Aboriginal and Local Perspectives on the Community Benefits of Conservation: A Case Study of a Proposed Canadian National Park and the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation

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Lutsel K'e, Northwest Territories, is a rural Aboriginal (Dene) community with a population of 400 that could soon become the gateway to the third largest national park in Canada. The Thaidene Nene Working Group of the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation is interested in the potential of the park in contributing to local socio-economic development. A collaborative research project with researchers from Lakehead University in Canada, examined various perspectives on how to maximize local development potentials in the community, with the purpose of providing information to the community and Parks Canada for direct use in park and community planning and development. This descriptive paper focuses on local and Aboriginal community member perspectives on the perceived and desired benefits of the creation of a national park in the traditional territory of the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation.

Keywords: *Conservation, Community Benefits, Social and Economic Development, Northern Canada, National Parks, Aboriginal Peoples*

A substantial portion of the traditional territory of the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) could soon become part of the third largest national park in Canada with local support. This represents a significant shift from 1969 when a national park was initially proposed and, subsequently, opposed by the LKDFN. At that time, the national park proposal was not understood by locals; protection of the environment was not seen as necessary; and, park regulations were seen as being contrary to the traditional way of life (Griffith, 1987; Ellis and Enzoe, 2008; Bennett and Lemelin, 2009). Since 2001, when former Chief Felix Lockhart reopened discussions with

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Parks Canada about the possibility of creating a national park in the traditional territory of the LKDFN, the LKDFN have been actively engaged in working alongside Parks Canada to determine future options and directions for protection of the area and community development. The national park, in this context, is an integral part of ongoing efforts towards cultural protection, economic self-reliance, and political self-determination.

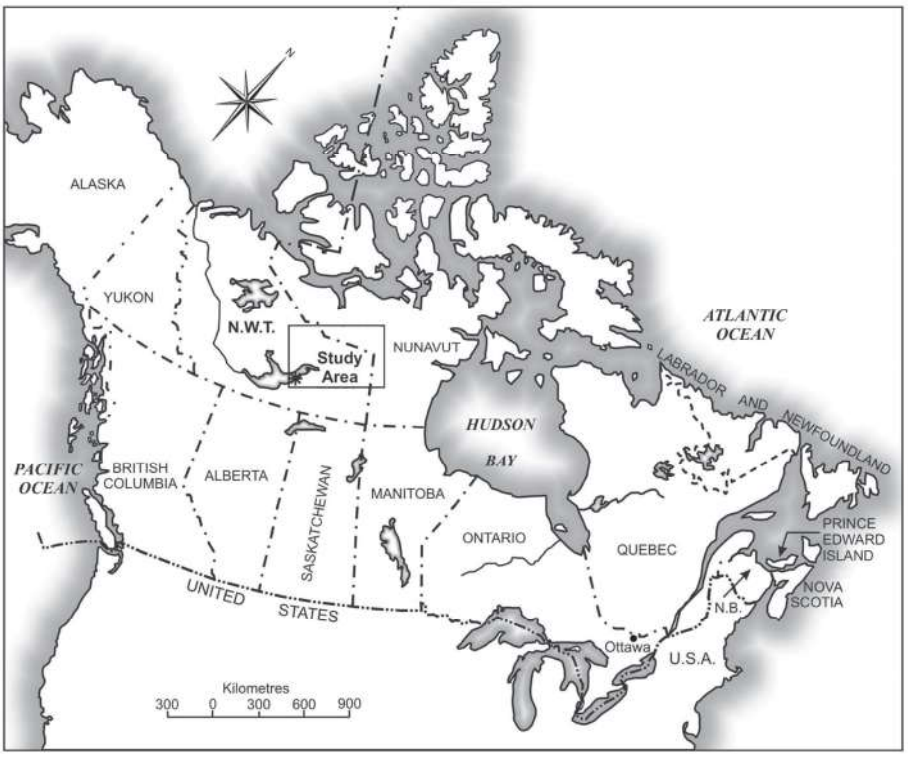
This descriptive paper provides an appreciative exploration of the benefits that the creation of a protected area could bring to the northern Canadian Aboriginal community of Lutsel K'e and its inhabitants. The paper begins with an exploration of the study area and the history of the national park proposal and frames the research through a brief examination of the literature on the relationship between parks and protected areas and Aboriginal and local communities. After a brief overview of the study's rationale and methodologies, the body of the paper focuses on the perceived and desired community benefits of national park creation. In the discussion, the theoretical and practical implications of these results are explored.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Context: Lutsel K'e

The remote Aboriginal community of Lutsel K'e (previously called "Snowdrift") is located on a peninsula jutting out into Christie Bay on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, 200 km east of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories and is only accessible by air or water (boat in summer, snowmobile in winter) (Figure 1). Lutsel K'e is now home to members of the once nomadic Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN). Historically, the Chipewyan who are also known as Dene peoples roamed the northern boreal forest from Hudson Bay to the Coppermine River following vast caribou herds (Hearne, 1934; LKDFN et al., 2001; Ellis, 2003). In fact, the majority of the LKDFN continued to live a primarily nomadic lifestyle up until the 1950s, living "on the land" in tents and cabins and subsisting primarily on traditional foods (hunting, fishing and gathering) with supplements from annual treaty payments and seasonal trapping income (Van Stone, 1963; SENES Consultants and Griffith, 2006). It was not until a school was built at the present day location of Lutsel K'e in the 1960s that people began to settle more permanently in the community (SENES Consultants and Griffith, 2006). Nowadays, slightly more than half of the LKDFN band's membership of approximately 700 people lives in Lutsel K'e with the rest dispersed throughout Canada (personal communication, Chief Steven Nitah, June 11, 2008). In 2005, 25 of the 414 residents of Lutsel K'e were non-Aboriginal (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2004a). A majority of these non-Aboriginal residents were and continue to be "transients", working part-time in the community as professionals (teachers, nurses, social workers).

Figure 1: Study Area.



Changes in Lutsel K'e during the 1960s and up to the present can be characterized by increasing engagement in the wage economy, decreasing reliance on government social support programs, and the formalization of community political structures (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2004a; SENES and Griffith, 2006). Yet community members continue to be primarily dependent on municipal and territorial government and resource-based industries outside the community for employment (SENES and Griffith, 2006). Though engagement in the wage-based economy has increased, residents of Lutsel K'e remain strongly connected to the land, continue traditional harvesting practices (hunting and fishing), and rely heavily on traditional food sources (Ellis, 2003; LKDFN and Ellis, 2003; Parlee et al., 2005; SENES and Griffith, 2006).

