



## PROPOSED CREATION OF NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

### Sahtu Community Update #1

February 2009

## WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

### THE STORY SO FAR...

For countless generations, the South Nahanni River headwaters area, in the southwest corner of the Sahtu Settlement Area, has been an important traditional area for the Shuhtagot'ine (Mountain) Dene. Today, its importance extends to the Dene and Métis of Tulita and Norman Wells.

On June 15, 2007, Parks Canada requested the support of the three land corporations that represent the Dene and Métis living in Tulita and Norman Wells for the creation of a national park reserve in this area.

On October 25, 2007, the Tulita Land Corporation, the Fort Norman Métis Land Corporation, the Norman Wells Land Corporation and the Tulita District Land Corporation unanimously passed a resolution to support an interim land withdrawal for the possible creation of a new, stand-alone national park reserve in the South Nahanni headwaters area.

On January 17, 2008, the then-Minister responsible for Parks Canada, John Baird, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the designated Sahtu organizations (land corporations) representing the Dene and Métis of the Tulita District. This MOU was signed in Ottawa and was witnessed by Chief Frank Andrew, Tulita Dene Band. Parks Canada and the land corporations are working co-operatively to develop an agreement to protect the South Nahanni River headwaters, and are negotiating an Impact and Benefit Plan.

Final park boundaries have not been determined, but 7,600 square kilometres of land are temporarily protected through an interim land withdrawal. The land withdrawal prohibits new mineral staking or any other third party interest being registered on the land. However, existing third party interests in the area, including existing mineral claims and leases, are not affected.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### 1. Why are the Nahanni Headwaters Important?

In addition to its importance to the Dene and Métis of the Sahtu and Dehcho, the South Nahanni River watershed is an incredibly beautiful and ecologically important area for Canada and indeed the world.

The upper part of the watershed within the Sahtu Settlement area accounts for about 1/6th of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem, and it is important as the source of the river and as habitat for grizzly bear, Dall's sheep and woodland caribou and many other important wildlife and plant species.

The headwaters area is the launching area for adventurous visitors to the wilderness. Visitors from the rest of Canada and the world will have the opportunity to see the spectacular landscapes and to hike, canoe, and climb in these new park areas.



*Lened Hotsprings steam in the cool September air, Mackenzie Mountains.  
Photo: Douglas Tate, 2002.*

