

**STATEMENT BY THE WORK GROUP MANDATED BY THE COUNCIL TO PREPARE THE MEMBERS TO THE COMEX HEARINGS REGARDING THE IMPACTS OF THE WHABOUCHI PROJECT**

On behalf of our Work Group, we would like to welcome you to our Community.

The former Council of the Cree Nation of Nemaska created this work group to prepare the members for the COMEX hearing and to gather concerns and comments regarding the impacts of the proposed Whabouchi Project.

The Work Group, with the support of the Council decided to use different methods to approach and encourage community members to express their concerns and comments during the COMEX process. The methods chosen were:

- Focus groups involving specific sector representatives (ex. Elders, women, land users, etc). These focus groups were open to anyone who wished to participate or observe
- Target visits – visits to either families, specific locations or groups who requested them (ex. personnel and clients of the Clinic, people with mobility issues, etc.)
- Individual interventions – open to anyone wishing to be met with individually for various reasons (ex. being shy, being afraid of public scolding, mobility issues, etc.)
- Reporting forums – such as the radio or other media like Facebook (a Facebook page was also created).

Participants were informed that these exercises were meant to be neutral so that everyone would feel free to contribute.

It was also decided that for the purposes of a more efficient gathering of comments, the comments and concerns would be divided into four themes. Though four themes were chosen, the topics falling in one group or another were left vague and it was agreed that all four themes were not exclusive of one another. These themes were the following:

- Land Use / Culture / Cree Knowledge
- Employment / Social / Business Development & Opportunities / Integration
- Water Quality / Air Quality / Environment / Communication / Safety
- Closure / Remediation

It was also decided to try and hold the focus group exercises for the following sectors of the community:

- Land users (families of the affected trapline and others around the area and/or who use the general area for their activities whether it be hunting, camping or getting drinking water) (February 5, 2015)
- Tallyman and his family (February 4, 2015)
- Elders (March 10, 2015)

- Youth (March 24, 2015)
- Women (March 3, 2015)
- Local entities and businesses (March 26, 2015)

Announcements were made on the radio about the activities and opportunities people had, to share their comments or obtain information. The media used, included the local radio station, the Facebook page, posters, letters sent to individuals and personal invitations.

A specific effort was made to make sure participants understood that the process was neutral and intended to encourage and educate people on how they could participate in the consultation process or share their feelings, thoughts and recommendations towards the project.

Most of the interventions, including the focus groups were carried out by more than one person in order to ensure a proper gathering of information.

The focus group meetings normally began with an opening prayer, followed by an explanation of the exercise, the rules of conduct (respect all opinions, etc.). This was followed by an explanation on the functioning of the COMEX process (from the early stages of a project, to the project notice, the impact assessment, the hearings, recommendation and delivery or not of a permit). A map was also shown of the project to explain some of the changes that had been made to the project. To show people the most recent plans, a brief video was shown of the Whabouchi Project.

The four areas of discussion were then presented, and the participants were encouraged to enter into open discussions on the Whabouchi Project. No efforts were made to correct false perceptions, comfort or scare people. Instead, they were encouraged to share their thoughts.

The comments and concerns gathered throughout this process were compiled in a report which will be included in a final report to be submitted to the COMEX for review and consideration before the deadline for submissions.

The final report will include the compilation of comments and concerns gathered:

- during the process initiated by the Work Group;
- expressed by members during Council meetings and Public meetings;
- expressed by the members of the Work Group.

The final report will conclude with a list of recommendations to be considered by the COMEX.

This document will be submitted on behalf of the members of the Community in order to ensure that all comments and concerns that were voiced publically will be heard by the COMEX. However, regardless of the forum used, it was decided that the participants' identities as related to their comments would not be disclosed. Names of the participants

were compiled for information purposes only and will be listed in our report in a separate section.

We thank you for coming here to our Community and we trust that you will consider every comment and every concern expressed by our members verbally or in writing. These concerns and comments are based on Cree knowledge and past experiences with development projects and they are not to be overshadowed by scientists or experts who have never lived on the land.

Meegwetch, Merci, Thank you.