they're descendants of the original people. - Tim Lennie

Acronyms

EA	Environmental assessment
GNWT	Government of Northwest Territories
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
Review Board	Mackenzie Valley Review Board
PKFN	Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
TK	Traditional Knowledge

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Acronyms	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	iii
List of Appendices	iii
1.0 Background	1
1.1 Format.....	2
1.2 Agenda	5
2.0 Community Perspectives and Observations	6
2.1 Key Issues.....	11
2.2 People and Community (Social)	12
2.3 Benefits (Economic)	14
2.4 The Land (Environment)	15
3.0 Recommendations	21
4.0 Closing	22

List of Figures

Figure 1: Facilitators used sticky notes to map issues, insights, concerns and recommendations about the Project.....	5
Figure 2: Agenda for the community sessions held in Pehdzéh Kǵ.	5
Figure 3: A word cloud developed from the session held in Pehdzéh Kǵ.	10
Figure 4: Elder speaking to the Review Board	13
Figure 5: Participants at the Wrigley community session	23

List of Appendices

Appendix A List of participants.....	A-1
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1.0 Background

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is proposing to build the Mackenzie Valley Highway Project (the Project) to extend Highway #1 from Pehdzéh Kǐ (Wrigley) to Tulít'a (Tulita) and Tłegóhłı (Norman Wells) in the Northwest Territories (NWT). The Project would connect to other existing and planned roads to create an all-season highway connection between these communities to replace the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road in this area.

The Project is undergoing an environmental assessment (EA) by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (Review Board), which hosted community sessions in the Dehcho and Sahtú regions from October 16-23, 2024. Dehcho community sessions were to be held in Łíídlı Kúé (Fort Simpson), and in Pehdzéh Kǐ. However, the recent passing of an individual in the community meant the Łíídlı Kúé event had to be postponed. Sahtú community sessions were held in Tłegóhłı (Norman Wells), Tulít'a and Délıne (Deline). The Pehdzéh Kǐ session was held on October 17, 2024.

Throughout the sessions, community members talked about what they saw to be the most important potential impacts of the Project. While the Review Board accepts both scientific and Indigenous Knowledge (IK)¹ sources on an equal footing, most of the discussions within the sessions were grounded in IK. For example, several participants applied IK of unstable clay soils and permafrost melting along the Mackenzie River to existing and to warn against the current proposed road alignment.

Elders, Knowledge-holders, youth and other community members voiced their insights, observations, concerns, issues, and recommendations related to the Project directly to members of the Review Board and the GNWT (the developer). Moving forward, the developer should be better informed on how to adapt the Project in response to community direction.

The format of an EA generally leans towards siloes whereby impacts are divided into components (e.g., cultural, economic, environmental, social). In reality, and in keeping with an Indigenous knowledge ethic, these impacts are inextricably bound and cannot be easily divided. The authors of this report have tried to highlight areas of overlap within and

¹ While many northerners like saying “traditional knowledge”, the term “Indigenous knowledge” is also used throughout this report as it is features in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#).

between these components. Key interconnected themes and recommendations discussed during the Pehdzéh Kí session are presented.

1.1 Format

The Review Board, GNWT, federal and territorial government consultation representatives, and independent facilitators travelled to Pehdzéh Kí to hold the community consultation session face-to-face, with a virtual option available to members of the community, Review Board and government members who were unable to attend in-person. Joanne Barnaby and Natasha Thorpe facilitated the session with support from Hannah Currie.

Posters, radio announcements, and social media posts were made in advance. Interpreters were provided. PIDO Productions Ltd. delivered audio-visual support. Notes were taken during the session and later compared with recordings to this report.²

The day in Pehdzéh Kí was intended to be split: one for Elders and Indigenous Knowledge-holders in the morning, and a community roundtable discussion in the afternoon. Due to weather conditions, the team's flight into Pehdzéh Kí was delayed and it was decided that one large afternoon session for the entire community would be the best approach.

Elders, youth, community members and local government representatives attended, allowing for diverse perspectives to be shared with the GNWT and the Review Board. The community of Pehdzéh Kí was well represented during this session with just over forty people attending.

The session opened with a prayer offered by Elder Ernest Moses, followed by a welcome from Chief Jamie Moses, and introductions by the Review Board. Chief Jamie Moses, who was online, encouraged community members to voice their thoughts and thanked everyone for coming out. In his opening remarks, he emphasized the importance of community involvement in every step of the Project.

We need to be active participants in the design and construction, so our community and our companies benefit from this. We need to work hard to mitigate and minimize the negative impacts, I believe that's possible with the people we have in our community.

We need to benefit economically and have long-term maintenance contracts. There's lots of emphasis on negative impacts, but once we tackle them head-on, we will be fine. If this

² Transcripts are available upon request and uploaded to the Review Board website: <https://reviewboard.ca/>

road were to happen, we have to be active participants in the design and let our companies do the work. – Chief Jamie Moses

Review Board Chairperson JoAnne Deneron reviewed the agenda and explained the purpose of the meeting. She emphasized the importance of hearing from community members.

We need you to clearly share your views on the potential impacts of the project on the environment, community, and your ability to practice your culture. The Review Board also asks you to present your view and opinion on how important these potential impacts are to you. We hope that hearing the views of communities will provide an opportunity for GNWT to adapt the proposed Project, make commitments, and improve mitigation measures prior to the end of the Project. The Review Board will fully consider views we hear today. To make a good decision, we need to understand and hear what you think. ... Our goal here is to make decisions that protect the environmental, social, and economic and cultural well-being of all residents of the Mackenzie Valley now and for future generations.
– JoAnne Deneron

The Review Board members and staff then introduced themselves along with the developer and representatives from the territorial and federal governments.