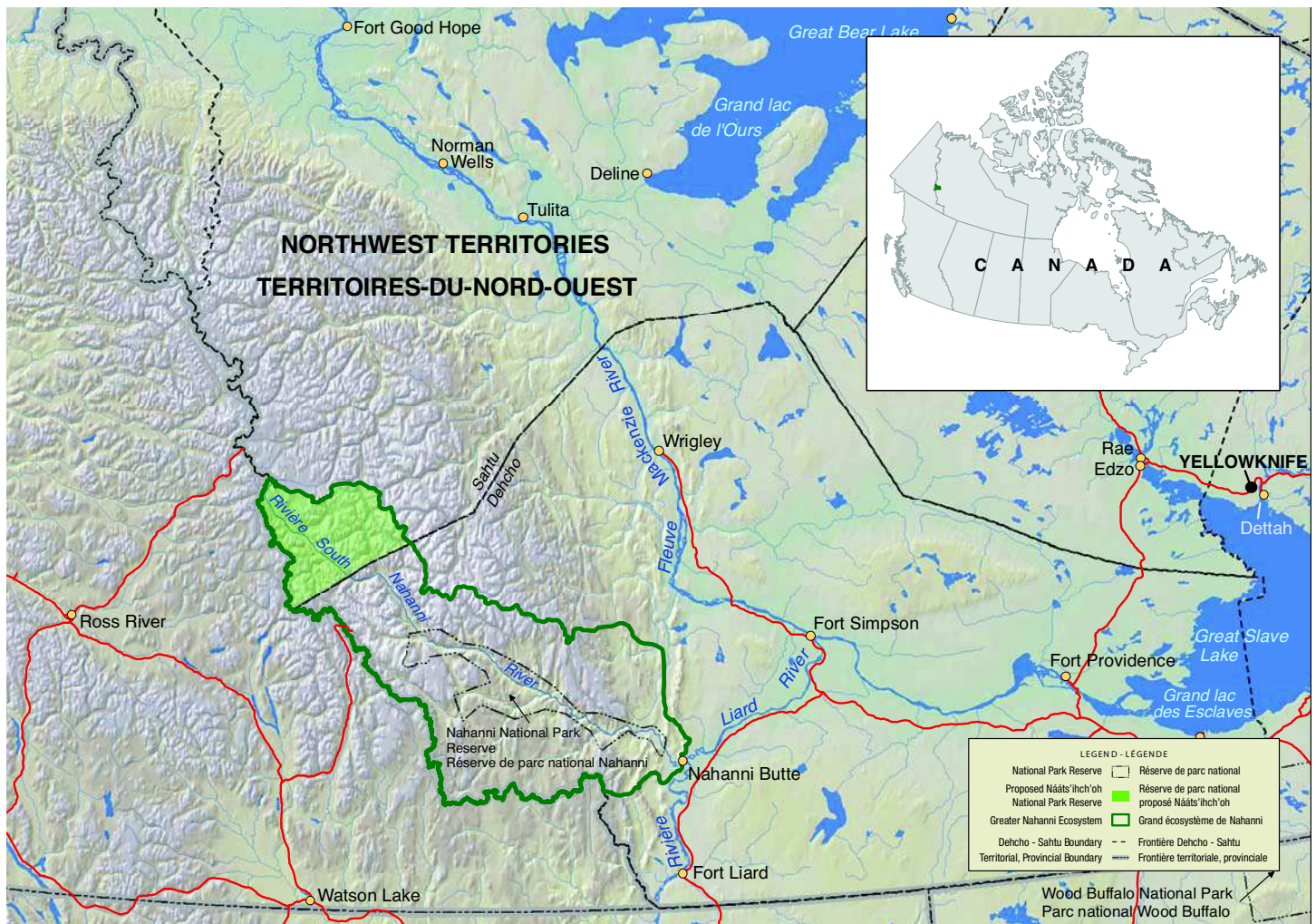


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The South Nahanni River headwaters are a vital part of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem. The Greater Nahanni Ecosystem, which straddles the Sahtu Settlement Area to the north and the Dehcho to the south, includes the entire watershed of the South Nahanni River, and the Nahanni North Karst lands.



*The Honourable John Baird, then-Minister of the Environment and Minister Responsible for Parks Canada, speaks at the announcement of an agreement to work towards the creation of NÁÁTS'ihch'oh National Park Reserve at the Museum of Nature, Ottawa, April 7, 2008. Photo: S. Kilpatrick, 2008.*

## 2. Where did the idea to create NÁÁTS'ihch'oh National Park Reserve come from?

Industrial development is progressing in the north, with roads, pipelines, exploration for minerals, oil and natural gas, and development of mines and wells. Amidst this development, the South Nahanni River watershed has remained a large, relatively intact wilderness area.

Nahanni National Park Reserve was established in 1976. The park reserve is too small to properly protect healthy ecosystems. Since the first Park Management Plan was approved in 1987, Parks Canada has been on record as wanting to expand the park to better protect the South Nahanni River watershed.

Parks Canada is working with Dehcho First Nations to expand Nahanni National Park Reserve within the Dehcho. In the Sahtu, Parks Canada is working with the land corporations to protect the South Nahanni River headwaters and create a national park reserve to be called NÁÁTS'ihch'oh.

At the end of these processes, we hope to have two national park reserves, Nahanni and NÁÁTS'ihch'oh, which will stand side-by-side to protect the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem for all time.





*Nááts'ihch'oh Announcement, April 7, 2008. Front row: Parliamentary Secretary (Environment) Mark Warawa, Minister John Baird, Chief Frank Andrew, Fort Norman Métis Land Corporation President Rocky Norwegian and Parliamentary Secretary (INAC) Ron Bruinooge. Visible in back row: Tulita youth representative Lindsay Norwegian, Parks Canada CEO Alan Latourelle and Tulita elder Leon Andrew. Photo: Jill Sturdy, CPAWS, 2008.*

### 3. What is an Impact and Benefit Plan?

As stated in Chapter 16 of the *Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement* (1993), an Impact and Benefit Plan is required. It will describe the steps that will be taken to mitigate any possible negative impacts and to

provide for benefits such as economic and employment opportunities for affected Sahtu communities..

**Sahtu participants will continue to enjoy their traditional harvesting rights within a national park reserve. There will also be a process that allows for appointment of Tulita and Norman Wells participants to a co-operative park management committee.**

