

DE BEERS GROUP



# WATCHING OVER THE LAND

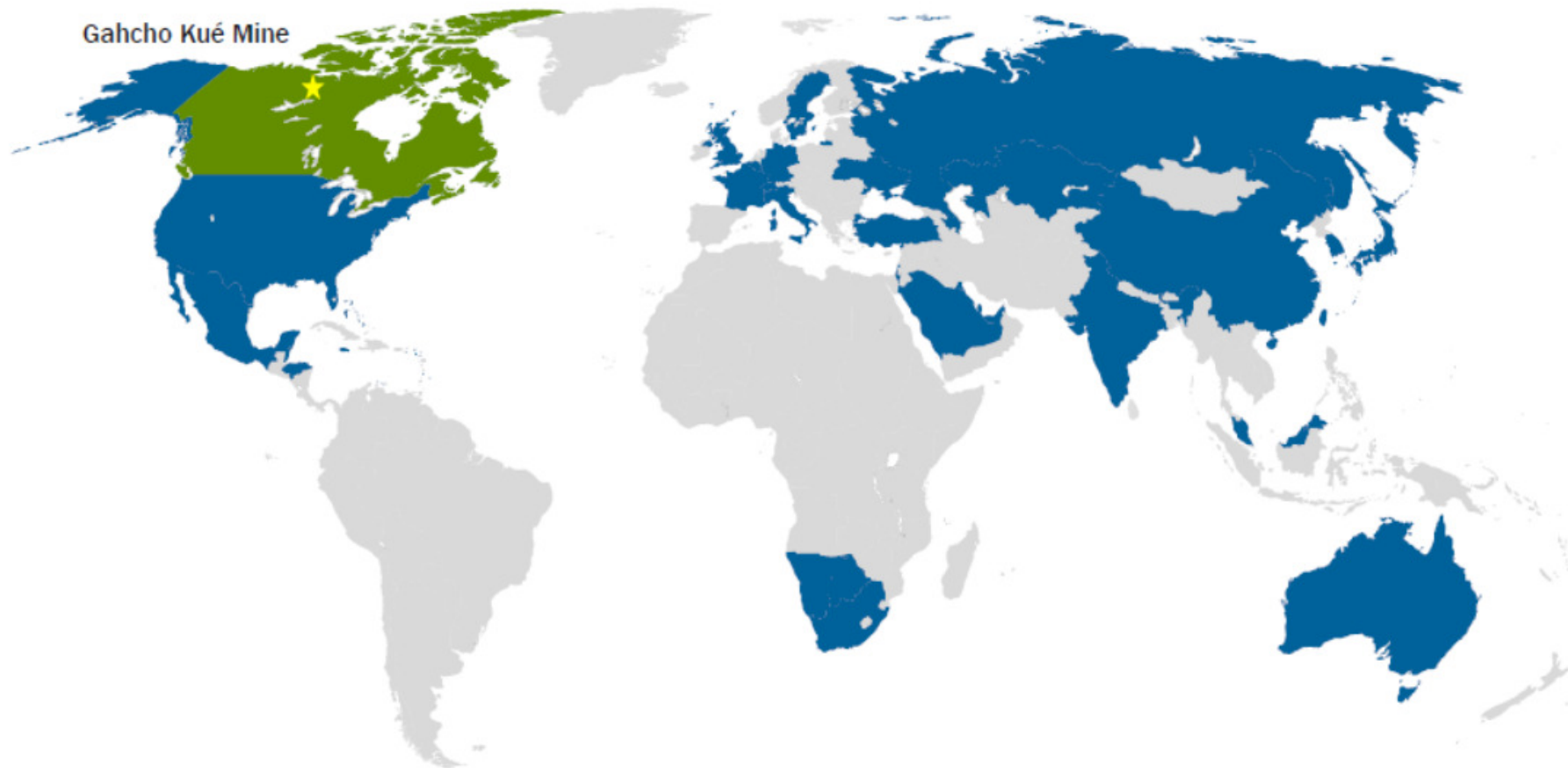
Alexandra Hood, De Beers Group  
October 2018

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## LOCATION OF THE GAHCHO KUÉ MINE

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## ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

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NWT Population= 43,000

Yellowknife Pop = 20,000

There are 33 communities in all of NWT

Northwest Territories is 50.3% Aboriginal

There are 11 official languages

Several First Nations are in the process of negotiating land claim agreements

All Aboriginal Communities feel a strong connection to the land

“When we talk about ‘Land’ in the Northwest Territories, it’s with a capital ‘L.’ Land here means more than just actual territory. It’s about wildlife, water, air quality, entire ecosystems, and livelihoods for the people who live on that land. All of this depends on the integrity of the land; and there are deep cultural connections to the natural resources connected to both the land and the environment.”

Alex Power, Yellowknives Dene First Nation



Jacqui Pinnau Photography

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## CO MANAGEMENT IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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- Regulatory regime is relatively new and is a direct result of comprehensive land claim agreements
- Based upon two principles:
  1. Integration and coordination; and
  2. Co-management of resources between governments and Aboriginal groups.



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## HISTORY OF NWT MINING

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- Gold mining began in Yellowknife in the 1935, soon there were several gold mines in the area
- The last Gold mine to operate in Yellowknife closed in 2004 (Giant Mine) shortly after the company went bankrupt
- Arsenic remains in underground chambers at Giant Mine, posing an ongoing threat to groundwater quality in the area
- Governments and Co-Management Boards became very cautious about new mining operations
- Diamond mining began in 1998 with the Ekati Mine, followed by Diavik in 2003, Jericho Mine in 2006, and Snap Lake Mine in 2007.