As of 2004, there were 150 buildings in the town site and public infrastructure in the community had increased to include an airstrip, a store, a school, a college, a church, a Bed and Breakfast, a community centre, an arena, a health care centre, social services and healing centre and several municipal buildings (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2004a). Alongside these developments, the community has been typified by a number of persistent, though declining, social problems (relatively high rates of

violent crime, low high school graduation rates, declines in traditional skills, a large proportion of single parent families, and high rates of alcoholism and addictions (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2004b; SENES and Griffith, 2006; Weitzner, 2006). Yet Ellis (2007) notes that the community remains strongly rooted in the sharing economy and is incredibly close knit:

> There's always someone willing to fire up the sauna, help fix a snow machine or share a meal and a laugh. And when despair and discord strike this turbulent town, I can rely on the indomitable spirit of its people to ensure that laughter and love persist here, as they have for generations. (Ellis, 2007, n.p.)

Lutsel K'e also exists within the context of the Canadian north, which, within this timeframe, was characterized by increasing pressure from resource development, a significant growth in population, as well as the increasing political and economic mobilization of Aboriginal groups (Bone, 2003; 2009). As part of the political mobilization of northern Aboriginal groups, the LKDFN were previously engaged in the Dene-Metis Comprehensive Land Claims processes that failed to ratify in 1990[1] and, subsequently, became engaged in the ongoing Akaitcho Process negotiations between the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the Akaitcho Dene First Nations. The creation of parks and protected areas are one area of negotiation under the Akaitcho Process. It is noteworthy to mention that the original national park proposal played an important role in the mobilization of the LKDFN and was a key trigger in the formation of the Dene Nation, the political organization that represents the interests of the Dene groups in the NWT (News of the North, 1969; Griffith, 1987).

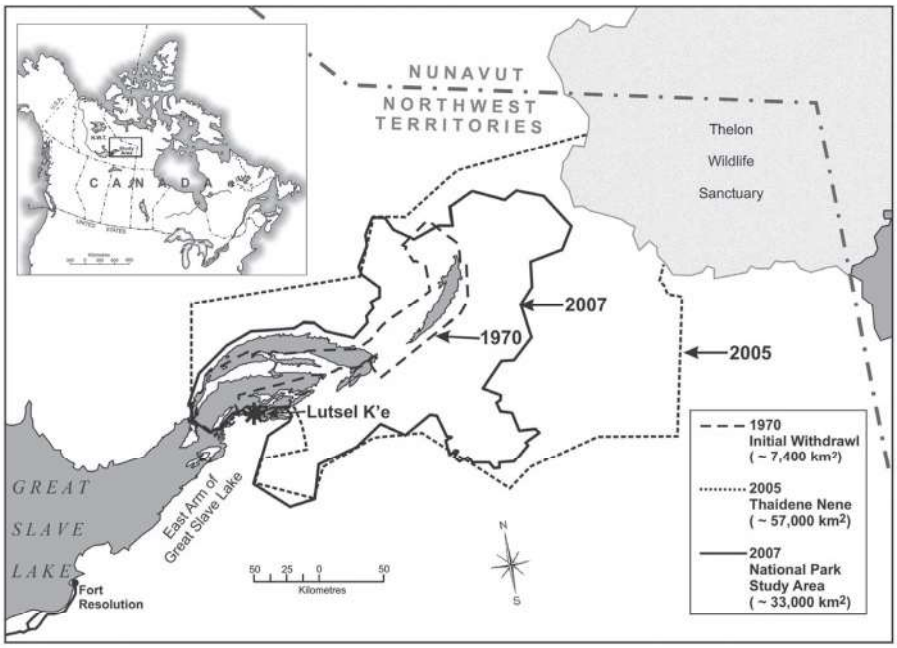
Context: A Proposed National Park

If former Chief Pierre Catholique had not been accidentally sent minutes of a meeting in 1969 that discussed the creation of a national park in the traditional territory of the LKDFN, a park might have been created on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake and in the area surrounding Artillery Lake without the permission of or consultation with the LKDFN (News of the North, 1969; Griffith, 1987). When Chief Catholique started asking questions, a delegation of bureaucrats was sent to Lutsel K'e to discuss the park proposal (News of the North, 1969; Griffith, 1987). Following this initial meeting, Chief Catholique was flown around Canada to visit various national parks including Banff and Prince Albert National Parks. Afterwards, he was flown to the nation's capital, Ottawa, where he was asked to sign an agreement that would have shown LKDFN support for the creation of the national park (Ellis and Enzoe, 2008). Chief Pierre Catholique refused to sign the document as he felt that his people did not understand the national park proposal and that it was potentially contrary to the local way of life as it would have restricted

traditional activities in the area (Griffith, 1987; Ellis and Enzoe, 2008). He was so taken aback by the large number of government bureaucrats that he called together a historic meeting of Dene Chiefs, which ultimately led to the formation of the Indian Brotherhood and, later, the Dene Nation (Griffith, 1987).

An initial land withdrawal of approximately 7,400km^2 was taken in 1970 in order to give the LKDFN time to consider the implications of the park (Figure 2). Several further attempts were made to revive the national park proposal in the succeeding decades but all were met with failure due to local skepticism and the failure to ratify the Dene-Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement in 1990 (Ellis and Enzoe, 2008). During this time, perceptions of the park proposal slowly shifted as a result of increasing exploration and development pressures throughout the north, changing relationships between national parks and indigenous people throughout Canada, and a growing perception that conservation was necessary in order to protect cultural, historical, spiritual or subsistence (hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering) values (Ellis and Enzoe, 2008; Bennett, 2009; Bennett and Lemelin, 2009). Then in 2001, former Chief Felix Lockhart of the LKDFN re-engaged with Parks Canada on the topic of creating a national park in their traditional territory.

Figure 2: Proposed boundaries for a national park.