Clémentine Bouche, the EA Advisor for the Review Board, played a short video explaining the structure of the Review Board and the work that they do, before presenting the EA process. She concluded by reading a list of questions that was prepared by the Review Board and facilitation team and distributed to the community in advance.

Hard copies of the list of questions were given out and displayed on a projected screen. Participants were asked to consider:

1. In what ways could the proposed Project affect the environment (such as wildlife, water) and the people (such as traditional harvesting, community relationships, culture, economy)?
2. What are the most important issues you would focus on if you were on the Review Board? What do you think about the issues the developer identified?
3. What impacts do you currently experience each year when the winter road opens? Please tell us about issues that should be prioritized.
4. Can you tell us about areas of special concern along the proposed route?

5. Can you share your insights into further Traditional Knowledge (TK) or land use (other than through TK studies) that may need to be brought forward? What kinds of recommendations would you like to make to reduce impacts?
6. What are your solutions to any of the issues shared today or otherwise identified?

Seth Bohnet, representing the developer, next outlined the EA process, the Project itself, and the key impacts the GNWT has outlined in the Developers Assessment Report (DAR). He directed community members to provided copies of the non-technical summary of the DAR³ and the GNWT website.⁴

Following these presentations, the session shifted into an informal open-ended discussion guided by an agenda and facilitated by Joanne Barnaby and Natasha Thorpe.

The facilitation format encouraged an emergent approach. In this way, session participants shaped interests of importance to discuss and explore. The list of questions was interwoven with this approach with the aim of probing deeper into arising issues and making sure that key discussion topics weren't missed.

Tables were set up in a U-shape with GNWT and the Review Board seated at either end. Community members were encouraged to sit at the main tables set up in the middle of the room, while some chose to sit on chairs along the wall. A welcome and sign-in table was set up in the foyer outside of the main meeting room, supported by Donna Schear, who is the Engagement Specialist of the Review Board.

Throughout the session, large sticky notes were used to document community contributions, which were then placed on a wall and organized by emergent topics. These sticky notes provided a visual summary of overlapping issues, concerns, mitigation measures, suggestions, and recommendations. Placement of the notes on the walls enabled session participants to gather around the notes during the breaks for consideration.

³ https://reviewboard.ca/upload/project_document/MVH_DAR_Non%20Technical%20Summary_final.pdf

⁴ <https://www.inf.gov.nt.ca/en/MVH>



Figure 1: Facilitators used sticky notes to map issues, insights, concerns and recommendations about the Project.

The following section highlights key issues that community members of Pehdzéh Kí identified.

1.2 Agenda

Pehdzéh Kí (Wrigley) Community Hall

Thursday, October 17, 2024

Activity	Time	Details
Community Feast	12:00 pm	Everyone is invited to the feast.
Community Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening Prayer Opening comments by Review Board Chair Joanne Deneron Opening comments from Chief (or representative) Review Board presentation Developer presentation Open Discussion Questions and comments from the public Closing Prayer 	1:30-4:30 pm	<p>Elders, Traditional Knowledge Holders, and Land Users are invited to share their expertise, insights, questions, comments, concerns, issues and advice with the Review Board. Youth are encouraged to participate.</p> <p>This roundtable is an opportunity for everyone in the community to speak to the Review Board about the project. Joanne Barnaby and Natasha Thorpe will provide facilitation support.</p>

Figure 2: Agenda for the community sessions held in Pehdzéh Kí.

2.0 Community Perspectives and Observations

Throughout the day, participants focused on several actions central to relationships in the EA process. These included:

- seeking meaningful reconciliation;
- learning from consultation of the past;
- listening to Elders, Knowledge-holders and Dene Law;
- understanding Pehdzéh Kǫ is on unsettled and unceded lands; and
- considering everything together.

Reconciliation

Although there are differences in what reconciliation means to everybody who attended this community session, participants raised reconciliation as a broad issue surrounding the Project, especially as it related to potential economic benefits.

In his opening remarks, Chief Jamie Moses explained that:

It all comes down to economic reconciliation. To me, reconciliation means a lot more than just saying sorry. We need opportunities to propel ourselves so we are not so dependent on the government. I want financial freedom for us to do as we please and to go after our agenda. - Chief Jamie Moses

The Chief brought [reconciliation] up because for us to move forward as a community, it needs to be in the context of reconciliation; everything we do today. - Tim Lennie

Jonas Antoine later expressed powerful imagery on what reconciliation means to him:

We heard the word ‘reconciliation’ that Chief Jamie brought up. It concerns me that there’s something deeply missing between them and us reconciling. If you take a piece of paper and put a line through it, the top is pre-contact and the bottom is now. At what point are we reconciling? If it’s over here, fine. If it’s over here, you have missed a great deal. It goes way beyond that, and this is what I’m reminded of when Tony brings up his concerns.

This is where the governments need to dig deep and look further than the word ‘reconciliation’; it goes way beyond that. Back in 1921 when we made an agreement, the Elders back then said there is three entities: them, us, and God. That carries through eternity, it goes way back. There’s a spirit and great power ... great power that goes with these things. When you don’t think about those things, you’re missing something, and you don’t feel good about it. – Jonas Antoine

Reconciliation was expressed as needing to be active rather than passive.

