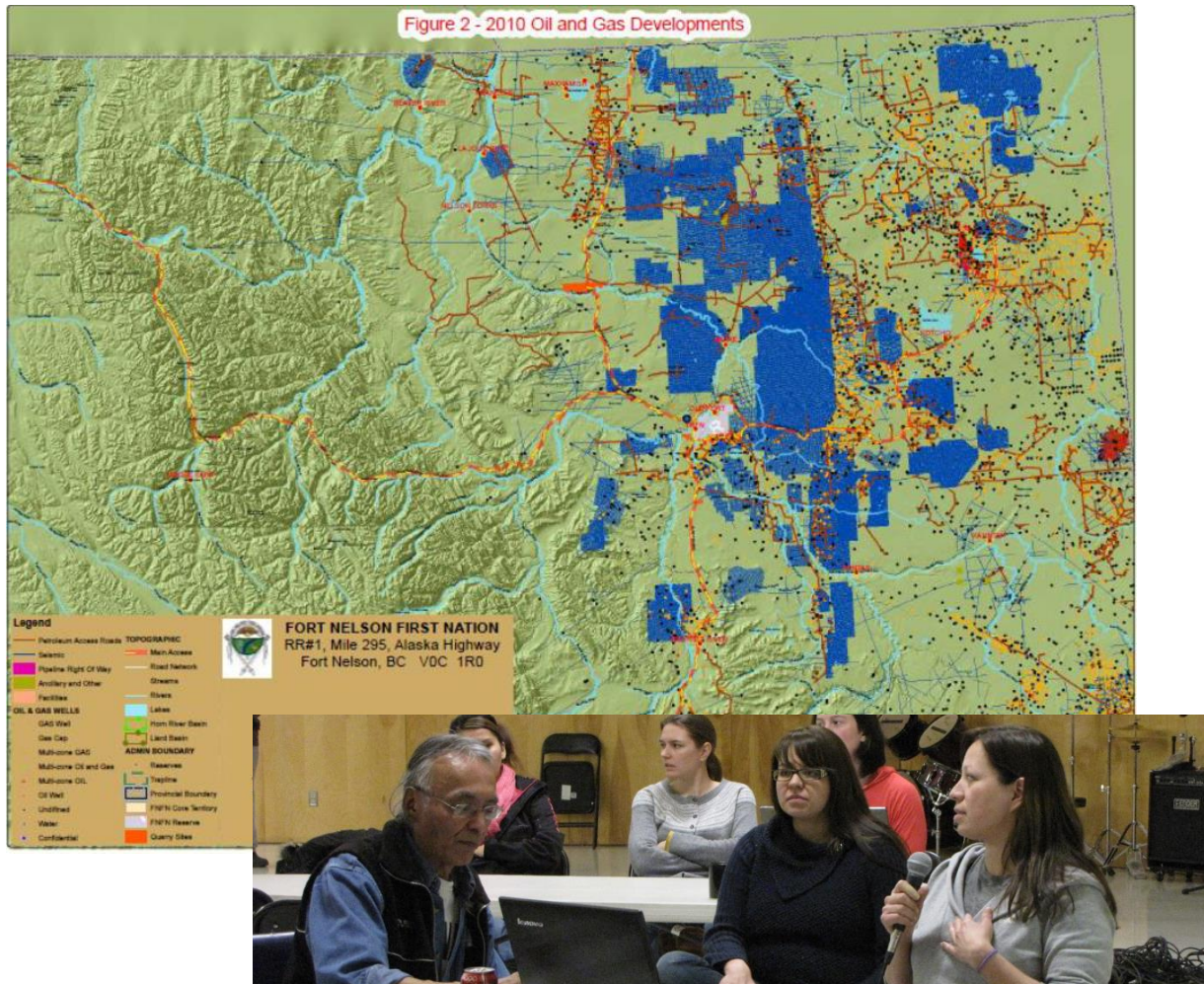


Sahtú Story-telling Tour with Fort Nelson First Nation Guests

March 3-6, 2014 –Tulít'a, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells




Presented by the ʔehdzo Got'ine ʔots'ë Nákedı and the ʔehdzo Got'ine of Tulít'a, Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells

With support from Dragonfly Fund at Tides Canada




Sahtú Story-telling Tour with Fort Nelson First Nation Guests March 3-6, 2014 –Tulít'a, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells

ʔehdzo Got'įnę (Renewable Resource Councils) and Sahtú community members have been requesting to learn more about the experiences of Fort Nelson First Nation in northeast British Columbia, which has been overwhelmed with shale gas exploration. Fort Nelson First Nation people are distant cousins of the Sahtú Dene people and share many cultural traits and values. FNFN is a Dene and Cree community with approximately 800 members.