In 2005, on its own initiative and with support of the other Dene groups involved in the Akaitcho negotiation processes, the LKDFN put forth a much larger area of approximately 57,000km^2 for protection. They dubbed this area "Thaidene

Nene" or "The Land of Our Ancestors". To advance its interest in protecting the area, the LKDFN also created a body called the Thaidene Nene Working Group and advocated for the creation of a side table in the Akaitcho Territory negotiations processes. After further talks with Parks Canada, the LKDFN and the federal government signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2006[2] and negotiated a smaller national park study area of 33,525km^2 within the bounds of Thaidene Nene in 2007. The area slated for protection is noteworthy for a combination of cultural and natural features. Cultural features in the area include Parry Falls (Ts'akui Theda), historic villages (Kache, Kaldele), traditional hunting and trapping grounds, and historic Pike's Portage. The area also represents an example of Northwestern Boreal Uplands forests, shows a transition between the boreal forest and the tundra environment, contains significant geological features (Tyrell Falls, Pethei Peninsula, Christie Bay), and is home to wolf, moose, wolverine, musk ox, and several herds of barren ground caribou. Currently, feasibility studies, socio-economic impact assessment, Mineral Energy and Resource Assessment (MERA), negotiations and local and national consultations are taking place. Through ongoing consultations with Parks Canada and active engagement throughout the process, it is hoped that the community will be able to protect local interests and receive greater benefits from the creation of the park.

Framing the Research: Parks and Protected Areas and Aboriginal Peoples

Protected areas can benefit Aboriginal and local communities in a number of ways, such as supporting local infrastructure development, providing local employment opportunities, increasing economic gains through tourism development, preserving, renewing and maintaining local cultural identities and knowledge, and protecting ecological values for future generations (Stevens, 1997; Machlis and Field, 2000; Langton et al, 2005; Bajracharya et al., 2006; Lai and Nepal, 2006; West and Brockington, 2006). However, a review of the literature indicates that local and Aboriginal communities have suffered a long list of negative consequences, including displacement of populations, marginalization from decision making processes, prohibition of traditional activities, exclusion of traditional knowledge and management regimes, creation of social hierarchies, initiation of internal community and community-managerial conflict, loss of development options, leakage of employment opportunities to outsiders, imposition of new regulations, unmet economic expectations, and even increased levels of poverty (West and Brechin, 1991; Stevens, 1997; Neumann, 1998; Poirier and Ostengren, 2002; West and Brockington, 2006; West et al., 2006; Adams and Hutton, 2007; Dowie, 2009).

Older national parks in Canada like the Wood Buffalo or Riding Mountain which are based on the Yellowstone National Park model of protection were often initially created without consideration of Aboriginal peoples and local communities (Dearden and Langdon, 2009). In many of these cases, Aboriginal groups were displaced and excluded from participating in subsistence activities such as hunting,

trapping, fishing, and gathering (Griffith, 1987; East, 1991; Sneed, 1997; Peepre and Dearden, 2002; Sandlos, 2007, 2008). With the enactment of the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 (Government of Canada, 1982), treaty and subsistence rights of Aboriginal groups have been increasingly recognized and upheld as a result of rulings by the Canada Supreme Court (Table 1). Though national parks and national park reserves now recognize Aboriginal and treaty rights, the incorporation of this recognition in previously created parks that fall within traditional Aboriginal territories remains a challenge for park planning and management (Government of Canada, 2000; Deardon and Langdon, 2009). Since 1979, Parks Canada agency has also created a variety of collaborative or joint management regimes in parks that involve Aboriginal peoples (Lemelin and Johnston, 2009). Moreover, Parks Canada has made major improvements in the manner in which it manages, plans, and designates parks to incorporate Aboriginal peoples. Since the 1980s, national parks and national park reserves, such as Gwaii Haanas (1988), Tuktut Nogait (1996), Auyuittuq (2001), and Torngat Mountains (2005), have been created in consultation with and with the support of Aboriginal communities and groups (Dearden and Langdon, 2009; Lemelin and Maher, 2009).

Table 1: Recent Supreme Court of Canada Decisions on Aboriginal Title and Rights (adapted from Bone, 2003, p. 195; Parks Canada, 2008).

Case	Date	Outcome
Calder	1973	Title recognized unless extinguished by the Crown.
Nowegijick	1983	Treaties must be liberally interpreted.
Guerin	1984	Ottawa must recognize the existence of inherent Aboriginal title and a fiduciary (trust) relationship based on title.
Sioui	1990	Provincial laws cannot overrule rights in treaties.
Sparrow	1990	Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act of 1982 containing the term 'existing rights' was defined as anything unextinguished.
Delgamuukw	1997	Oral history of Indian people must receive equal weight to historical evidence in land claim legal cases.
Marshall	1999	Mi'kmaq have the right to catch and sell fish (lobster) to earn a 'moderate living'.
Haida & Taku	2004	The government has a legal duty to consult and to accommodate concerns of Aboriginal groups.

Framing the Research: Maximizing Local Benefit from Park Creation

A number of authors suggest that maximization of local benefit is an important consideration for all parties motivated by conservation, since long-term support of local communities is essential for the success of conservation initiatives (Martin, 1993; Beltran, 2000; Nepal, 2000; Lockwood and Kothari, 2006; McNeely et al.,

2006). This is not a new idea, for in 1993, Martin (1993) wrote that "unless property rights (land tenure) of long-term residential people are respected and economic benefits from the creation of protected areas accrue directly to the communities living near them it is unlikely that the nature reserves will endure" (p. xviii). The World Conservation Union (IUCN) in a manual titled *Aboriginal Peoples and Protected Areas* recognizes that "protected areas will only survive if they are seen to be of value….to local people in particular" (Beltran, 2000, ix). Increased inclusion of local communities during designation and envisaging of protected area objectives and mandates has the potential to increase local benefit and, ultimately, support (McNeely et al., 2006). The Canadian Parks Council (2009, 3) encourages increased incorporation of local vision, but places the responsibility for "articulating a vision for the sustainable use and protection of their traditional lands" on Aboriginal community leadership.