Learning from Consultation of the Past

Reconciliation was linked to development projects and what has happened when consultation has not been done well. Although not part of the Project, participants explained that the community was not consulted when the bridges for the winter road were built:

These bridges that went in without Pehdzéh Kǰ First Nation being consulted have had a huge impact on the traditional, way of life for the people of Wrigley. The people are concerned about these. The Smith Creek bridge is falling into the creek, we expect that any time. – Sharon Pellissey

Participants expressed that they are not against development, but that it must meet community needs:

Pehdzéh Kǰ First Nation isn’t against development, we are just trying to protect their way of life that they have been practicing for years, the Dene way of life. This is the highest Dene law. - Sharon Pellissey

Listening to Elders, Knowledge-holders and Dene Law

Building on this central issue, people spoke to their commitments to protecting the Land by honoring the wisdom of Elders and making sound decisions by connecting to the importance of Dene Law. Elders and Knowledge-holders attending the session shared their expertise surrounding the landscape, key wildlife habitats, and changes they have observed over their lifetimes. It was evident that people of Pehdzéh Kǐ have a deep connection with the Land⁵ and have fought to protect their traditional ways. Participants emphasized that IK of Pehdzéh Kǐ First Nation must be considered in the EA process and Project design.

The GNWT has to agree to Pehdzéh Kǐ First Nation's wishes and what they want. Everyone in Wrigley knows that land better than the government. All GNWT knows is what's on paper; they don't know the history. - Keith Nayally

Pehdzéh Kǐ is on Unsettled Land

The community of Pehdzéh Kǐ is located on unsettled land that has never been surrendered, and members of the Pehdzéh Kǐ First Nation have not signed a land claim. The community is tied to the Land, has a deep love for the Land, and remains a sovereign nation.

We're in unsettled territory, you are dealing with people who have inherited rights to this territory. These young people can define who they are as inherited rights holders. Over the years as a leader, I've been told as long I'm here don't let the people relinquish, surrender, or cede the Land. - Tim Lennie

Everything must be Considered Together

People spoke to many threats facing PKFN today, including those related to the energy corridor, natural disasters and environmental change, as well as from social issues like drugs and alcohol. Some participants highlighted that with the current state of the environment and the low water levels that are leading to undependable transportation of goods and a higher cost of living, they understand why there is pressure to complete the Project.

In his opening statements, Chief Jamie Moses expressed support for the Project, stating that the community needs to "happily accept the economic opportunity" whereas some community members expressed that the benefits from this Project may not be long-lasting.

⁵ The Indigenous worldview of "the Land" is used throughout this report to mean the earth, water, air, and all that lives within these ecosystems. The "Land" is spiritual places, ancestors, living and non-living beings, water, wildlife, air, birds, people, relationships, traditional ways and laws, and more.

If you think the road is for the goodwill of the people, don't kid yourself. The road is actually out to get the last of the riches. – Tim Lennie

Other participants acknowledged that the sense of urgency of the process expressed by the developer now didn't make sense given that discussions have been ongoing for over 50 years.

I'm really surprised that this has been going on for 50 years and we're still where we were 50 years ago. Ten years before we turn over a shovel of dirt. This is an urgency type thing. We feel that something like this should be far advanced by now and, if not, things can be sped up. – Jonas Antoine

Other participants seemed wary to consider the Project given that commitments made by governments in the past have not always been followed:

We haven't had any nurses here for the last 50 years or so. These are the kind of problems we have with the government people; they make promises to the community and never keep their promises – Charlie Tale

Throughout the session, participants emphasized that everything needed to be considered together, over time and across PKFN traditional territory, ranging from how the Dene traditional ways would be affected to how the cost of living would decrease to how quickly the Project should be completed, if at all.

2.1 Key Issues

Key issues shared during the community session are presented in the graphic above (Figure 3). Overarching and interconnected issues that emerged multiple times through the community session included:

- Reconciliation means involving the community in decision-making processes and actively considering the feedback that Pehdzéh Kí provides. Community involvement in the design and maintenance of the Mackenzie Valley Highway is crucial. It also means that any development on Pehdzéh Kí lands must provide for all possible economic benefits which includes planning and design, construction and maintenance contracts. Reconciliation must be active and meaningful.
- The presence of hard drugs in the communities along the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway will increase if an all-season road is built.
- The creation of an all-season road will open the energy corridor and region to various kinds of industrial activity and development, which could have both positive and negative impacts.
- The Dehcho First Nations Land Use Plan is unfinished. There is an increasing need to have this plan finalized and implemented.
- The Project means everybody will have easy access to culturally significant areas such as traditional burial grounds. This is a concern for cultural preservation.
- The people of Pehdzéh Kí regularly use and travel upon the land surrounding the proposed highway route within the Dehcho region. They feel their observations need to be strongly considered and hold much of the weight in the decisions that are made surrounding the Project and beyond.
- Pehdzéh Kí community members have voiced that they do not feel a sense of urgency from the GNWT to begin the Project, as it has been discussed for over 40 years.
- The land surrounding Pehdzéh Kí has not been ceded. The community has not signed a land claim agreement and thus has inherent rights to the Land and its resources. Pehdzéh Kí is self-governing and aims to maintain independence from the territorial and federal governments.

