



**NI HADI XA**

Annual Report 2023

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Tom Unka, NWTMN

Hello everyone,

Last year was a challenging one for Ni Hadi Xa (NHX). Forest fires caused by high temperatures and dry conditions raged across Canada and in the NWT led to the evacuation of several communities including Yellowknife, N'Dilo, Dettah and Hay River. Together with a high employee turnover rate, this resulted in interruptions to all of the 2023 NHX programs. Despite these challenges, NHX staff and governance committee members pulled together and were able to meet several objectives throughout the year. This included a site visit to the Gahcho Kué Mine, participation in site-based monitoring programs, Traditional Knowledge (TK) monitoring, participation in the Geoscience Conference in Yellowknife, and holding in-person governance committee meetings in Łutsel K'e, Yellowknife, and Dettah.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank former Ni Hadi Xa Governance (NHX) committee member Jessica Hurtubise, representing North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA) for her contributions to all of the Ni Hadi Xa activities. Jessica has taken on a new role outside the NSMA and stepped down as their representative in March 2023.



I would also like to thank former employees Kyle Enzoe and Shyla Boucher for their efforts towards NHX's Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Program.

We were saddened at the loss of Robert Sayine, Elder of Deninu Kųé First Nation. Robert served on NHX since 2014 and was a large part of the negotiations of the NHX agreement. Robert will be missed at our annual and subcommittee meetings. On behalf of NHX I want to express our condolences to his wife Mae and their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. You are in our thoughts and prayers.

Lastly, thank you to all the organizations and companies that NHX worked with during the challenging times of wildfires this past summer. Your patience and kindness are much appreciated.

Marsi Cho!

Tom Unka

NHX Chairperson



## OBJECTIVES

Ni Hadi Xa is a contractual agreement between six (6) Indigenous Nations; Deninu K'ue First Nation, Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, North Slave Métis Alliance, Northwest Territory Métis Nation, the Northwest Territories Government, and De Beers Canada mining company. The Ni Hadi Xa Agreement is a legally binding contract which provides for environmental monitoring and management of the Gahcho Kué Diamond Mine additional to such matters governed by legislation.

Our collective efforts aim to provide ways to avoid or minimize the impacts of Gahcho Kué on the rights of Indigenous Parties; their traditional lands; their relationship to the land, water and resources; their social, cultural, economic and spiritual values; their way of life; and the environment.

Ni Hadi Xa exists to watch over the Gahcho Kué mine. This is different than the existing environmental agreement agencies set up to monitor the other diamond mines in the NWT, because there is a much greater emphasis on traditional knowledge monitoring.



## Some of the objectives of Ni Hadi Xa are to:

- ★ Respect and protect land, water, wildlife, plants and the land-based economy, essential to the way of life and well-being of the Indigenous Parties and present and future generations;
- ★ Ensure ongoing review of Environmental Monitoring and Management Plans, activities, and reports of De Beers and the regulators in relation to the Gahcho Kué Diamond Mine;
- ★ Develop and improve the capacity of the Indigenous Parties to participate in adaptive environmental management;
- ★ Make recommendations to De Beers with respect to these objectives;
- ★ Integrate and promote equal use of traditional knowledge in environmental monitoring and management; and
- ★ Communicate to the Parties and the public on activities and achievements of the above objectives.





## STRUCTURE

Ni Hadi Xa was established in December 2014. It is administered by a Governance Committee comprised of seven (7) land and environmental specialists appointed by each Party to the Agreement: six (6) Indigenous Party members, and one (1) member representing De Beers Canada. The committee makes decisions by motion and seeks to have consensus.

The Governance Committee exercises its will through Ni Hadi Xa staff who run the day-to-day operations. Staff monitor the impacts of Gahcho Kué in three different ways.

- ★ The first is technical – reviewing the environmental monitoring and management plans. NHX contracts outside experts to conduct external technical reviews as needed.
- ★ Second is on-site observation by our staff. NHX has an Environmental Monitor based at the mine working within the mine's environmental team. Their role is to observe what happens at the site, report observations and incidents and provide recommendations to the Ni Hadi Xa Leadership.