Despite the extensive literature encouraging increased consideration of benefits for neighboring and Aboriginal communities, it is unclear to what extent Aboriginal communities in Canada are benefiting from national park creation. For communities located beside Canadian national parks, beyond initial social and economic impact assessments (done prior to the creation of the park), there is often only anecdotal evidence suggesting mixed outcomes in terms of local levels of benefit from park creation with some exceptions (Berg, 1993; Page et al, 1996; Fortin and Gagnon, 1999; Timko, 2008). Even in more recently created national parks, where many of the previous criticisms have been addressed, concerns have still been raised over the actual level of benefit received by local and Aboriginal communities, particularly in terms of tourism and employment (Val, 1990; Sneed; 1997; Wight and McVetty, 2000; Notzke, 2006). A substantial review of the existing literature revealed no comprehensive studies that have reviewed the actual short and long-term impacts and benefits of national parks on Aboriginal communities. Yet there are a number of 'best-case scenario' documents that celebrate the successes without exploring the negative impacts (Canadian Parks Council, 2008; Hassall, 2006). Especially for rural, Aboriginal and northern Canadian gateway communities, however, it is often hoped that national parks will play an integral role in local community development (Griffith, 1987; Val, 1990; Notzke, 1994; Lemelin and Johnston, 2009; Thompson and Peepre, n.d.).

PROJECT OVERVIEW

An overarching rationale for the Thaidene Nene Working Group and the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation to approach researchers at Lakehead University and to engage in this research project was to proactively explore community development options and directions and means of maximizing local benefit from the creation of the national park. The resultant collaborative and participatory research project focused

on three topics pertinent to the community's development: 1) community benefits of national park creation; 2) capacity building to maximize local benefit; and, 3) the role of the social economy in facilitating community development related to park creation (Bennett, 2009; Bennett and Lemelin, 2009). The overall study had the objective of seeking insight and providing usable information to the Thaidene Nene Working Group of the LKDFN and to Parks Canada that would support community development related to the creation of a national park. As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this descriptive paper is to explore emergent results on local and Aboriginal perspectives of the perceived and desired benefits of national park creation to Lutsel K'e and its inhabitants.

METHODOLOGY

Like many northern Aboriginal communities, Lutsel K'e has had a long history of "helicopter" researchers who would come to the community with a pre-determined research agenda, conduct research, and then leave without returning themselves or the results to the community (Freeman, 1993). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues that much research in an Aboriginal context has been an extension of the politics of colonialism and that researchers need to decolonize their methodologies through setting aside their own research agendas and working for and with communities (Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Simpson, 2001).

This research project was initiated by a letter of invitation to participate in a collaborative research project from Stephen Ellis, Project Coordinator of the Thaidene Nene Working Group, to the School of Recreation, Parks and Tourism at Lakehead University. Subsequent discussions and an initial visit to the community by the principal author led to the development of this project and a number of community supported applications for funding. This study's objectives, questions, and outcomes were designed collaboratively with members of the Thaidene Nene Working Group and the chief and council of the LKDFN. Research was devised and conducted in a manner that considered the particular Aboriginal culture and context of the community. Many of the documents and publications resulting from this research have been co-authored with members of the Thaidene Nene Working Group.

Adoption of a constructivist paradigm, which views knowledge as being socially, culturally and contextually constructed (Schwandt, 1994; Hollinshead, 2006), allowed for the use of qualitative interviewing to try to understand the world from the viewpoint of the research participants: "The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own viewpoints" (Hodgson and Firth, 2006, 15). Furthermore, a constructivist paradigm is often seen as more appropriate for working in a cross-cultural context (Hodgson and Firth, 2006; Tribe, 2006). Due to the need for a participatory, action-focused, and emancipatory research agenda, action research methodologies

were reviewed (Reason and Bradbury, 2000). The positive and constructive orientation of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999; Whitney and Trostenbloom, 2003) was adopted as the philosophical underpinning of this action research project. With roots in social constructivism, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was created in response to criticisms of negative orientation of development theory and praxis (Grant and Humphries, 2006; Raymond and Hall, 2008). Because AI recognizes local voices and multiple realities it is suitable for working in an Aboriginal context (IISD and Skownan First Nation, 2001; Koster and Lemelin, 2009).

A series of open-ended in-depth ethnographic qualitative interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2003) were conducted with both band-members and long-term community members. Though interviews were conducted with individuals from outside the community for other areas of the project, this paper focuses on community voices in order to "put the last first" in discussions related to community development (Chambers, 1983; 1997). Chambers (1997) explored how local people are the most insightful and adept at providing explanations and solutions for local, complex, dynamic, diverse and uncontrollable dilemmas. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify 34 LKDFN band members and another 5 long-term community members to interview. Snowball sampling starts with a single person or several people (in this case the Thaidene Nene Working Group and the Chief and Council) who suggests possible interviewees. These people, in turn, suggest additional interviewees. Through purposive sampling, we sought individuals who would be particularly informative on topics pertinent to the study. Efforts were also made to select individuals from both genders, from various age groups, and from different socio-economic groups within the community. A community research assistant and a Dene language translator were hired to assist with cultural and language translation as recommended by Ryen (2002). Interviews were recorded and/or field notes were taken. All interviews were later transcribed. An initial analysis was undertaken to search for overarching themes and then interviews were imported into NVivo 8 qualitative software for analysis. The analysis of benefits was done in an emergent fashion without prior knowledge or exploration of related discussions in the literature.

Normal ethical considerations associated with research on human subjects, that is informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, secure data storage, and risk/benefit, were taken into account in designing this study (TCPS, 2005). All interviewees were required to read a cover letter prior to conducting interviews and were given the option of remaining anonymous if their comments were used in subsequent documents and publications. An arrangement was made for confidential storage of an anonymized version of the data by the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and at Lakehead University (ACUNS, 2003). Ethical approval for this research project was granted by the Lakehead University Ethics Board and by the Aurora Research Institute. The project's methods and procedures were also formally endorsed by the LKDFN.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS OF A NATIONAL PARK

The results of this exploratory research are classified into three groups: 1) a broad overview of perceived and desired benefits; 2) an in-depth exploration of several specific areas of benefit; and, 3) an examination of the interrelationships that exist between the various spheres of benefit.

The perceived and desired benefits of band members towards creation of a national park fell into eleven spheres of the community's development: *aesthetic, economic, employment, cultural, social, political, educational, infrastructure, environmental, health, and spiritual.* An alphabetical and non-ordered overview of the perceived and desired benefits is provided in Table 2.