In addition to these underlying issues outlined above, participants spoke to matters which have been grouped under the following themes: people and community, benefits, and the Land. Finally, participants' recommendations are presented. Each of the impacts and issues should be considered in relationship rather than alone.

2.2 People and Community (Social)

Most of the discussions around impacts to people and community focused on how emergency services and support are inadequate now, let alone if the Project were to move forward. In Pehdzéh Kǐ, there are no doctors, nurses, a functioning firetruck, a wellness center, or a police force. The community urgently needs a healthcare facility and personnel. When emergencies do happen, emergency responders may not make it in time.

I just want to touch base on the social impacts. The first time they built a highway here my father was speaking; he was a teacher here. The whole thing was about protecting the land and animals. At that time, we didn't have nurse or doctor, that's fifty years ago and we still don't have that. It's time: we have to do something. I think everyone that spoke before touched base on the things that I was concerned about. My other concern is the social impacts. We don't have a wellness worker, a nurse, a doctor. What about emergencies? Fifty years a is a long time. – Dorris Pellissey

We have no firetruck, ambulance, nurse, doctor, police. Some emergency responders don't get there in time. My auntie is an example of that, last year she could have been saved if the plane got there quicker. We need to have the personnel and infrastructure to assist in emergency situations on the road. – Lawrence Nayally

Participants explained that the community alone could not supply the infrastructure required to support emergency services related to the Project. An increase in traffic to the area would intensify the need for ambulance, police, and fire services. Already, support from the government is needed to build facilities and employ emergency responders.

Several participants talked about how an increase in traffic and trucking brought on by the Project would likely heighten the risk of vehicular collisions with humans, wildlife, and other vehicles. Nicole Hardisty shared that many of the large trucks that pass through the area do not abide by the local speed limits:

One of the social impacts regarding the winter road is that truckers don't abide by the rules. If there was an accident when students cross the road, how would we be able to help them? We don't have medical services provided. They don't abide by the 30km/hr speed limit. – Nicole Hardisty

Tony and I were sitting on the highway one time a few years ago during the winter. Big trucks were going by, lots of them, one after another. Tony was shaking his head. 'That's a lot of trucks,' he said. It's only seasonal. Can you imagine the traffic with an all-season road, the kind of impacts we will have? – Jonas Antoine

Lastly, Jay Horesay expressed his concern with drugs in the North even without an all-season road:

The big elephant in the room is the amount of hard drugs being distributed in the far North and we don't even have a highway yet; it's just on the winter road. - Jay Horesay

Summary

- Community members have been asking for better emergency services and support for over fifty years, and they are still lacking today.
- More emergency services and support would be needed if the Project were to go ahead.
- More traffic, vehicular collisions, and speeding trucks are particular safety concerns.
- An all-season road would mean there will be more drugs and alcohol coming into the community and contributing to an existing serious problem.



Figure 4: Elder speaking to the Review Board

2.3 Benefits (Economic)

Throughout the day, participants consistently expressed that PKFN members must benefit directly from this Project from the outset. For example, long-term maintenance contracts should be given to community-based companies, providing the community with a reliable source of long-term income.

We need to be active participants in the design and construction, so our community and our companies benefit from this. We need to work hard to mitigate and minimize the negative impacts, I believe that's possible with the people we have in our community. We need to benefit economically and have long-term maintenance contracts.
– Chief Jamie Moses

Several participants also spoke to the current high cost of living and that the Project would be a help.

For the people that live north of us, I'm pretty sure they need their highway with the prices that high up there. – Charlie Tale

The community has invested in thinking about economic development through the Dehcho First Nations Land Use Plan. Although still in draft form, this document is a starting place to consider how the Project could align with PKFN priorities:

We did our economic development all through the Mackenzie Valley. It's up to the community here to review and activate the Pehdzéh Kǐ First Nation Land Use Plan.
– Tim Lennie

Summary

- The community must benefit economically from all opportunities associated with the Project ranging from construction to maintenance as well as any decreases in the cost of living.
- The Pehdzéh Kǐ First Nation Land Use Plan should be consulted so that it aligns with community priorities around economic development.

2.4 The Land (Environment)

Throughout the session, participants also expressed their concerns about caring for spiritual places, water, wildlife, and everything that is “the Land.”

We still have the Land and water and lakes. You got to think about all these things there. When Chief Jamie talks about wanting the best we can get for our people, it goes way beyond the words there. You got to think very deeply. ... I’m trying to make a point that there’s a deep connection. There’s something there we have to look at yet. – Jonas Antoine

The Elders always say to the young people, ‘make sure you take good care of the Land, especially the water and the animals, that’s the last. We have the same warning from many other First Nations’ community Elders. We have to go back to the Land with our children and grandchildren. – Tim Lennie

Pehdzéh Kǐ, as a community, emphasized its strong relationship with the Land throughout the session. Participants connected the Land with culture, shared many stories about living a Dene way of life guided by Dene Knowledge, their experiences on-the-land, and impacts to the Land they have seen over their lives. Community members warned that the proposed route alignment is where the Land is unstable and there is important wildlife habitat, burial grounds, and sacred sites.

Route Alignment

Concerns about the proposed routing of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway to better avoid sensitive habitats and culturally significant areas, and to lessen problems associated with an unstable and changing landscape dominated much of the discussion throughout the day. In general, the proposed route was not supported by participants.