★ The third is Traditional Knowledge (TK) monitoring – here our staff and land users are on the land, observing what's occurring in the area around Gahcho Kué. NHX employs two part-time TK Monitors and one part-time Administrator who are responsible for the implementation of our traditional knowledge monitoring program. TK monitoring is carried out via two avenues: 1) through observations and data collected by the NHX TKM staff who spend approximately 12 weeks of the year on-the-land near the mine site, and 2) through observations and data collected by Indigenous Party beneficiaries who participate in our On-the-Land Travel Program (OTLTP).



## NHX GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE



NHX faced challenges this past year with northern wildfires preventing NHX from meeting face to face last summer. As a result, the annual On-the-Land meeting, which usually takes place at Fletcher Lake, was done virtually.

NHX did meet face-to-face on February 2, 2023, in Dettah, and April 26-27 in Łutsel K'e. On November 21, the NHX Governance committee visited the Gahcho Kué mine site and November 22, the Committee meeting was held at the NSMA office boardroom in Yellowknife.

Recommendations made by the Ni Hadi Xa Governance Committee, and their status are:

- ★ Creation of a Spills map from a cumulative effects perspective – fully addressed
- ★ Production of a plain language summary of underground water and water flow migration and usage – fully addressed
- ★ Use of waste cooking oil rather than burning it – fully addressed
- ★ Update on carbon capture program – fully addressed
- ★ Update on the Recycled synthetic diesel research – in progress
- ★ NHX to meet the maintenance crew at the mine site to get an overview of spill management and mitigation efforts – fully addressed
- ★ Advertising of positions for hire – fully addressed



# ON-THE-LAND FAMILY TRAVEL PROGRAM

This past year wasn't a great year for the On-the-Land Family Travel Program, as it was held up by wildfires and human resource challenges. While several groups had applied to participate in the program, due to not having Traditional Knowledge monitors on staff and several wildfires around Yellowknife, the 2023 program was not implemented.

Our thanks go to the various companies and individuals who tried to help make the past year's program a success.



# NI HADI XA TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE MONITORING PROGRAM (NHX TKMP)

The winter monitoring program was implemented from the Gahcho Kué mine site in 2023. The TK monitor was able to travel the winter road, and the area around the mine to document caribou sightings from March 16 to 28, 2023. Consideration will be made to using the mine site for future monitoring programs when logistics or other issues prevent the TK monitors from basing out of Ni Hadi Xa's cabin, located near the mine site on the shores of Fletcher Lake.

One TK monitor position remained open throughout the year and the NHX Hiring committee continued to work with those who applied.

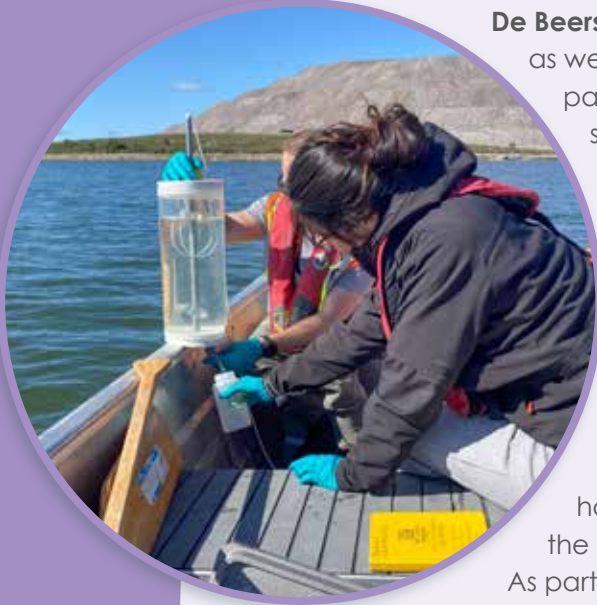
Summer programs couldn't start without the TK Monitoring Program (TKMP) monitors. Without them on staff, compounded by the extreme wildfires in and around Yellowknife, resulted in the On-the-Land Family Travel Program being cancelled.