Who we are

- ~ We are a Dene & Cree community in NE BC
- ~ 800 members
- ~ Our vision: A nation, a people—strong, healthy and self-reliant
- ~ Our families wish to continue to provide for ourselves in our own land long into the future




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FNFN is a Treaty Nation

Our Land



- ~ Treaty 8 confirms our right to govern our traditional territory, 'nation-to-nation'
- ~ Governance = the right and responsibility to protect and manage our territory for our future generations
- ~ A central role in economic development and resource management is a treaty imperative

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Slides from FNFN presentation in Sahtu communities

The Sahtú Story-telling Tour with Fort Nelson First Nation Guests was a partnership between the ʔehdzo Got'įnę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board), the ʔehdzo Got'įnę (Renewable Resource Councils or RRCs), and the K'asho Got'ine Community Council.

The goals of the tour were to:

- Develop a better understanding within Sahtú communities of the environmental and social impacts, risks, and opportunities associated with the shale oil industry;
- Promote 'big picture' thinking about landscape-level / cumulative impacts and impacts on present and future generations of Sahtú people; and
- Strengthen relationships and cross-community learning between Sahtú communities and First Nation communities in northeast British Columbia who have already experienced extensive cumulative impacts associated with the shale gas industry.

This report describes:

- How the project fits within the mandates of partner organizations
- How the tour was organized
- Story-telling sessions in three Sahtú communities - overview
- Highlights from the community meetings
 - Water
 - Cumulative impacts
 - Economy
 - Governance
- Measures of success
- Next steps



Community meeting in Tulit'a

How the project fits within the mandates of partner organizations

Under the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (1993), the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board is the “main instrument of wildlife management” in the Sahtú Region. The Board has a responsibility to uphold the overarching objectives of the land claim, which include:

1.1.1(c) to recognize and encourage the way of life of the Sahtu Dene and Metis which is based on the cultural and economic relationship between them and the land;

1.1.1(f) to provide the Sahtu Dene and Metis with wildlife harvesting rights and the right to participate in decision making concerning wildlife harvesting and management;

1.1.1(g) to provide the Sahtu Dene and Metis the right to participate in decision making concerning the use, management and conservation of land, water and resources;

1.1.1(h) to protect and conserve the wildlife and environment of the settlement area for present and future generations.

The Renewable Resource Councils, which are made up of active hunters and trappers, have a mandate “to encourage and promote local involvement in

conservation, harvesting studies, research and wildlife management in the community” (13.9.1). Section 13.8.40 states that the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board “shall directly involve Renewable Resources Councils and participant harvesters to the greatest extent possible.”

Shale oil exploration is currently a major consideration in the management of wildlife, land and water in the Sahtú Region. In order for the ʔehdzo Gotʔine Gotsʔé Nákedí to properly do its job of protecting and conserving wildlife and habitat in the region while working closely with the ʔehdzo Gotʔine and harvesters to encourage local involvement in decision-making, the ʔehdzo Gotʔine Gotsʔé Nákedí has made strong efforts over the past several years to help ʔehdzo Gotʔine understand shale oil issues and help them engage meaningfully with industry and government.

It has been particularly difficult for Sahtú community members to meaningfully participate in decision-making on shale oil issues without a strong understanding of the bigger picture (“cumulative impacts”). The purpose of the story-telling tour with Fort Nelson First Nation guests was to provide an opportunity for Sahtú community members to hear first-hand stories from other Dene people about what the experience of shale oil and ‘fracking’ has been like, in ways that ordinary people could understand.

How the tour was organized

The ʔehdzo Gotʔine Gotsʔé Nákedí approached Tides Canada for support and received positive feedback on the idea of a cross-community learning initiative about oil and gas impacts.