To minimize further disturbance to existing habitat, the developer proposes a 1km corridor around the existing winter road as the proposed route. However, most participants expressed that the landscape within the corridor is unsuitable and that the existing Enbridge Norman Wells Pipeline would be better for highway construction.

When the Elders talked about the energy corridor, they wanted the highway to be on the Enbridge line, beside it. – Tim Lennie

Put [the highway] up on the high bank. There’s no science. Take a plane and fly over it. You’re talking about boots on the ground. Well, get your boots on the ground. Right now, I can’t support the route they are talking about. It’s a waste of money. – Tim Lennie

As an Elder, the whole area is a landslide coming down. You need to spend money [constantly] fixing the road. How are you going to maintain it? We worry about safety. If they want their road, use the land along the pipeline. It's safer and already cleared. Apparently, the pipeline isn't even working anymore. They said they would compensate for it but never did. – Charlie Tale

I just want to push and stand behind re-routing. ...The washouts with high rains means constant repairs and fixing. Just move up, you will have better access to quarries and be on stable ground. A whole re-route will decrease overall impacts by 70 to 80%, including wildlife, social, sensitive area impacts. – Jay Horesay

By re-routing beyond the corridor, the highway would not utilize the current winter road bridges, which community members have described as problematic.

Even our regular winter road isn't well maintained, the bridges are almost falling into the creeks. The road is going to slide towards the Mackenzie [River]. Then how are we going to get out? – Charlie Tale

The proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway route does not respect the IK of the landscape expressed by Knowledge-holders nor does it respond to the needs or requests of the PKFN. The community is urging the developer to re-route eastward into the foothills.

According to participants, this higher route would avoid the soft clay soils, slumping, and eroding riverbanks of the Mackenzie River. The soil along the proposed route is mainly comprised of clay, which can be described as a "soup" in the warmer months. In the winter, the clay deep freezes and becomes like chunks of concrete.

I know for a fact that's how it is. It's all clay down there. I've been on the winter road. I hunted on the winter road with my dad as a kid; we walked. I know how the Land is: it's all clay. No gravel down that way, nothing to keep it stabilized. I agree for re-routing, not that 1km corridor, that's nothing! Only one way to go: to the East. You're wasting your money and time trying to build a road on clay. – Keith Nayally

Along the proposed route, community members have seen an increase in permafrost melt and resulting slumping and noted that the banks of the Mackenzie River are rapidly eroding. Many community members have noted the area as sloping towards the river, which could result in washouts and large trucks carrying dangerous goods sliding into the river.

It's a high area for clay and it's not stable long-term, especially given the climate warming in the north. There's a lot of erosion on the Mackenzie River; it's only a matter of time until it reaches the existing corridor. – Lawrence Nayally

Most areas north of Wrigley it's all clay, when it melts in the summer it's all soup, you can't do anything. In the winter its concrete, how are you supposed to build? All the land is on a slant towards the river, and it's a perfect angle for the sun to hit the route. Look at Smith Creek, the whole portion is sliding down! Look at the bridge. At one time it was straight, but now it's falling down! On top of that, look at the highway on the right-of-way edge: the land is sliding, it's all clay. It's going to cause a lot of problems down the road. – Keith Nayally

The PKFN is working towards identifying another route that applies IK to best avoid sensitive habitats and culturally significant areas, and identify a more safe and stable path. Publications will be released shortly about this route to be considered by the developer and the Review Board.

All of the winter road area is impacted by cultural areas, sacred sites, sensitive habitat, burial grounds, fish spawning. It's all within the 1km corridor. We are really trying to develop re-routing efforts to lessen impacts on our way of life. ...The reports we produced will go forward to the Review Board and GNWT and we highly recommend they work within the parameters for rerouting. Our new route will be closer to the Enbridge corridor, on higher ground in the foothills, away from the [Mackenzie] river and the culturally sensitive areas. In the future this could benefit tourism, you overlook the entire Mackenzie Valley. ...We are putting the recommendations forward so that the Review Board and GNWT can help us create an alternate route. We're currently researching one [with our Elders] and the GNWT knows that. We have reports coming out alongside our re-routing research. This will all go to the Mackenzie Valley Review Board to become public. All of this is coming from the community and will capture all the impacts. – Sharon Pellissey

We were born and raised there, we walked the land, we hunted the land. – Keith Nayally

Sensitive Habitat and Culturally Significant Areas

Participants further noted that the proposed route would affect sensitive habitat, culturally important areas, and lead to greater access to Land.

All of the winter road area is impacted by cultural areas, sacred sites, sensitive habitat, burial grounds, fish spawning. It's all within the 1km corridor. We are really trying to develop re-routing efforts to lessen impacts on our way of life. – Sharon Pelligsey

The current proposed route passes through multiple sensitive habitats including White Sand and the Blackwater areas. Participants described these as active wildlife corridors abundant with caribou and moose. Lawrence Nayally asked that these areas be protected and expressed concern that the proposed route interferes with sensitive wildlife corridors.

The winter road today, it is passes through some very sensitive areas, not only to campsites but to wildlife. – Tim Lennie

[Highways] are a gateway of possibilities for people to build cabins in sensitive areas or picking away at things we want to leave in place. This is massive construction through our area, there's lots of history in the area. I'm a bit concerned about these sensitive areas; how can these impacts be mitigated? – Lawrence Nayally

The importance of monitoring programs to safeguard traditional lands was raised multiple times.

