

DEPOSE , 31-03-2015

JAMES WAPACHEE



Statement from James Wapachee as provided to and translated by Johnny Trapper

When I first became aware of something taking place on our trapline, there was a shovel (heavy machinery) parked on the side of Route Du Nord near our camp at Mountain Lake. At a later time, I saw the same shovel had moved and the next time I saw it, it was working on the mountain. I did not know what was going on so I went to the Band Office to see Matthew Tanoush to ask around. He told me he did not know anything but he would find out. Josie Jimikin was Chief at the time.

When I went back to see Matthew Tanoush, this is where I found out that something had been authorized by the Chief for work to take place as possibly, some mineral was found out on the trapline. I eventually found greater and more in-depth details about the kind of mineral set to be extracted. I did not get invites from the Chief or other Band Officials when they were discussing potential projects on our trapline.

It seems that Chief Josie Jimikin at the time and Bertie Wapachee had okayed preliminary work to take place there without consulting us or me for the matter. I am the tallyman for the affected trapline. It seems there was a name already given by Chief Josie and Bertie to call the project, "Wabouchii". I don't know where they came up with this name but if they wanted to name it after the mountain, the mountain where the mineral was found lying underneath is really called, "Ka-waput-nat". It is not call Wabouchii.

I later found out the name of the person wishing to start the mine project or the proponent was "Guy Burassa". I eventually had the opportunity to meet him in person along with my late brother in-law George Swallow along with my wife. This "Guy" said I could invite my family members to start working right away. We told him that it didn't work that way and that there were complex processes to follow.

Now, the main concern I have here is on the issue of my status as the TALLYMAN. If they found some type of natural resource or mineral on our family trapline, wouldn't it be more appropriate to advise the tallyman first. Instead it seems our leadership at the time totally disregarded the importance of a play role by the tallyman. Where do I stand? Nobody consulted with me and even to this date. It's as if the tallyman does not exist. This is where my concern is!

I am not one who is opposed to the project. In the latter stages of discussions on this project, I was previously asked what cautions to make. I want to help and will help in finding ways to avoid damaging the environment. One area that must be strenuously pursued is continuous studies to take place on land, environment in general, animal and fish. This includes before and after the mine starts. Thereafter, tests should continue year after year or every second year

The crushed stone should not be piled to create a mountain out of it. It could be used for road repairs. Access road could be built for me to my camp, or improve our camp ground with it, etc...The stone could be used on the main road to minimize the air dust.

For employment, our Cree people who have started their own businesses here in Nemaska should be used for their equipment. These are people with heavy machinery equipment. Cree people from the outside have asked me when the project will start and they anticipate to come for work here. I would also like to see them find employment here at the mine.

In the context of creating hunting zones, this is where my concern is that we are not subjected to certain hunting regulations where we cannot hunt in certain areas. It must be remembered at all times that the mine sits on someone's trapline. I would not want to see strenuous regulations indicating us where cannot hunt. This is not just for us at the trapline affected but for us who practice our Cree culture. We cannot be stopped to go hunting on our trapline. We will take, as Cree hunters, precautions in what we do in hunting activities.

In terms of blasting the rock, I think there could be an alternative way to crush the rock or stone. Some years back I was working under the Cree Construction Company with Billy Mettaweskum. We were asked to mix this powder with water which was reddish in colour. We poured this mud liquid from the powder mix of water into these holes. Then we covered the holes with insulation. Within a 24 hour period, we went back to the work site. A shovel was used to hit the work area. The rock literally and practically broke into pieces. There was no need for the rock to be blasted. This could be an alternative way instead of using the blasting method. I do not recall the exact name of the method but this, I actually witnessed as alternative to blasting.

As stated earlier, I will help out finding solutions to avoid damaging the land and the environment as whole. We need to use methods to minimize the dust in the air by opting to use various alternatives.


James Wapachee