Further Discussion of Benefits

The overall benefits of the creation of a national park can be framed by a desire to protect the local environment. In this context, protection of the environment refers to protection *of* the flora and fauna (particularly the caribou), as well as the land and the water for future generations, but also protection *from* exploration, resource extraction, development and contamination. As Elder George Marlowe said, the Dene are keepers of the land and have a responsibility to "watch over it". Protecting the area in a park is seen as one way of doing that; "The mines are only here for a short time and then they go. The park will be here forever," said Elder Pierre Catholique. Furthermore, protection of the land in a national park (Thaidene Nene) was seen as being central to all of the other spheres of benefit. For example, protecting the environment was seen as central to preserving the culture, protecting the social structure of community, maintaining the health benefits of eating traditional foods, and supporting tourism development.

The following section examines several of the spheres of benefit through using quotes from interviews. Due to the qualitative nature of the research and space restrictions, in depth presentation of all of the spheres of benefits is not possible; therefore, this discussion is limited to exploring several areas of benefit that could use further clarification and exploration (beyond that provided in table 2) through the voices of community members. This section explores cultural, spiritual, social, and political benefits, as well as the desire to have local control over economic resources that might come with the park's creation for local initiatives.

Cultural and spiritual benefits

In the context of Lutsel K'e, protection of the environment and protection of the culture are inextricably linked:

> That would be a good sense of identity. They have such a long history in this land…that is important that it's preserved because you can lose it [*snaps fingers*]…. So that could be an asset, that park, for that. Their identity is kept,

Table 2: Perceived and desired benefits related to the creation of a national park.

Sphere	Perceived and Desired Benefits
Aesthetic	Protect beauty of area
Cultural	Contribute to preserving and strengthening a living culture
	Contribute to cultural education for community and others
	Infrastructure for contributing to cultural education
	Preservation and ongoing use of Dene (Chipeweyan) language
	Cultural preservation and revitalization through tourism development
	Contribute to sustaining traditional way of life
	Freedom and right to continue traditional uses (harvesting, hunting, fishing, trapping) and way of life
	Preservation of wildlife and resources to allow for continued ability to live off the land
	Contribute to preservation of history, culture and traditional knowledge
	Preservation and documentation of historical, traditional and cultural knowledge
	Preservation and documentation of cultural and historical sites
	Infrastructure for storing cultural and historical knowledge
Economic	Economic benefits
	From employment with Parks Canada
	From infrastructure creation and maintenance contracts
	From tourism development
	From an Impact Benefit Agreement with Parks Canada to support community goals
	Ongoing funding to support community management, jobs, training and infrastructure development
	Funding to create trust fund to support community development and capacity building efforts
	Funding to support community's cultural, social and educational goals
	Increased potential for business and tourism development
Educational	Initial support and programs for training and educating local people and youth in preparation for park
	Ongoing support and programs for training and educating local people and youth
	Support for cultural education (i.e., camps and programs) for community
Employment	Significant opportunities for locals through both direct and indirect employment
	Culturally and socially suitable employment options in park and tourism
	Local employment in full range of positions pertaining to park (including management and research)
	Management positions located in the community
	Work towards 100% of jobs being filled locally
Health	Maintenance of physical health from eating wild foods
	Maintenance of physical health from having clean water to drink
	Ongoing positive affects on mental health from being on the land

Table 2: cont.

Sphere	Perceived and Desired Benefits
Environmental	Protection from exploration, development, mining and contamination Protection of flora and fauna (plants and animals) Protection of caribou populations and habitats Protection of ecosystem Protection of land Protection of water Legacy for future generations
Infrastructure	Community integrated infrastructure development in Łutsël K'e For managing and operating park For local uses and community benefit: For storage of cultural, historical and traditional knowledge For cultural education of locals socio-cultural events For supporting tourism development: For greeting tourists For selling goods and services to tourists For accommodating and feeding tourists Integrated community and tourism infrastructure development in park Trails and facilities for tourists Facilities for local use
Political	Meaningful consultation and incorporation of local vision into park creation and management Protection of Aboriginal and treaty rights and continued access to area Recognition of Aboriginal (or mutual) title Mechanisms for increasing local control over and level of input into management of area Creation of locally weighted joint management body Implementation of flexible and contextual management arrangement Implementation of mechanisms for controlling visitors to area Ability to increase land area-quantum through park and treaty negotiations
Social	Suitable, meaningful, desirable and positive local employment opportunities Positive social outcomes from suitable and local economic and employment opportunities Positive personal development from successful business development and ownership Positive social and emotional outcomes (improved quality of life, pride, self esteem, less social problems, not having to worry about the land) from protecting area Improved relationship with the "outside world" Support for community programs and events
Spiritual	Protection of spiritual aspects of local culture Protection of sacred area and spiritual site(s)

> their language. You know, it is not only the land; it is the social structure of the community, of the band. So that is all one package. The land is them. The people belong to the land. They belong to the park. Part of it. (Eduardo Prince)

Ray Griffith explored how the park was central to the identity of the LKDFN: "A very strong reason for protecting the area is for cultural reasons. For Lutsel K'e, it's the heart of their territory. And the park will become the heart of their identity in the future" (Ray Griffith). As former Chief Felix Lockhart expressed:

> It [the park] is all going to be about the way of life, through history and even carrying on today through maintaining that so you want to be able to put forward the idea of not just preservation but of a culture of a people. We don't want to live in the past. We just want to be able to continue living in the future….It [the park] does not need to obliterate people and their way.

There were a number of ways that community members felt that the park might contribute to the preservation, revitalization and strengthening of the local culture. The park's creation was viewed as an effective way to protect Aboriginal rights to continue subsistence activities and to continue living a traditional way of life in the present and the future (hunting, trapping, living on the land): "It is going to be viewed in terms of the capacity to carry on with our way of life…it's not just a matter of us going hunting in that area…it is an essence of who we are" (Felix Lockhart, former chief).

Protection of the resources on which the traditional way of life relies, particularly caribou populations, was also seen as particularly important rationale for conservation. Resources from the park initiative could play a vital role in supporting the documentation and storage of historical, traditional and cultural knowledge, as well as the ongoing cultural and historical education of local peoples. Interviewees also felt that the park could contribute to the preservation of the Dene language, in part through the use of the Dene language in park-related documents and local place names. As J.C. Catholique maintained "These areas are traditional areas, traditional routes that we used to travel in the winter time. They all have their own stories… you have got to…use your own traditional place names."