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## INDEPENDENT MONITORING AGENCIES

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- Strong interest from local Aboriginal communities in protecting the land, water, air, and wildlife
- Are the fish still good to eat? Is the water still safe to drink? Will there still be caribou?
- Diamond companies acknowledge that active engagement with Aboriginal parties, to understand their concerns, and to understand how best to address those concerns is critical to maintaining the social license to operate
- All 4 diamond mines (Ekati, Diavik, Snap Lake, and Gahcho Kue) support Independent Monitoring Agencies



Ekati



Diavik



Snap Lake



Gahcho Kué

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## GAHCHO KUÉ – NI HADI XA

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- Collaborative organization formed by 5 Aboriginal Parties and De Beers
- Traditional knowledge is treated with respect equal to scientific knowledge
- Parties set aside their usual roles, their usual positions and work together
- Decisions made by a Governance committee comprised of a member from each of the Parties including a company representative
- First meeting in November 2014
- De Beers will fund the program until 1 year after active closure of the mine





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## NI XADI XA OBJECTIVES

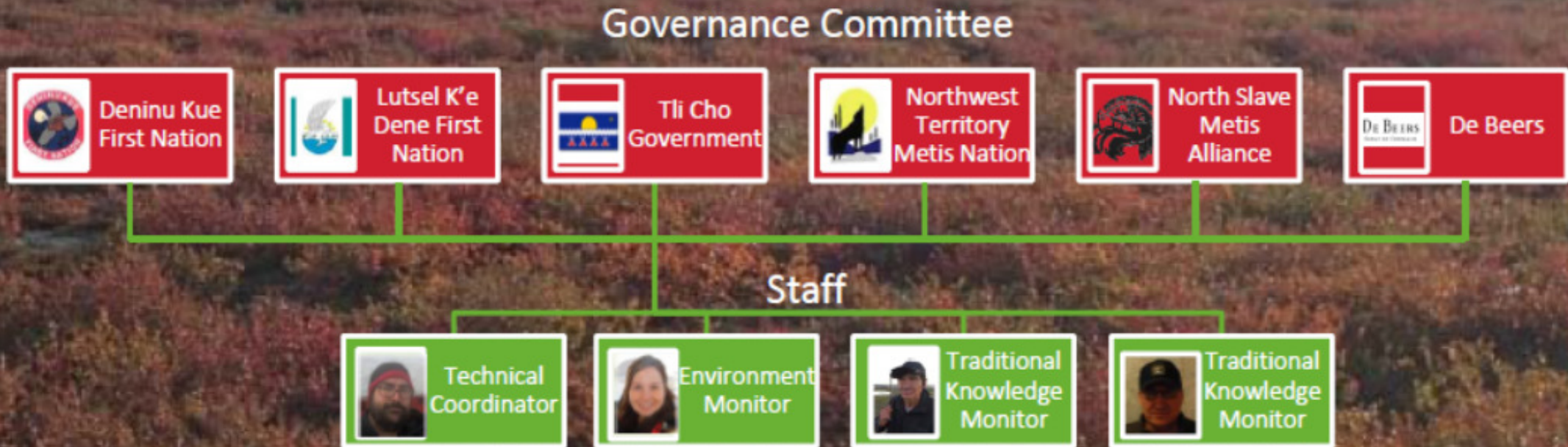
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- 1) Respect the land, water, wildlife, plants
- 2) Respect the indigenous people and their way of life
- 3) Ongoing review of environmental monitoring and management at the mine
- 4) Develop capacity of Aboriginal communities
- 5) Priority issues receive technical review including 3rd party review
- 6) Recommendations can be made to De Beers; De Beers must respond
- 7) Integrating traditional use in environmental management
- 8) Promote efficiency through shared costs
- 9) Dispute mechanisms
- 10) Communicate back to the people



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## NI HADI XA STRUCTURE





On-Site  
Environmental  
Monitoring



On-the-Land  
Traditional  
Monitoring



In-the-Office  
Technical  
Review



Ní Hadi Xa Programs



## On-Site Environmental Monitoring



Sampling



Observation



Heritage Resources



Report back to NHX



In-the-Office  
Technical  
Review



Coordinates the  
NHX Program



Technical Review



Manages 3<sup>rd</sup> party  
contracts



Spokesperson for  
NHX



## On-the-Land Traditional Monitoring



Traditional Knowledge  
Monitoring



Family Culture  
Program



Build and Maintain  
the Cabin



Communicate with  
Communities

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## NI XADI XA CABIN: A GATHERING PLACE ON THE LAND

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- 35km north of the mine
- Strategic monitoring location
  - Participants required to record their observations, and report back to NHX
- Traditional migratory route of barren ground caribou
- Downstream of the mine
- Home-base for TK Monitors
  - Bring youth and other community members with them
- Gathering place for Family Culture Program
- Owned and operated by Aboriginal Parties
- Access via ski-doo or float plane
  - De Beers supplied the equipment (Ski-doods, tents etc.) and covers the costs



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## WHAT WORKS WELL?

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- Aboriginal Parties taking ownership and control of programs
- Integration of NHX with Environment team on-site
- Open communication – share everything and do so immediately
- Clear structure, which all parties agree to
- Hiring Aboriginal staff
- Focus on the issues that matter the most to parties
  - wildlife, water, fish

What are we still working on?

- Need to develop a better mechanism for responding to issues and concerns when they are brought up
- Developing the TK Framework for capturing observations systematically