It is vital to maintain the integrity of our ecosystems for future generations. How will the traditional Dene Land be protected from future exploration and industrial activities?
– Lawrence Nayally

Watching the Land

Participants agreed that safeguards must be in place to monitor the landscape and waterways. There were concerns shared around how the Project would open the Land for development as well as to hunters, fishers, and visitors that might bring harm, for example, to fish, wildlife, and water.

Pehdzéh Kí First Nation is the only community that has an energy corridor. The energy corridor was to put all the infrastructure whether its highways, railways, pipelines together so we don't open up too much land. ... At the end of the day, our people need opportunities. This road is a short-term opportunity. It opens the land to other development, squatters. – Tim Lennie

People might come onto the highway for hunting. After the weekend, we see people come back with their moose. That kind of activity we need to watch for. It might wipe out our animals. I know other regions only allow hunting with a permit, but the Dehcho is pretty wide open. The hunting must be monitored and dealt with. – Keith Nayally

After the highway is done, people will be so close to the [Mackenzie] River. There will be high activities for fishing in the outflows. People will have easy access to creeks and rivers, including Blackwater. We don't want to deal with that, they think it's their divine right to access these areas. Also, most of our hunting is done on the river. If there's human activity on this, they will impede our harvesting rights if they are hanging out on the rivers.
– Jay Horesay

Community members also expressed concern that increased traffic along this route may increase the potential for environmental contamination, such as oil and fuel spills that would affect waterways. Keith Nayally shared that during his time working in Norman Wells, he saw the Mackenzie River become contaminated with petroleum and does not want to see it happen again.

The current route is no good: it's too close to the river. What about spills? All that petroleum will go into the river... Pehdzéh Kǰ First Nation wants the highway away from any water bodies and on higher ground, stable ground - Keith Nayally

Throughout the session, community members referred to the IK of their Elders and stressed the importance of protecting their lands and cultural heritage sites. The community of Pehdzéh Kǰ values the wisdom and direction of their Elders today as they have always done. Lawrence Nayally shared that a Traditional Land Use Map has been created for the community. This map is a powerful tool that should be referenced when finalizing the route alignment for the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

He has love for the Land, it's where he was born. Old traditional places. – Jonas Antoine



Figure 5: Participants and sticky notes at the Wrigley Community Session

Summary

- Knowledge-holders “know” their traditional territories. As experts, the community does not support the current route proposed and consider it unsafe and a waste of time and money.
- The proposed route is problematic because it is located:
 - in soft clay soils and banks that are slumping and eroding along the Mackenzie River, increasingly so with environmental change;
 - too close to water bodies; and
 - within sensitive wildlife habitat and culturally important areas.
- The PKFN is working on an alternate route grounded in the expertise of IK that will be submitted to the Review Board and developer. The alternate plan will be located:
 - closer to the Enbridge corridor;
 - on higher ground away from waterways and unstable areas;
 - eastwards in the scenic foothills that might benefit tourism in the future; and
 - away from the Mackenzie River, culturally sensitive areas, and important wildlife habitat.
- Important wildlife corridors like the White sand and Blackwater areas need to be protected.
- Increases in traffic may lead to contamination along the Mackenzie River and in waterways.
- Access to traditional territories will increase with the Project. Monitoring programs need to be created to watch for unlawful hunting and fishing activities, contaminants, and other concerns.
- The PKFN has developed a Traditional Land Use Map which is a powerful tool to be referenced when finalizing the route alignment. The PKFN will decide how this may be used or shared.⁶

⁶ This must be done in accordance with the First Nations principles of OCAP[®] which establish how First Nations’ data and information will be collected, protected, used, or shared. OCAP[®] is a tool to support strong information governance on the path to Indigenous data sovereignty (<https://fnigc.ca/>). In addition, PKFN may have other protocols to be followed.

3.0 Recommendations

Throughout the sessions, participants made several recommendations largely related to re-routing the highway. Recommendations are listed below. Key issues, recommendations, and support for these recommendations are summarized in Appendix A.

1. Spend more time in communities engaging on the Project.
2. Support reconciliation that requires working together, fulfilling past promises made to the community, following through with commitments, and providing meaningful and long-term economic opportunities.
3. Speed up the EA and the construction process if the Project moves ahead.
4. Consider an alternate routing for the proposed all-season road.
5. Listen to the expertise of Elders and Knowledge-holders and consider the PKFN proposed route of the highway, which would go eastwards through the foothills to higher ground where the ground is more stable and will have less impact on critical wildlife habitat and culturally significant areas.
6. Follow the existing Enbridge pipeline right-of-way as it has already been cleared and will minimize habitat disturbance.
7. Create wildlife passages or overpasses to avoid vehicle collisions in wildlife corridors.
8. Hire guardians to monitor the highway, watching for poaching of fish and wildlife, illegal activity, harm to sensitive wildlife habitats, and disturbance to culturally important areas.
9. Given the Project is on Pehdzéh Kí traditional territory, provide the PKFN with economic benefits including planning and design, construction, and maintenance contracts.
10. Engage regularly and practice open communication with community members including Elders and youth.
11. Consider a fee or toll for road use to help recover some of the costs associated with the construction and maintenance of the Project.

4.0 Closing

As the session came to an end, Seth Bohnet committed to continuing community engagement on this Project, re-iterated some of the key points of his presentation, discussed the importance of collaborative work with communities, and emphasized that the design and alignment of the highway is not yet complete. He thanked everybody for participating.