Chief Steven Nitah viewed the protection of the LKDFN's sacred site, Ts'akui Theda or "Old Lady of the Falls", as an important reason to protect the area: "The re-connection with the Old Lady of the Falls and the spiritual re-connection is part of the recognition to protect that area as well." Finally, park-related community tourism development was seen as having the potential to contribute to cultural preservation and revitalization, through capitalizing on local cultural knowledge and traditional skills, supporting the local way of life, and giving value to cultural and traditional knowledge.

Social benefits

The perceived and desired social benefits discussed by participants include the following three areas: 1) positive social and emotional outcomes from protecting the area; 2) positive social, cultural and personal outcomes from suitable, meaningful and local economic and employment opportunities; and, 3) improved relationship with the outside world and improved external perceptions of Łutsël K'e.

Interviewees mentioned several positive social outcomes that they felt would result from the protection of the area: increased pride, improved quality-of-life, less worry about the land, and decreasing social problems. A number of interviewees talked about the pride that the community would feel from successfully protecting the area as a result of collective community action. The community would "be proud to watch over their land, to take care of their land, to protect their land for generations to come," said Gloria Enzoe. Felix Lockhart postulated that the park would improve local social problems by offering people the opportunity to continue with the traditional lifestyle now and in the future:

> Because the alternative right now, it seems like they have given up. They don't like the lifestyle that is going on in the communities, it's unbearable and it's taking too much of our way of life away, too much of our, our sense of who we are. To the point where some of our people are turning to suicide, towards, alcohol and drug abuse. There is no need for that. We can always do what our ancestors did even today…we can always follow a way of life in a meaningful way, even today, in the 21st century.

Tsatsiye Catholique felt that park-related and tourism employment could diversify economic options for community members and contribute to increased economic self-reliance in the community. Many interviewees discussed the negative impact that employment in exploration and mining had on the community, and felt that park-related and tourism employment would be more culturally appropriate and desirable. These alternative forms of employment were also seen as having positive impact on individuals and a stabilizing effect on the community; these jobs would allow people to:

> feel good about themselves because they have purpose in their lives. That's personally what I'd like to see out of the park initiative. People doing things for themselves that puts food on the table or that keeps them busy doing things and growing as individuals that are contributing to a larger, happier community. I think that people have it in their bones, the connection to the land and people are at their best when they're out on the land. (Tracey Williams)

The park could "take over as the primary employer in the community and become a stabilizing factor" through creating a "long-term stable cultural and economic system for the community" (Ray Griffiths). Tsatsiye Catholique discussed how the

employment and economic opportunities created by the park could contribute to feelings of self-worth, decrease social issues, and increase economic independence.

Finally, interviewees felt that the park would improve external perceptions of the community and ameliorate relationships with the outside world. Tourism, in particular, was seen as increasing positive interactions between the community and outsiders because "it involves ourselves as community members contributing to the enjoyment and education of other people that come to our area" (Felix Lockhart). Gloria Enzoe suggested that this interaction would help the community to "work better with the outside world" and contribute to "learning to co-exist with other people".

Political benefits

The creation of a national park was also seen as having a number of political benefits, including 1) increasing control over and input into management of the area, in part through creating a locally weighted management body; 2) incorporation of local vision into the park; and, 3) protection of Aboriginal and treaty rights and consideration of Aboriginal title. In recent decades, the community has seen increasing mining activity, increased tourism infrastructure development, and increased visitation to the area. Protecting the area through a park was seen as a way of increasing control over both tourism and development in the region and improving levels of input into the management of both people and resources in the area. Dennis Drygeese commented that "apparently, we don't have that right yet to protect our own land." In opposition to this statement, Pierre Catholique said that government officials had told him that he could control his own land: "I've been to Ottawa. They told me this was my land, I could be the boss."

Many community members felt that the LKDFN should have significant input into managing of the area through creation of a locally weighted joint or co-management body, and that this could be created through the park initiative. Elder George Marlowe was also concerned about the composition of the management body: "If the park goes ahead we should have 51-55%. We should be the top person instead of those guys [Parks Canada] are the top person." For many interviewees, it did not make sense that local people relied on the area for sustenance but that they might have less input into the management of the area.

Interviewees discussed the potential for meaningful consultation in order to ensure the incorporation of the local community's vision into the park. "Nobody can tell us what is good for us," said Felix Lockhart, adding:

> It's been one sided for too many years. Let's sit down and talk to each other and try to work things out. I think that is much better than to have anything imposed on us…So it isn't a park that is going to be dominated by the concept of Parks Canada, the concept of government again. It sounds pretty good in terms of the Akaitcho Territory Government putting forward the rationale of what Thaidene Nene Park is going to be about.

Gloria Enzoe wished that the government would respect the vision that was advanced by the community: "I'd like the government to say 'Okay, we respect you. We'll give you that.'" Finally, interviewees felt that working with Parks Canada would guarantee the long-term protection of Aboriginal and treaty rights (hunting, fishing, trapping, living on the land) and might even allow for the recognition of Aboriginal title. Chief Steven Nitah expressed how when the discussions regarding the national park were re-opened by the LKDFN it was with "the position that we owned the land."

Economic benefits

Economic benefits to the community included benefits from employment and tourism development. In addition, interviewees often discussed a desire for the Parks Canada agency to make a direct contribution of economic resources to community educational, social, cultural, and infrastructure initiatives (Table 3) through a formal agreement (Impact Benefit Agreement) similar to those found in other areas (Inuit IBA, 1999). Interviewees often suggested that this financial contribution was necessary for the achievement of many of the benefits as it would help the community to overcome barriers related to human (education, skill building), infrastructural, social, cultural, and financial capital. Furthermore, interviewees felt that this money should be locally controlled and administered, perhaps through a trust fund managed by a board. This would allow the economic resources that might come with park creation to further contribute to local efforts towards economic self-reliance and political self-determination.

Table 3: Overview of community initiatives that could be funded by the park initiative.