The ʔehdzo Gotʔine from Tulít’a, Norman Wells and Fort Good Hope each wrote a letter of support for the project. In addition, Grand Chief Frank Andrew of the Sahtú Dene Council wrote an official letter to Fort Nelson First Nation Chief Sharleen Gale, inviting her and other Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) representatives to visit Sahtú communities to share their stories and experiences.

Once Chief Gale and FNFN Lands Director Lana Lowe had accepted the invitation and the week of March 3, 2014 was decided upon, organizers contacted the high school principals and teachers in Tulít’a, Norman Wells and Fort Good Hope in order to explain the initiative and arrange for visits by the FNFN guests with the high school students. Unfortunately, this week fell within spring break for the Fort Good Hope high school, but sessions were arranged in the Tulít’a and Norman Wells schools. Organizers prepared educational

materials about shale oil and gas and sent them ahead of time to the teachers in Tulít'a and Norman Wells, in the hope that students could do some thinking about the issue ahead of the visit. In Fort Good Hope, a session was arranged at the youth drop-in centre.

Unfortunately, organizers received a message from the high school principal in Norman Wells, less than a week before the scheduled visit, that the Fort Nelson First Nation guests would not be allowed to speak with the students since the topic of 'fracking' could not be discussed at school. On Monday March 3rd, the day of the scheduled visit to the high school in Tulít'a, the Tulít'a principal informed organizers that the FNFN guests would similarly be prevented from speaking in his school, without permission from the Minister of Education. A last-minute session was arranged in the youth drop-in centre in Norman Wells; however, no youth attended. The session at the youth centre in Fort Good Hope went ahead, but with poor attendance.

A big lesson was learned through this disappointing experience about the challenge of engaging young people on the controversial topic of shale oil development, and the care that must be taken to gain trust and support from decision-makers. The ʔehdzo Got'įnę Gots'ę Nákedī followed up by writing a letter to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), inviting ECE to work together in a positive way in the future to ensure young people receive adequate and unbiased education about oil and gas issues.

Story-telling sessions in three Sahtú communities - overview

Community meetings featuring presentations by Fort Nelson First Nation Chief Sharleen Gale and Lands Director Lana Lowe were held in Tulít'a on Monday March 3rd, in Fort Good Hope on Tuesday March 4th, and in Norman Wells on Thursday March 6th. Chief Gale and Lana showed their dedication to the initiative by driving for two days from Fort Nelson, all the way up the winter road to the Sahtú Region. They also spent much of the week driving for many hours on the winter roads between the three communities,



Muskox that charged FNFN vehicle on Fort Good Hope winter road

and then found the energy to make their presentation in the evenings. On the winter road between Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells they were even charged by a muskox!

Each community meeting was well-attended, despite being a very busy time of year, with 45 people in attendance in Tulít'a, 35 in Fort Good Hope, and 25 people in Norman Wells. People in Tulít'a were so interested in the discussion that the meeting lasted until 11 pm.



Community meeting in Tulit'a arena, March 3, 2014

Both the FNFN leaders and local Sahtú leaders emphasized how important it was to be having a Dene-to-Dene dialogue about oil and gas at this time, given that this is a turning point in the histories of both regions. Chief Gale of FNFN felt that the existing threats to land and water in her territory mean her people are on the verge of losing their Dene way of life and are now faced with difficult choices about how they will work with government and industry going forward. Sahtú community leaders have already made agreements with oil and gas companies but recognize that exploration is only at the beginning stages, and they still have a chance to protect the land and water and set limits on the scale and pace of development before things get out of control.

FNFN leaders and Sahtú community members discussed and compared their challenges in struggling to gain more control over the future of their land and water and their own destinies.

The following theme emerged repeatedly and was discussed in detail: **“What does it mean, what does it look like, to be self-governing and take charge of land and water management in relation to oil and gas development?”**

Highlights from the community meetings

The Fort Nelson First Nation guests told stories about how shale gas development in their territory has evolved, especially over the past 5 years, and how their role as community leaders has evolved:

“In 2010 we said ‘no’, and they went ahead anyway. So now we are trying to move away from saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to recognizing it is happening, and figuring out how do we manage it?” --FNFN Lands Director Lana Lowe



Michael Neyelle (interpreter), FNFN Chief Sharleen Gale, Lands Director Lana Lowe in Tulit'a

Water

One of the most important issues raised by Sahtú community members was the protection of water. Questions asked during the meetings included:


- How much water is used in fracking in your territory?
- How are water sources chosen?
- Are there any caps or limits on water usage?
- How is wastewater stored or disposed of? Are injection wells used?