Several participants expressed that PKFN is not against development, but that it must be done in ways that respect the community and traditional ways of living. Chief Jamie Moses and others expressed support for the Project, focusing on the economic benefits. However, overall, most session participants did not seem to support the Project in its current form, largely because the proposed routing does not reflect PKFN knowledge of the landscape, environmental change impacts, sensitive habitats, etc. The PKFN is preparing to submit an alternate routing to the developer and Review Board for consideration.

Joanne Barnaby and Natasha Thorpe thanked the community of Pehdzéh Kí for sharing their IK, concerns, and recommendations. They reminded participants that their perspectives have been recorded and will be recognized, and that a report would be prepared for their review.

Tim Lennie expressed frustration with the briefness of the session and asked for engagement to continue for this Project. He stated that the Pehdzéh Kí community members want to share their needs and aspirations. Further, he re-iterated the importance of re-routing the highway and said that he is unable to support the Project's currently proposed route. Tim urged the developer and the Review Board to listen to the expertise of community members:

You guys going home already? We were just getting started. Come on. We've got to have two or three nights of this stuff and maybe we will get something resolved. This in-and-out for two or three hours will go on for thirty years and we will still be at the same table. Time is of the essence. – Tim Lennie

Review Board Chairperson JoAnne Deneron thanked the community of Pehdzéh Kí, facilitators, others such as Sharon Pellissey, who helped to arrange the session, and the caterers. She apologized that the team had to leave and reminded community members that there will be other opportunities to voice their concerns.

Elder Ernest Moses offered the closing prayer.



Figure 6: Participants at the Wrigley community session

Appendix A List of participants

Community Members and Participants

- Jonas Antoine
- Katy Antoine
- Toni Betsedea
- Daniel Brunean
- E. Canadien, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Erwin Cli
- Albert Clillie, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Robert Denethlon, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Nicole Hardisty, [Pehdzéh Kí First Nation Councillor]
- Charles Hardisty, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Jay Horesay, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation Councillor
- Tim Lennie
- Chief Jamie Moses, Chief of Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Ernie Moses, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Allen Moses, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Napem Moses, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Dale Moses
- George Moses
- K.H. Moses
- Priscilla Moses
- Christian Moses
- Lawrence Nayally, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Keith Nayally, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Doris Pellissey, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation
- Sharon Pellissey, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation Lands Department
- Michael Pellissey
- Jocelyn Skeard, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation

- Charlie Tale
- Dennis Tanche
- Lisa Williams

Review Board Members and Staff

- Clémentine Bouche
- Mark Cliffe-Phillips
- Joanne Deneron
- Jim Edmondson
- Alan Ehrlich
- Catherine Fairbairn
- Brenda Gauthier
- Kate Hearn
- David Krutko
- Tanya Lantz
- Malorey Nirlungayuk
- Donna Schear
- Simon Toogood

Territorial Government

- Seth Bohnet, Government of Northwest Territories Department of Infrastructure
- Patricia Coyne, Government of Northwest Territories Department of Infrastructure
- Alison Heselp, Government of Northwest Territories Department of the Environment and Climate Change
- Andrew Lirette, Government of Northwest Territories Department of the Environment and Climate Change
- Nancy Njere, Government of Northwest Territories Department of the Environment and Climate Change, Project Assessment Branch

- Anita Ogaa, Government of Northwest Territories Department of Infrastructure
- Melissa Pink, Government of Northwest Territories
- Ash Varghese, Government of Northwest Territories Department of the Environment and Climate Change
- Zoe Zwaigenbaum, Government of Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services

Federal Government

- Bridget Campbell, Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Clarisse Fiset, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Canada
- Chantal Grey, Northern Project Management Office
- Adrian Paradis, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- Melissa Pinto, Environment and Climate Change Canada

- Jennifer Sabourin, Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Nicholas Wawryk, Health Canada

Observers

- Erica Bonhomme, K'alo Stantec
- Matti Elias, Summit Air
- Jane Henderson, Pehdzéh Kí First Nation Legal Team
- Jennifer Heneberry, DPRA Canada
- John Sexsmith, West Point First Nations
- Jacob Winterburn, Summit Air

Facilitators and Support

- Joanne Barnaby, Joanne Barnaby Consulting
- Hannah Currie
- Natasha Thorpe, Thorpe Consulting Services
- Interpreter(s)
- Elizabeth Hardisty

Note: This list is as it appeared on the sign-in sheet. In some cases, people did not list their affiliation.

Appendix B Pehdzéh Kí Community Session Issues, Recommendations and Support

DRAFT

B.1 General

Issue	Recommendation	Support
Community engagement sessions are too short.	Spend more time in communities engaging on the Project.	You guys going home already? We were just getting started. Come on. We've got to have two or three nights of this stuff and maybe we will get something resolved. This in-and-out for two or three hours will go on for thirty years and we will still be at the same table. Time is of the essence. – Tim Lennie
Reconciliation is more than words: reconciliation is working together meaningfully.	Support reconciliation that requires working together, fulfilling past promises made to the community, following through with commitments, and providing meaningful and long-term economic opportunities.	<p>It all comes down to economic reconciliation. To me, reconciliation means a lot more than just saying sorry. We need opportunities to propel ourselves so we are not so dependent on the government. I want financial freedom for us to do as we please and to go after our agenda. – Chief Jamie Moses</p> <p>This is where the governments need to dig deep and look further than the word 'reconciliation.' – Jonas Antoine</p> <p>The Chief brought [reconciliation] up because for us to move forward as a community, it needs to be in the context of reconciliation; everything we do today. – Tim Lennie</p>
Governments have been talking about this all-season road for over forty years: the Project is stalled.	Speed up the EA and the construction process if the Project moves ahead.	I'm really surprised that this has been going on for 50 years and we're still where we were 50 years ago. Ten years before we turn over a shovel of dirt; this is an urgency type thing. We feel that something like this should be far advanced by now and if not, things can be sped up. - Jonas Antoine