# NHX ENVIRONMENT MONITOR AT GAHCHO KUÉ MINE SITE – SUMMARY FOR 2023

**Construction** – Gahcho Kué continues to be a dynamic work-site with construction activities occurring continually. Lifts continue to be added to raise the heights of Dykes D, L & A1. Work has started to extend Dyke A1 to raise the facilities elevation. Extensive expansion was done between the Tuzo pit and the Coarse Processed Kimberlite facility, including the creation of a new heavy equipment parking area, moving the pit refueling station and the mobile crusher. The Raw Ore Material (ROM) pad and the West Mine Rock Pile (WMRP) continue to grow in height as expected. The Airstrip was resurfaced and covered in a dust suppressant in July. While not harmful for wildlife and fish, the oil may be a wildlife attractant. There has not been an increase in wildlife observations in this area to date. The previous landfill in the WMRP was closed in August and a new one was opened in the Coarse Processed Kimberlite facility (CPKF) in August.





**De Beers Sampling** – De Beers monitors air, water, soil and wildlife internally as well as mine activities. The Air quality monitoring includes suspended particulate monitoring, as well as dustfall and NO<sub>2</sub> sampling stations spread out from site. Particulate testing results were higher than normal in parts of the summer due to the large amount of smoke particles that blew into the area from forest fires. Extensive water monitoring occurred throughout all seasons. De Beers continues to monitor the Surveillance Network Program as part of their Type A Water License MV2005L2-0015. Samples are also taken on the Downstream Flow Mitigation water that is piped from lake N11 to Area 8 as part of the fish habitat program. A seepage program occurs twice a year to confirm that the dykes and pads are not significantly impacting the surrounding water quality. De Beers has begun the process of determining the remediation success of the historic land farm which contains contaminated soil and gravel. As part of this process, De Beers has sampled the land farm for existing contaminants to ensure adequate breakdown. Additional sampling will occur in the spring of 2024.



**Wildlife** – De Beers monitors site wildlife through weekly inspections, collection pond surveys and monthly logs spread across the worksite. Animals reported include wolf, red fox, wolverine, arctic hare, ground squirrel and caribou, while birds include raven, robin, sparrow, swallow, ptarmigan, various waterfowl, and multiple predators, including bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and hawks. De Beers also responds to wildlife reports if the animal is in a high-risk area for example, a fox on the pit ramp. Several unknown causes of mortality occurred. Two mine operations related mortalities occurred, one ground squirrel and one red fox. All reasonable effort was made to prevent these occurrences including trapping and relocating the fox.

**Spills and Inspections** – De Beers continues to log and clean up spills within the lease boundary. Active effort is being demonstrated in trying to decrease the number that occur with investigations into needed changes. De Beers Environment continues to inspect fuel systems and waste disposal areas to ensure compliance. When areas are out of compliance supervisors are contacted and often respond quickly to fix the issues. Most issues that arise are due to human error.

**Programs** – Caribou monitoring along the Gahcho Kué spur road occurred for the duration of the winter road season. This involved behavioural and population monitoring by truck from the Gahcho Kué site to where the road meets up with the main road at Reid Lake. This year De Beers also implemented a camera program along the road hoping to observe caribou interacting with the road. The Snowpack Survey occurred in late April this year when the snow had already begun to melt.

The Environment Monitor participated in many of the annual monitoring programs including water quality, plankton, sediments, and benthic sampling as well as the removal of the fish fences. These programs were implemented efficiently and competently by De Beers staff and consultants. The Archeology team was on-site in early September to check a few locations for new sites as well as check existing archaeological sites.