- What chemicals are used in the fracking process?
- What are the impacts on surface and ground water quality?
- Was there any baseline water monitoring before the exploration started?


The FNFN leaders told the story of one family who crosses a river to get to their cabin. Once the shale gas industry started operating upstream, water levels dropped so much that the family could cross the river on a quad for the first time.


The FNFN leaders explained that there is no regional water monitoring program in northeast B.C., and very little baseline information has been collected in their territory. Community members have noticed lake levels going down, and believe that companies are overdrawing water. At first, FNFN took pictures and made complaints to both government and industry, but often there was no response or it wasn't until many months later. So FNFN took matters into their own hands and made arrangements directly with industry. They got companies to pay FNFN to hire a water scientist to install monitoring stations and train FNFN members on how to use the technology.

Slide from FNFN presentation to Sahtu communities



Impacts on Water: The Water Cycle





~ Huge water withdrawal and loss

~ Our people fear that the muskeg will be “dried up” because the water is taken forever

~ Our people fear that there will be no beaver, moose, fish or other foods & medicines that we need

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FNFN leaders explained that they are challenging the B.C. government which is planning to issue permanent water licenses for tens of millions of cubic metres of fresh water per year, in perpetuity:

“Water is very spiritual, and we have a connection to water. Sometimes elders say things, and I know those things are important and I know that

they are speaking the truth, but I can't explain that to people who aren't Dene. Elders have noticed effects and pushed us to take care of the water. Industry is using big hoses to suck out the water. They want to install huge long term infrastructure in our lakes and waterways so they can suck it out year round. We don't want that, because as soon as one company builds one, everyone wants one, and there are 20 proposals on the table. We don't think our land can handle that. That's why it is really important to monitor before it starts happening."

They also spoke about injection wells and the failure of the B.C. government to provide information or consult FNFN properly:

"We don't know where the injection wells are on our territory, because of the way they are permitted. They are abandoned wells, so they don't have to disclose locations. There are a lot of things wrong with the way B.C. does oil and gas, we want to get them to disclose these things – location, how much water is being used, what they are putting in it. These are the things we need to know."