B.2 People, Community, Benefits and the Land

Issue	Recommendation	Support
<p>The proposed route for the all-season road is not safe nor cost-effective for many reasons, many of which are linked to IK of long-term environmental change impacts.</p>	<p>Consider an alternate routing for the proposed all-season road.</p>	<p>Put [the highway] up on the high bank. There's no science. Take a plane and fly over it. You're talking about boots on the ground. Well, get your boots on the ground. Right now, I can't support the route they are talking about. It's a waste of money. – Tim Lennie</p> <p>I just want to push and stand behind re-routing. ...The washouts with high rains means constant repairs and fixing. Just move up, you will have better access to quarries and be on stable ground. A whole re-route will decrease overall impacts by 70 to 80%, including wildlife, social, sensitive area impacts. – Jay Horesay</p>
<p>Elders and Knowledge-holders “know” the Land and can draw on their expertise and Traditional Knowledge to map an alternate route where the ground is more stable and will have less impact on critical wildlife habitat and culturally significant areas.</p>	<p>Listen to expertise of Elders and Knowledge-holders and consider the PKFN proposed route of the highway which would go eastwards through the foothills to higher ground where the ground is more stable and will have less impact on critical wildlife habitat and culturally significant areas.</p>	<p>All of the winter road area is impacted by cultural areas, sacred sites, sensitive habitat, burial grounds, fish spawning. It's all within the 1km corridor. We are really trying to develop re-routing efforts to lessen impacts on our way of life. – Sharon Pellissey</p> <p>Also, realignment, I can't express how much that's needed. Like Keith said, it's a high area for clay and it's not stable long-term, especially given the climate warming in the north. There's a lot of erosion on the Mackenzie River, it's only a matter of time 'til it reaches the existing corridor. – Lawrence Nayally</p> <p>The winter road today, it passes through some very sensitive areas, not only to campsites but to wildlife. That alone will affect a lot, but you do have another option, that's what I'm looking at. – Tim Lennie</p> <p>Highways are important, it will reduce economic weight of the world. They are a gateway of possibilities for people to build cabins in sensitive areas or picking away at things we want to leave in place. This is massive construction through our area, there's lots of history in the area. I'm a bit concerned about these sensitive areas; how can these impacts be mitigated? – Lawrence Nayally</p>

Issue	Recommendation	Support
The land along the Enbridge pipeline is safer and already clear and could be an alternate route.	Follow the existing Enbridge pipeline right of way as it has already been cleared and will minimize habitat disturbance.	<p>Pehdzéh Kǐ First Nation wants the highway away from any water bodies and on higher ground, stable ground. - Keith Nayally</p> <p>When the Elders talked about the energy corridor, they wanted the highway to be on the Enbridge line, beside it. We did a study about 30 years ago about running a railway on that right-of-way. Fossil fuel, the taps shut off. Norman Wells is shutting down, pipeline gone dry. You have a right of way there, it's wide open, why do you want to open more land? – Tim Lennie</p> <p>If they want their road, use the land along the pipeline, it's safer and already clear. – Charlie Tale</p>
People and wildlife may be injured on the all-season road.	Create wildlife passages or overpasses to avoid vehicle collisions in wildlife corridors.	<p>Whoever did the work on this proposal probably already looked into structural passages to facilitate safe wildlife movement on highways. Can those be erected on the highway near Blackwater and White Sands to help mitigate the impacts on wildlife? It is a high traffic area for a lot of wildlife.</p> <p>– Lawrence Nayally</p> <p>The wildlife passages over key wildlife activity areas like Blackwater and White Sands, I want to see those structures be created. – Lawrence Nayally</p>
There need to be safeguards and monitors in place as the Project will open the Land for access.	Hire guardians to patrol the highways, watching for poaching of fish and wildlife, illegal activity, and harm to sensitive habitats.	<p>Monitor the people and the traffic that come onto the highway. People might come onto the highway for hunting. After the weekend, we see people come back with their moose. That kind of activity we need to watch for. It might wipe out our animals. – Keith Nayally</p> <p>People will have access to that road. What kind of monitoring programs will be implemented to safeguard the traditional land of Pehdzéh Kǐ First Nation?</p> <p>– Lawrence Nayally</p>

Issue	Recommendation	Support
PKFN must be provided with economic opportunities throughout all states of the Project.	Given the Project is on Pehdzéh Kí traditional territory, provide the PKFN with economic benefits including planning and design, construction, and maintenance contracts.	We need to be active participants in the design and construction, so our community and our companies benefit from this. - Chief Jamie Moses We need opportunities to propel ourselves so were not so dependent on the government. I want financial freedom for us to do as we please and to go after our agenda. – Chief Jamie Moses
Costs for the Project will be high.	Consider a fee or toll for road use to help recover some of the costs associated with the construction and maintenance of the Project.	From Wrigley north they could put a toll or fee for commercial vehicles so that GNWT can recover some of their money – Keith Nayally