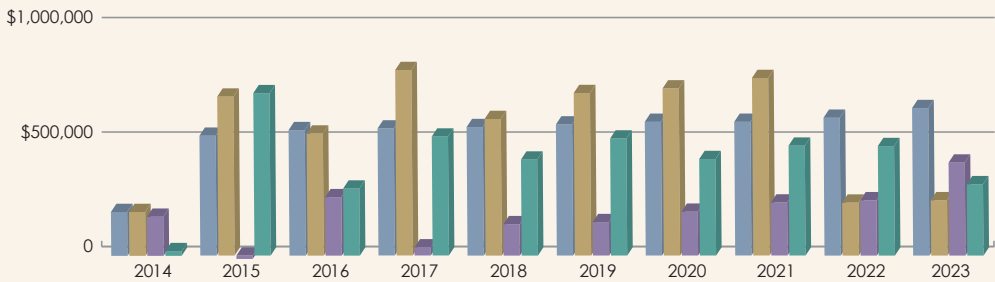


# FINANCE

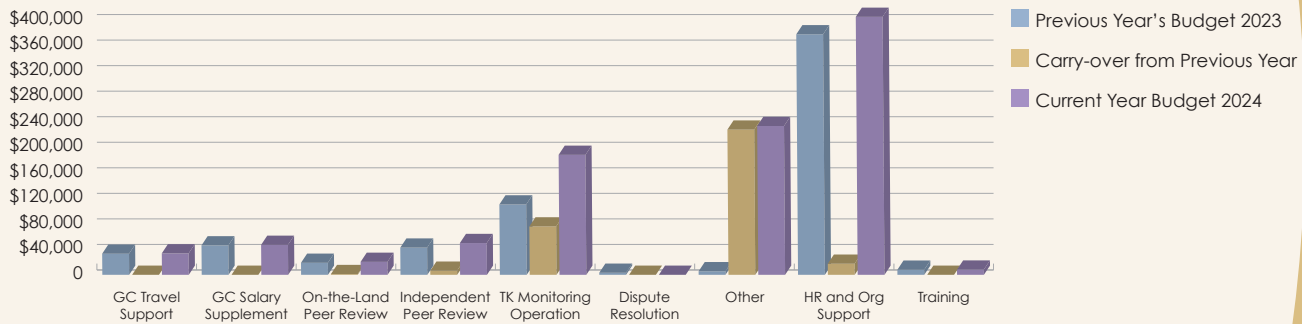


Calendar Year	Original Budget Amount	Budget with Carry-over from Preceding Year	Carry-over into Subsequent Year	Actual Expenditure
2014	\$192,500	\$192,500	\$171,727	\$20,773
2015	\$526,025	\$697,752	\$-14,998	\$712,749
2016	\$550,925	\$535,927	\$256,583	\$294,342
2017	\$557,536	\$814,119	\$35,578	\$521,958
2018	\$564,147	\$599,725	\$137,900	\$421,533
2019	\$575,430	\$713,330	\$146,679	\$513,751
2020	\$586,939	\$733,618	\$192,318	\$423,456
2021	\$586,939	\$192,318	\$232,600	\$482,145
2022	\$605,134	\$232,600	\$242,948	\$480,759
2023	\$647,493	\$242,948	\$408,299	\$313,310

- Original Budget Amount
- Budget with Carry-over from Preceding Year
- Carry-over into Subsequent Year
- Actual Expenditure



Budget Summary		Previous Year's Budget 2023	Carry-over from Previous Year	Current Year Budget 2024
3.1A	GC Travel Support	\$33,184.49	-	\$33,781.81
3.1B	GC Salary Supplement	\$46,322.89	-	\$47,156.70
3.1C	Committee OTL Meeting	\$18,900.00	\$1,159.80	\$20,400.00
3.1D	Independent Peer Review	\$42,800.00	\$6,429.60	\$50,000.00
3.1E	TK Monitoring and Family Travel Program	\$110,758.27	\$76,146.08	\$188,898.00
3.1F	Dispute Resolution	\$3,210.00	-	-
3.1G	Invoicing and Other	\$5,605.60	\$228,603.50	\$234,310.00
3.2A	HR and Organizational Support	\$378,686.98	\$17,436.16	\$406,207.28
3.2B	Training	\$8,025.00	-	\$8,169.45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$647,493.22</b>	<b>\$329,775.14</b>	<b>\$988,923.24</b>



## MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

I was taught by my Elders and relatives that as Dene we are the stewards of this land. It is not ours to own, however it is ours to care for, for generations yet to come. Without the resources the earth has to offer we cannot survive.