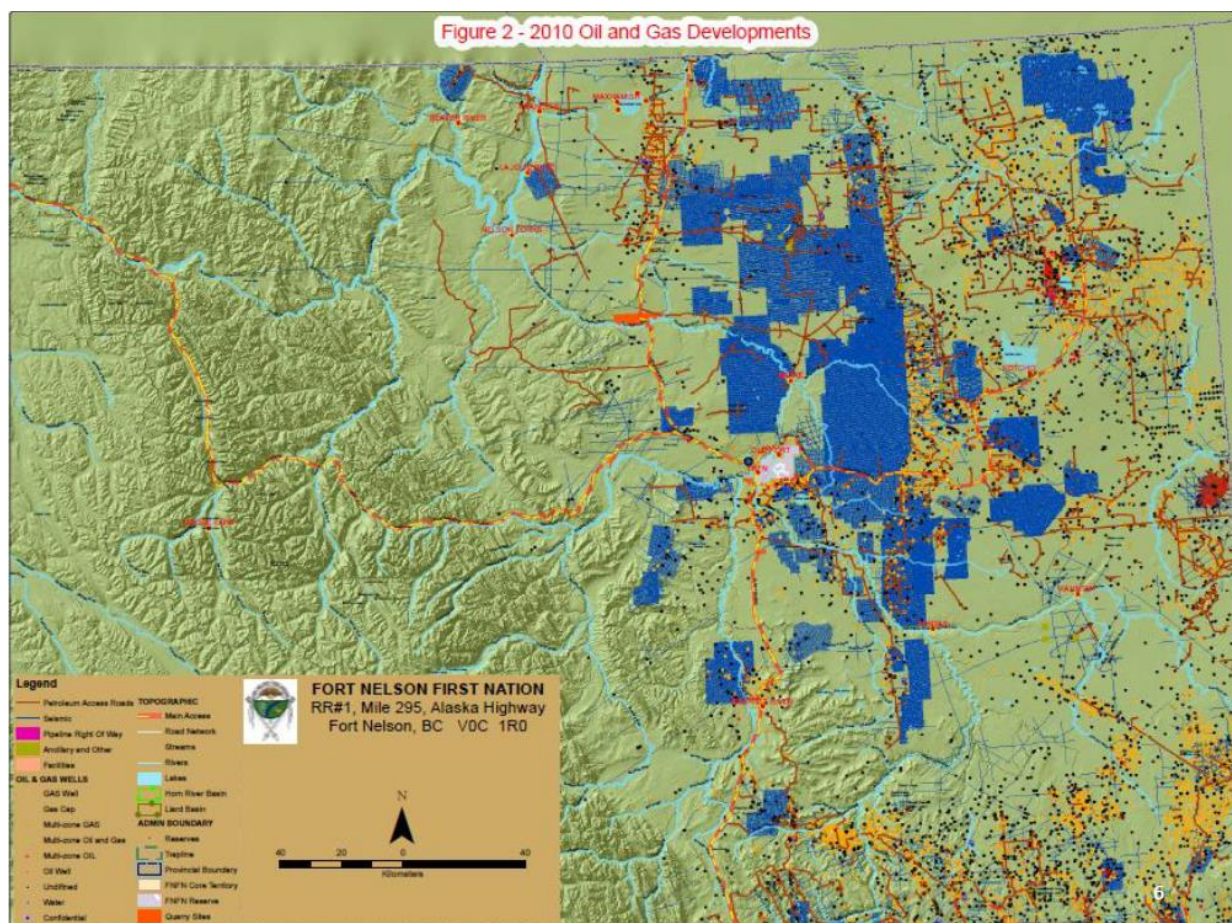
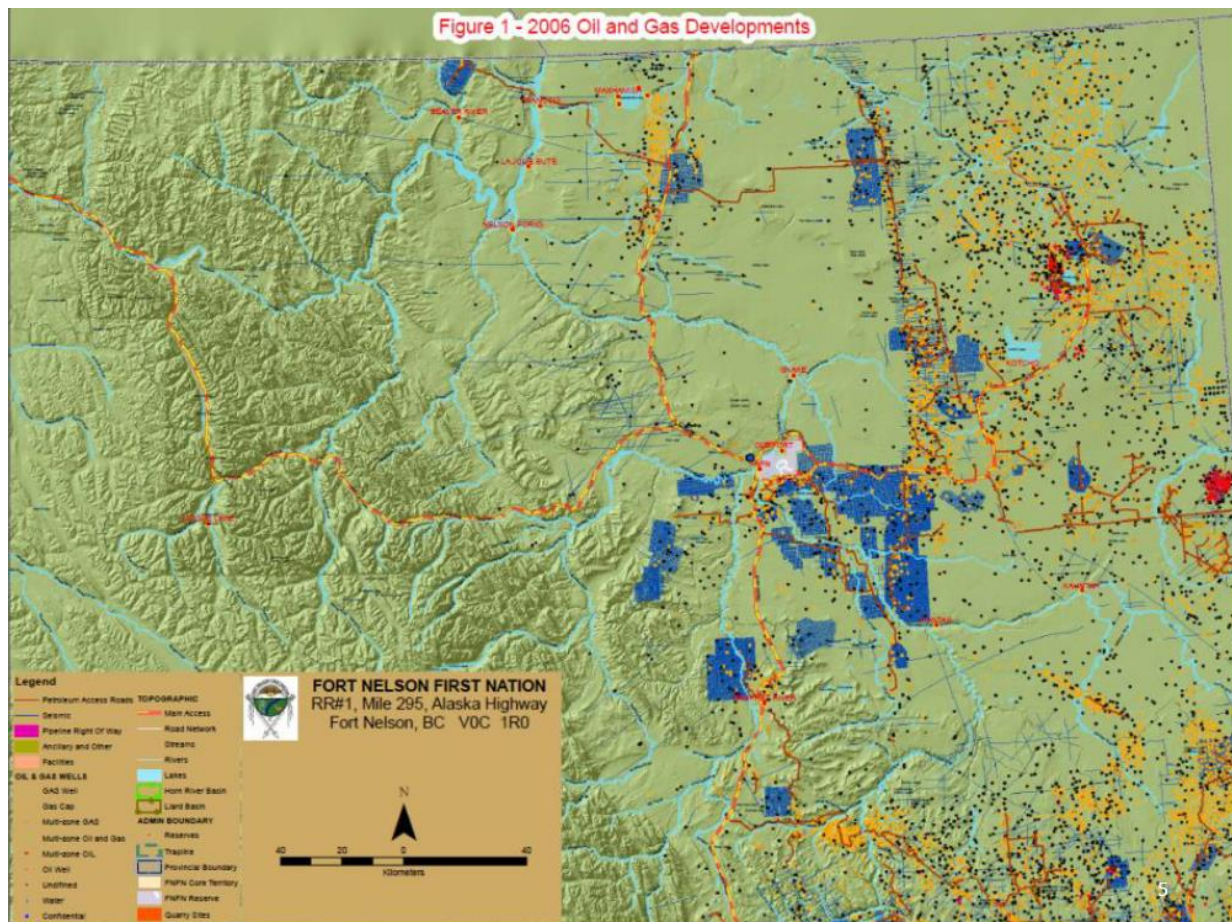
Cumulative impacts