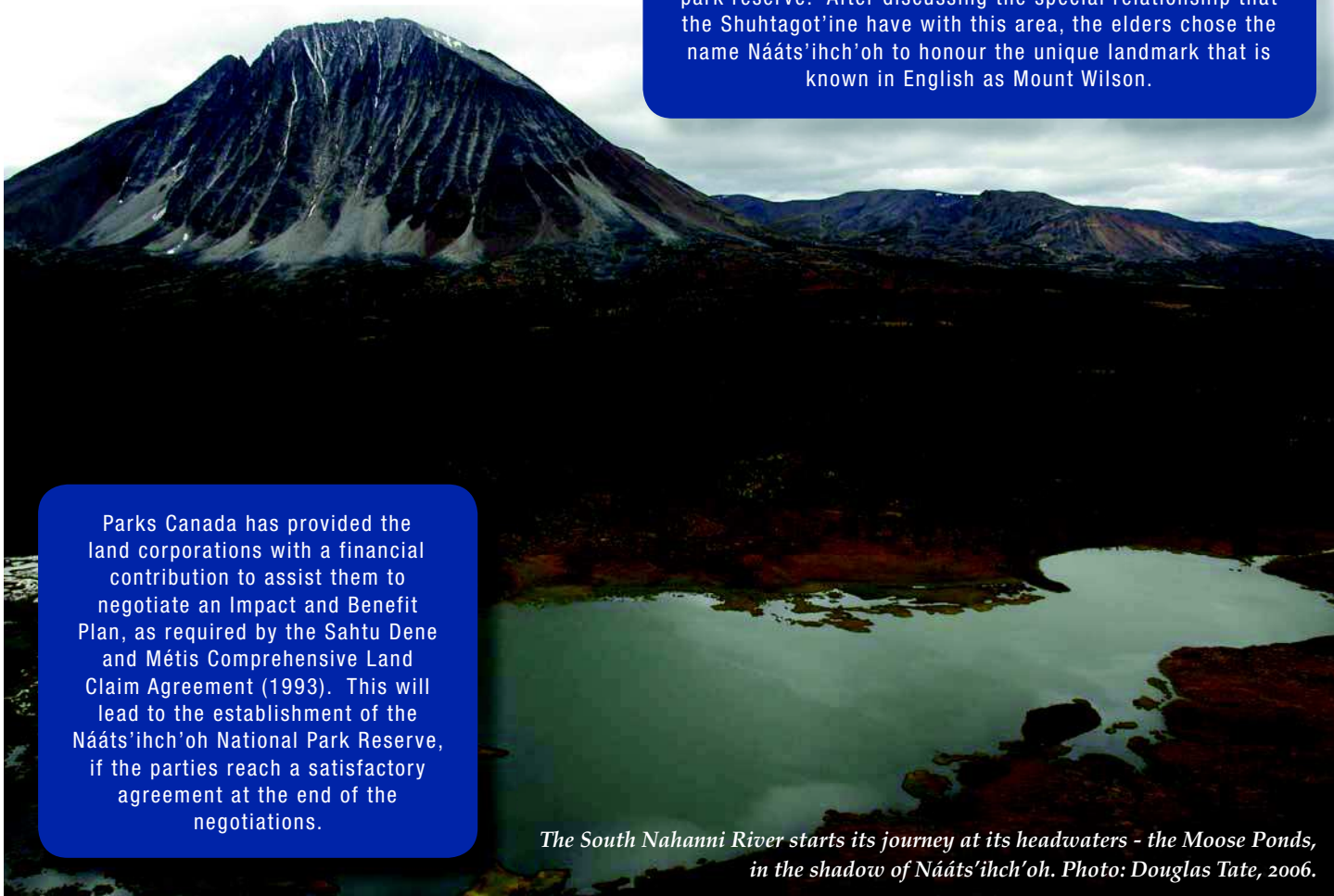
### 4. What is happening in the Dehcho?

While working with people and organizations in the Sahtu, Parks Canada continues to work with Dehcho First Nations to expand Nahanni National Park Reserve in the Dehcho.

In August 2007, the Prime Minister and the Minister responsible for Parks Canada were in Fort Simpson, NWT to announce that lands had been set aside through an interim land withdrawal order to protect the Dehcho portion of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem.

The feasibility study phase of this project is now finished and government is considering a final boundary for the expanded national park reserve.

In November of 2007, Tulita District elders met to choose an appropriate name for the proposed new national park reserve. After discussing the special relationship that the Shuhtagot'ine have with this area, the elders chose the name Nááts'ihch'oh to honour the unique landmark that is known in English as Mount Wilson.



Parks Canada has provided the land corporations with a financial contribution to assist them to negotiate an Impact and Benefit Plan, as required by the *Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement* (1993). This will lead to the establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, if the parties reach a satisfactory agreement at the end of the negotiations.

*The South Nahanni River starts its journey at its headwaters - the Moose Ponds, in the shadow of Nááts'ihch'oh. Photo: Douglas Tate, 2006.*



Together, the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and the expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve within the Dehcho will help to protect the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem for all time.

## PLEASE GET INVOLVED.

Parks Canada and the Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group (TDNWG) have provided this community update to answer questions that community members might have about this project. Please feel free to contact us at any time.

If you would like to share your ideas or want to know more, we would like to hear from you!

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Clarence Campbell, Rocky Norwegian and Chief Frank Andrew listen to Minister John Baird speak at the announcement of an agreement to work towards the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve at the Museum of Nature, Ottawa, April 7, 2008. Photo: S. Kilpatrick, 2008.



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