Sphere of Development	Initiative
Social	Social Programs Healing Programs Recreation Programs
Cultural	Cultural and Historical Documentation Cultural Education in Schools Culture Camps and Programs On the Land Language Programs
Educational	Education and Training Programs Scholarships for Education Parks Education in Schools Cultural Education in Schools
Infrastructure	Facilities for Storing and Presenting Cultural and Historical Knowledge Facilities for Community Use on the land

Interrelationships between Spheres of Benefit

For presentation and communication purposes the spheres of benefit are separated in the previous discussion; though, of course, the spheres of benefit are not separated but interrelated in complex ways (Figure 3). Throughout the interviews, interviewees discussed the positive effects that benefits in one sphere of the community's development would have on another sphere or other spheres of the community's development. For example, J.C. Catholique explained how the use of traditional place names (cultural) is a way of laying claim to geographical places (political):

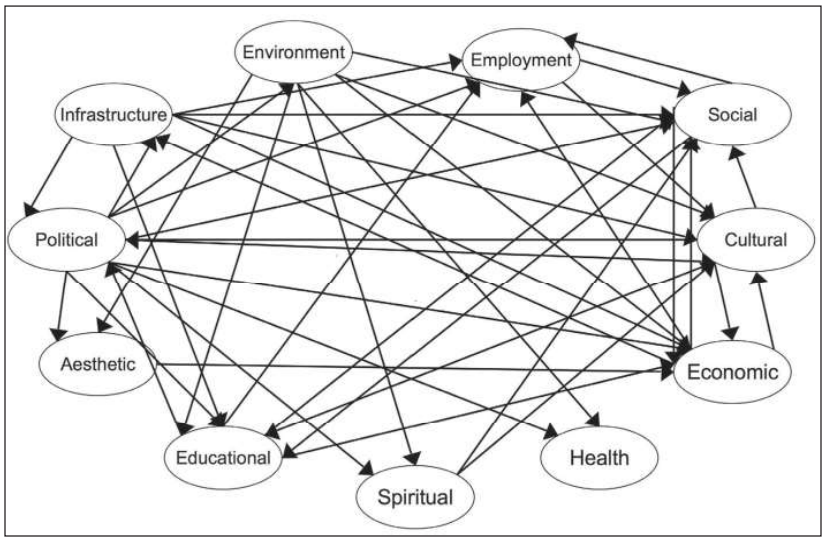
> You know, they have place names for a lot of those landforms, terrain, and they should use that. They should use their place names, they should mention that. So in a lot of ways, they are making their mark in the world.

In another instance, Adelaine Jonassen talked about how locating the park office in the community (infrastructure) would allow management to be located in the community (political and employment):

> I guess maybe the office, have it managed out of Lutsel K'e not in Yellowknife or somewhere else, but have it here and you know have the parks manager from the community, people from the community working within the park.

Figure 3 presents a model that demonstrates how benefits in each sphere of development could have positive effects on other spheres of development as discussed by participants.

Figure 3: Perceived positive interrelationships among spheres of benefit.



The arrows in the model represent the perceived positive effects that benefits from the proposed national park in one sphere of development could or would have on other spheres of development. For brevity, the perceived positive interrelationships among the various spheres of benefit that were mentioned by band and long-term community members are summarized in Table 4.

DISCUSSION

This paper integrates LKDFN band and long-term community member perspectives on the perceived and desired community benefits from the creation of a national park. This interpretation of the research results places the community benefits into 11 interrelated categories: *aesthetic, economic, employment, cultural, social, political, educational, infrastructure, environmental, health,* and *spiritual*. In addition to exploring several of these areas in more depth, this paper explored the positive interrelationships between the various spheres of benefit. In this discussion, we will explore the theoretical and practical implications of these results.

In a theoretical sense, the discussion of perceived and desired benefits presented in this paper is reflective of the broader and growing discourse around the benefits that *should* be afforded to local and Aboriginal communities near protected areas (Kemf, 1993, Beltran, 2000; Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari and Oviedo, 2004; WWF International, 2008). Furthermore, the categorization of benefits presented herein provides a similar conceptualization of the benefits of a park or protected area for Aboriginal or local communities found elsewhere in the literature. Mansourian et al. (2008), for example, categorize benefits to local communities under subsistence (food, water and medicine), economic (employment, tourism, and park fees), cultural and spiritual benefits (sites and practices), and environmental services (clean water, erosion control). Scherl (2005) and Scherl and Edwards (2007) discuss the "facets of the relationship between Aboriginal and local communities and protected areas" under the six categories of livelihood security (subsistence activities, harvesting of resources for local use), economic (employment, management and tourism), cultural and spiritual (cultural integrity, identity, and spiritual sites), psychological well-being and recreation (identity, belonging and security), educational (transmittal of culture, learning from nature, and learning about managing area) and governance (empowerment, participation in decision-making and partnerships).

Though this conceptualization is similar to those mentioned previously, this paper presents a unique regional and contextualized perspective to an ongoing discussion around the indigenous and community benefits of conservation. Rather than providing a broad overview of benefits that should be afforded to all Aboriginal groups near all protected areas (Beltran, 2000; Scherl, 2005; Mansourian et al, 2008), it offers a rural, northern Canadian, and Dene perspective on the benefits that could or should come with the creation of a national park. In this context, park

Table 4: Perceived positive interrelationships among spheres of benefit.

Benefit	Specific Benefit	Positive Effect On (Sphere)	Benefit Sphere
Aesthetic	Protecting beauty of area	Tourism development	Economic
Cultural	Use of place names	Makes a mark in the world	Political
	Increasing cultural, traditional and on the land activity	Improving social conditions in community (*social*) Happier and healthier people (*social*)	Social
	Preservation of culture	Tourism development (*economic*)	Economic
Economic	Tourism development	Cultural preservation (*cultural*) Employment benefits (*employment*) Utilization of traditional skills and knowledge (*cultural, social*) Showcases and gives value to local culture (*social*) Self-reliance (*social, cultural*) Increased outside awareness of local culture (*social*)	Cultural, social, employment
	Financial contribution	Contribution to community social, cultural, infrastructural and educational initiatives	Social, cultural, infrastructural, educational
	Economic opportunities	Decreasing social dependency	Social
Educational	Increasing levels of education	Increased political awareness (*political*) Redevelop modern personal identity (*social*) Higher levels of employment (*employment*)	Political, social, employment
Employment	Less mining employment	Decreasing social problems (*social*)	Social
	Local employment opportunities	Decreasing social dependency (*social*) Positive atmosphere in community (*social*) Increased on-the-land activity (*cultural*) Utilizes traditional knowledge (*cultural*) Educated people will return to the community (*social*) Increased individual and collective self-esteem (*social*) Healthier community (*social*) Stabilizing influence (*social*)	Social, cultural