A community member in Fort Good Hope asked the following question, demonstrating a good understanding of the problem of cumulative impacts:

"The environment can only sustain so much. The studies always say it is safe because the contamination is only so many parts per million, but over the course of years...have you in Fort Nelson First Nation been able to actually identify the impacts on your ecosystem?"

FNFN Lands Director Lana Lowe explained that when they talk about 'fracking' on their territory, they are not talking about one well or one frack site. They are talking about all the impacts to the land and water over time, including seismic lines, roads, well pads, wells, quarries, frack sand sources, etc. FNFN leaders showed a month-by-month timelapse animation illustrating how quickly roads, seismic lines, pipelines and well sites were developed on FNFN territory between 2004 and 2012. This timelapse animation is available online at:

<http://vimeo.com/53895331>.



If BC's LNG Strategy is realized, the number of shale gas wells drilled and fracked in FNFN territory will increase by 600% over the next 20 years. This will mean tens of thousands of kilometers of roads, seismic lines & pipelines; and trillions of litres of water removed from muskeg, rivers and lakes in the territory.

The FNFN leaders explained some of the cumulative impacts they have already seen on their territory, and some of the ways these impacts have affected their people:

- Seismic lines make it easier for wolves to hunt moose and caribou, so the wolf population has gone up and the moose and caribou populations have gone down.
- Streams have been damaged and diverted during the construction of water crossings.
- There are lots of small spills; many go unreported.
- There are a lot more roads across the landscape; it seems that every company wants to build their own access road. There are lots of big trucks, lots of dust, garbage, air pollution and noise.
- Roads create more access for hunters, and more people everywhere. FNFN people feel uncomfortable going out on the land and unwelcome in their own territory.
- Beavers get in the way of road construction and maintenance by building dams, so companies hire people to go out and shoot them. Beavers are traditionally a very important animal for Fort Nelson First Nation people.

Economy

Sahtú community members were interested to know:

- How many jobs in the shale oil and gas industry go to local people?
- How safe are those jobs?
- How is hunting and trapping affected?

FNFN leaders explained that a lot of local people get jobs cutting open the seismic lines and building roads; the First Nation wants to provide jobs, but not at the expense of their treaty.

They told stories about hunters and trappers having their cabins interfered with, and companies putting up security booths and trying to keep people out of their own territory. It has made FNFN people feel uncomfortable and unwelcome on their own land.



Community meeting in Fort Good Hope hall, March 4, 2014

Governance

There was a lot of discussion on how decisions are made about oil and gas activities on traditional territory in both the Sahtú Region and northeast B.C. Many differences and some similarities were identified between treaty rights and rights accorded by the Sahtú land claim, the role of First Nations in oil and gas regulation, levels of consultation, and private agreements with industry (eg. Access and Benefits Agreements signed by Sahtú land corporations).

FNFN Lands Director Lana Lowe pointed out that while the Sahtú people have an approved land use plan, the entire FNFN is considered an economic zone, a “free for all.”

Many Sahtú community members realized that they actually hold a lot more power than they thought, compared to FNFN. They were shocked at how little consultation the B.C. government has done with FNFN, and the fact that industry has not signed ABAs with FNFN. They were impressed with how proactive FNFN has been in asserting their rights and setting up their own programs, often with industry funding, to monitor and manage their land and resources.