I have learnt that our ancestors have been miners for millennia. They have utilized resources such as copper for knives and other utensils, salt from the plains, and clay and bitumen from the earth for their homes. For a very long time, our people had no say in the development of these resources or how the development occurs or how it's monitored. Through NHX, the Indigenous signatory parties get to use their traditional knowledge during committee meetings to make recommendations to De Beers regarding mining and associated activities at the Gahcho Kué mine and how the resources are developed.

NHX is unique in a sense that it implements a traditional knowledge monitoring program, which includes an **"On-the-Land Family Travel Program"** to bring land users and their families to the barren lands to enjoy berry picking and fishing and just visiting under the midnight sun. This is our time as Indigenous people to monitor and take care of mother earth, so I encourage all to take the time to read our reports and take interest in applying for the **"On-the-Land Family Travel Program"** with NHX.

Challenges NHX has faced is employee turnover. Our NHX Traditional Knowledge Program requires traditional people to be healthy, both physically and mentally, and before being offered a position as a monitor, NHX requires the potential candidate to undergo a medical and a security check to allow the monitor to be able to work from the Gahcho Kué mine site during the winter road season.



If NHX had two monitors and one can't make a shift during the winter road season, the other monitor can still travel and stay at the mine site, working with the De Beers team to collect data on the winter road.

Our NHX TKMP administrative assistant Shyla Boucher has resigned due to unforeseen reasons. It was a pleasure working with Shyla during her time with Ni Hadi Xa. In the interim, we hired Michael Sanderson to work with Monitor Kyle Enzoe. However, Kyle also resigned after being with Ni Hadi Xa for two years, and Michael completed the 2023 winter road monitoring season with the De Beers Environmental Team, staying at the mine site for two weeks. NHX is still seeking two individuals to work as NHX Traditional Knowledge Monitors.

Thank you Jessica for your time with NHX as a NSMA representative, and your helpful insight on day-to-day operations and hiring committee.

Our Governance Committee experienced a big loss when Robert Sayine passed away. Robert was a mentor to me my entire career, always very sensible and understanding. He never took anything personally and always had good advice to give when I was not understanding a situation. I will miss Robert's insight and knowledge especially at the annual meetings or finance subcommittee, but more so not seeing him around the band office daily. However, we still feel his presence. Thank you, Robert, for your guidance and knowledge. My condolences to Robert's family.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Ni Hadi Xa, please contact Rosy Bjornson, Manager at (867) 445-0538 or [Rosy.Bjornson@nihadixa.ca](mailto:Rosy.Bjornson@nihadixa.ca)

Respectfully submitted,

Rosy Bjornson,  
Manager





**NHX would like to send our appreciation of services to the following:**

- ★ Weaver and Devour
- ★ Canadian Tire Yellowknife
- ★ Air Tindi
- ★ MSS Hay River
- ★ CTG Enterprises
- ★ Buffalo Airways Express
- ★ Polar Tech
- ★ Discovery Mining Services
- ★ Inkit Limited
- ★ 62 Degrees North
- ★ Trailmark Systems
- ★ Home Hardware Yellowknife
- ★ Co-op, Łutsel K'e
- ★ Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation
- ★ Bassett Petroleum
- ★ Deninu Kųę First Nation
- ★ Hoarfrost Airways

If you have any questions or would like to apply for the On-the-Land Family Travel Program, contact Rosy Bjornson at :

**Phone:** (867) 445-0538

**Email:** Rosy.Bjornson@nihadixa.ca.

**Address:** Ni Hadi Xa  
Main office, Deninu Kųę First Nation  
Fort Resolution, NT X0E 0M0







## NHX GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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Top, left to right:

**Tom Unka**, Northwest Territory Métis Nation

**Stephanie Poole**, Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

**Alan Alex**, North Slave Métis Alliance

**Robert Sayine**, Deninu Kųé First Nation

Bottom, left to right:

**Jessica Pacunayen**, Tłı̨chų Government

**Ryan Miller**, Yellowknives Dene First Nation

**William Liu**, De Beers Canada Inc.