Benefit	Specific Benefit	Positive Effect On (Sphere)	Benefit Sphere
Environmental	Preservation of environment	Preservation of local identity, stories, language and history (*social, educational, cultural*) Important for tourism (*economic*) Protection of beauty (*aesthetic*) Preservation of harvest (*economic, health, cultural*)	Social, cultural, educational, economic, aesthetic, health
	Preservation of caribou	Protection of way-of-life and identity of a people (*cultural*) Maintenance of health (*health*)	Cultural, health
	Protection from contamination	Protection of Ts'akui Theda (*spiritual*)	Spiritual
	Protection of ecosystem	Protection of sustainable way-of-life (*cultural*)	Cultural
Infrastructure	Locating parks office in community	Increased input into management (*political*) Increased local employment (*employment*)	Political, employment
	Increased tourism infrastructure	Increased potential for tourism (*economic*)	Economic
	Increased infrastructure in park and community	Integrated planning for local social, cultural and educational uses	Social, cultural, educational
Political	Input into management of area	Feeling of acknowledgement (*social*)	Social
	Inclusion of vision in park creation, operations and management	Protection of subsistence harvesting rights (*cultural*) Positive effects on *all spheres* of development	All spheres of development
Social	Decreased addictions and social problems	Increasing potential for tourism (*economic*) Decreasing human resources problems (*employment*)	Economic, employment
Spiritual	Protection of Ts'akui Theda	Important aspect of local culture and identity (*social/cultural*)	Social, cultural

creation represents an integral part of ongoing community (and Akaitcho territory) development processes, cultural preservation and revitalization, social betterment, economic self-reliance, and political self-determination. These previous considerations rely, in turn, on protecting the environment on which the community relies for their cultural identity, spiritual inspiration, and physical sustenance. The protection of the land-base is central, since, as Raffan explains "land is a, if not *the*, central feature of what it means to be Chipewyan" (Raffan, 1992, 176). Overall, the park is seen as contributing to the well-being of the community and individuals

The important question of whether the breadth and depth of perceived and desired benefits presented in this paper are realistic or feasible is complicated by several factors. First, though many of the benefits identified by interviewees have been experienced to a greater or lesser degree by other Canadian Aboriginal groups near national parks (Wight and McVetty, 2000; Notzke, 2006; Canadian Parks Council, 2008; Dearden and Langdon, 2009; Lemelin and Johnston, 2009), achievement of many of these benefits is partially dependent on a broad number of factors associated with ongoing park and community development processes. Though some of the benefits discussed in this paper would be almost automatic results of the creation of the park (i.e., aesthetic, health, environmental), other spheres of benefit (i.e., political, cultural, educational, economic) will require careful consultations and negotiations, ongoing community leadership, trust building, articulation and communication of a united vision, collaboration, and effective action on the part of the various stakeholders involved. Furthermore, the Thaidene Nene Working Group of the LKDFN preferred that the question of what is realistic or feasible was not explored as the manifestation of these benefits was seen as inherent to their mandate. Secondly, since there have been no comprehensive studies of the actual cumulative costs and benefits of previous national parks for indigenous or northern Canadian gateway communities, it would have been difficult to establish a basis for comparison. This is a future area of research that is sorely needed. Yet the upcoming Socio-Economic Impact Assessment that Parks Canada will be conducting as part of park development processes will attempt to answer the question of what is realistic and feasible.

While the establishment of a national park or national park reserve was prevalent at the time of the study, recent developments have prompted the LKDFN, Akaitcho, and the GNWT to refer to the area in question as a "protected area" and examine various protected areas options currently available in Canada and in the Northern Territories. The parties involved in these discussions understand that the protected area will be unique and that, in the end, it may not fall under the auspices of a national park in the traditional sense.

CONCLUSION

In the context of Lutsel K'e, the national park proposal represents one aspect of much broader community development and self-actualization processes for the LKDFN. Yet it is an important aspect that might increase community economic sustainability, improve local social conditions, support the traditional way of life, revitalize the local culture, and increase levels of local input into and control over their territory. The discourse presented herein is timely in that it could be integrated into the articulation of a united community vision for the creation of the park and inform the upcoming Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. Additionally, engaging in this participatory and proactive process guided by Appreciative Inquiry and focused on community development and the benefits of the national park prior to its formation might, in the long-run, contribute to the manifestation of a greater depth and breadth of benefits for the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (Chambers, 1997; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Finally, this study could provide a baseline for comparison and for measuring the overall success of the national park initiative for the community. In closure, though this collaborative research project was motivated primarily by the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation's interest in maximizing community benefit from the park, this discussion of benefits is also relevant to the development efforts of Aboriginal groups in Canada and elsewhere who are engaged in protection and conservation initiatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The results presented herein were gathered as part of the principal author's thesis research when he was a graduate student in the Master of Environmental Studies program in the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism at Lakehead University. The principal author would like to acknowledge the guidance and mentorship of his supervisor Dr. Harvey Lemelin and committee members Dr. Margaret Johnston and Dr. Lesley Curthoys. Funding for this project was provided by the Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada (SERNNOCA), the Aurora Research Institute, the Northern Scientific Training Program (NSTP), and Parks Canada. This research would not have happened without the support and guidance of the Thaidene Nene Working Group and the LKDFN. A final thank you to community members in Lutsel K'e for their trust by sharing stories, hopes, dreams, and aspirations with an outsider.

NOTES

1. Perhaps the greatest reason for the failure of the Dene-Metis Comprehensive Claim process was the insistence on the part of the Government of Canada

that treaty and aboriginal rights be extinguished. At a 1990 assembly in Dettah, NWT, the First Nations from the Tlicho, Dehcho, and Akaitcho regions of the Northwest Territories refused to endorse a Dene-Metis Agreement-In-Principle. First Nations from the Gwich'in and Sahtu regions, anxious to settle a land and resource deal with Canada, broke away from the Dene-Metis process at this time and pursued comprehensive claims on their own.

2. In 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between then Minister of the Environment, Rona Ambrose, and then Chief of the LKDFN, Adeline Johansson that recognized a cooperative arrangement to examine the feasibility of a national park in Thaidene Nene (within three years), to recommend a boundary for the park, and to assess the impacts and benefits of the park creation and recommend "measures to increase Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation capacity to deal with such impacts and benefits."

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