FNFN Lands Director Lana Lowe explained that a big part of the problem with the lack of consultation is the nature of the permitting system:

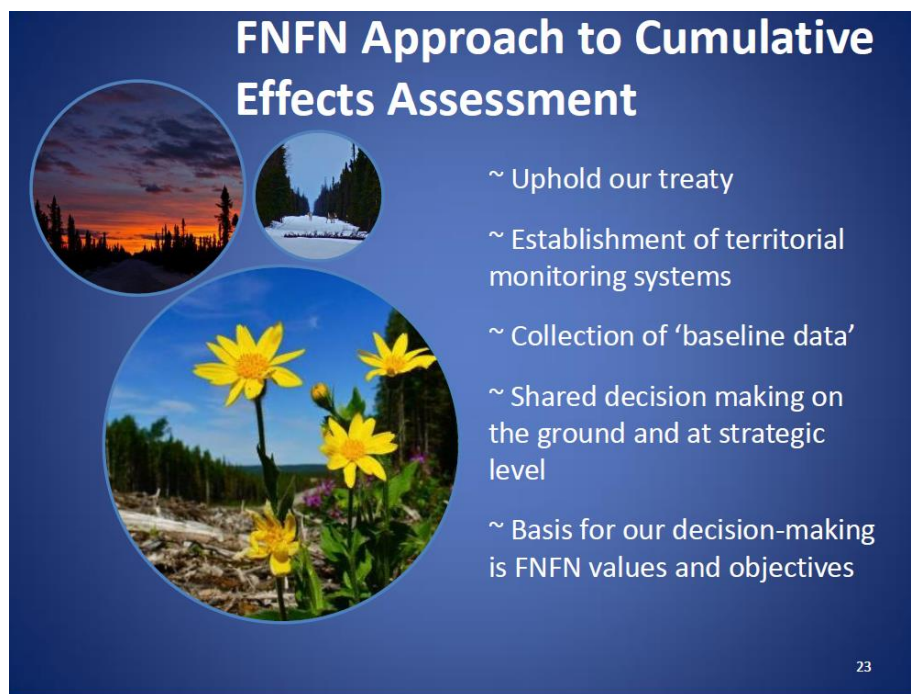
“It’s all piecemeal. It’s not looked at as one project; thousands of permit applications come into our office and because each one is just one little well, the government permits it. They say it’s just one little well so it will have insignificant impacts to your treaty rights. But 300 wells plus seismic lines and roads together have significant impacts on our treaty rights. We’re here to say there are cumulative impacts that need to be addressed.”

Lana explained that all of the development in FNFN territory so far has happened without any environmental assessment (EA), because each single project is too small to go to EA. She summed up their relationship thus far with the BC government by saying:

“So in our territory, this is what consultation looks like. We are sharing our identity, they smile and nod and walk away. It is expensive for us, hiring people to help us get through this process, and it is demeaning because we don’t get any results. So we are looking for a new way to do this.”

A community member in Norman Wells asked:

“I know there is challenge for the Lands Department to keep up with permits and licenses. Do you have any learnings on how First Nations can increase their capacity to understand applications and make decisions and implement programs?”



FNFN Approach to Cumulative Effects Assessment

- ~ Uphold our treaty
- ~ Establishment of territorial monitoring systems
- ~ Collection of ‘baseline data’
- ~ Shared decision making on the ground and at strategic level
- ~ Basis for our decision-making is FNFN values and objectives

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Slide from FNFN presentation to Sahtu communities

In response, FNFN leaders described the consultation protocol they developed. They also emphasized the importance of working with industry before companies submit applications, to ensure that environmental management and monitoring plans are developed in a collaborative way. Lands Director Lana Lowe observed:

“Many companies do have a genuine desire to be good neighbours, to get a social license, it just takes some leadership from communities. There is some old school thinking within companies, especially at the operational level, but higher-ups seem pretty open to doing things differently. They provide us with the resources to get monitoring stations installed and to get our knowledge holders on the ground to identify important sites.”

FNFN leaders explained some of the research and monitoring partnerships they have established with industry. In addition to water monitoring, they have partnered on a seismic program which the BC Oil and Gas Commission permitted, even though it crosses through a prime hunting area near two of the First Nation villages:

“So we stepped in and said, ‘We’re going to work with you, while you collect information below the ground, we will collect information above the ground, and you pay for it.’ We hired a biologist, an archaeologist, and 12 of our people to be part of field teams. The company is paying for all of this. Our people are getting paid, getting training, learning from their elders, and we are gathering all this information. We also have stop work authority—if something happens, we can stop the program until a solution is figured out.”

The FNFN leaders gave an example of when they used that stop work authority when a mulcher killed a denning bear. They trained all mulcher operators to be able to identify bear dens, got input from elders, and established a protocol for identifying and avoiding dens. Since then, dens have been successfully avoided.

FNFN leaders and Sahtú community members shared important reflections about what it means and what it takes to maintain and strengthen Dene identity and culture in the midst of oil and gas development:

“We think it is important to talk about what the future holds for our children. When I am with my ancestors, I want to see my kids picking berries where my grandparents picked berries. That’s what it means to be Dene, to share being on the land, to go to places we’ve always gone to.”

-FNFN Chief Sharleen Gale



Elders and RRC members at Fort Good Hope meeting

Community members in Fort Good Hope reflected:

“Our elders fought for this land, back in the 1970s and 80s. A lot of them are gone now, but when they spoke, they spoke with a strong voice and they spoke together.”

Several people observed that Sahtú communities have a lot more power than they often realize, and ʔehdzo Gotʔine in particular can have a lot of power if they speak up on environmental issues.

Results


Organizers hoped that as a result of this tour, Sahtú community members would be able to more confidently engage in regulatory processes and cumulative impact assessment and management initiatives related to the shale oil and gas industry. Another hope was that Sahtú community members would develop lasting relationships with Fort Nelson First Nation representatives and become linked with broader support networks amongst First Nations in northern Alberta and British Columbia.

It appears that there has been some success. A few days after the FNFN presentation in Tulit’a, the Sahtú co-management boards held an information session in Tulit’a about their mandates and how regulatory processes work. An

ʔehdzo Got'įnę Gots'ę Nákedí representative who attended the meeting noticed that Tulít'a community participants were more engaged than usual, asking more questions and sharing stories and learnings from the FNFN session earlier that week.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of letters sent by community members and organizations in Tulít'a, Norman Wells and Fort Good Hope in response to applications submitted in April and May 2014 for further shale oil exploration in the region. For example, the K'asho Got'ine Community Council in Fort Good Hope submitted its first letter on a shale oil application in April 2014, calling for an environmental assessment. In June 2014, the Norman Wells ʔehdzo Got'įnę called for an environmental assessment on an application to horizontally fracture up to 10 wells. The Fort Good Hope ʔehdzo Got'įnę submitted letters on both applications, expressing concern about environmental and wildlife impacts and calling for further consultation. In Tulít'a, sixteen elders wrote a joint letter in April 2014 calling for an environmental assessment.

Both FNFN leaders and Sahtú community members pledged to keep in touch and maintain a network of mutual support. Chief Sharleen Gale invited leaders and members from each of the communities to attend a Summit on Shale Gas and LNG, being hosted by Fort Nelson First Nation from April 14-16, 2014. First Nation representatives from across British Columbia and Alberta were expected to be in attendance at this Summit.



**BC First Nations
Shale Gas - LNG Summit**
April 14-16, 2014
Fort Nelson, BC

Please join
us in the
Fort Nelson
First Nation
Territory

April 14-16,
2014

"Striking the Balance"
Hosted by Fort Nelson First Nation

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Slide from FNFN presentation to Sahtu communities

Overall, FNFN Chief Sharleen Gale and Lands Director Lana Lowe expressed profound appreciation for the opportunity to get to know their distant Dene relatives. They were inspired by the number of people still speaking their Dene language and practising their culture, and by how much Sahtú people care about protecting their land and water. They also had an opportunity to learn about Access and Benefits Agreements which are standard in the Sahtú Region, and how co-management boards work.

Next steps

The ʔehdzo Got'jné Gots'ę Nákedí is eager to organize follow-up activities with the ʔehdzo Got'jné focused on establishing a meaningful and culturally appropriate framework for cumulative impact management, with a particular focus on both the protection of freshwater and protection of boreal caribou habitat.

This could include story-telling within and between Sahtú communities about previous experiences with oil and gas exploration and development, scenario building, and the exploration of appropriate targets and thresholds.