

Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Mount Lorne oppose fracking

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The Tr'ondek Hwech'in have banned fracking on their traditional territory.

"We had been talking about it before and we had some strong recommendations from our elders," said Clara Van Bibber, the deputy chief.

The resolution to declare Tr'ondek Hwech'in frack-free passed unanimously at a recent council meeting.

"Tr'ondek Hwech'in has a direct relationship with the land and any activity that is going to happen on our traditional land, we're going to be very concerned about it, that it's going to be harming the environment," said Van Bibber. "We depend on our environment, we depend on our clear streams."

Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, involves pumping a slurry of water, sand and chemicals deep underground to break apart rock and release the natural gas trapped inside.

The Yukon government is required to consult the Trond'ek Hwech'in on all significant development projects within their traditional territory.

But outside of the parcels of land where the First Nation has jurisdiction, the government has the ultimate say.

The possibility that the government could issue a fracking licence against Trond'ek Hwech'in wishes is many years away, said Van Bibber.

"We hope it doesn't come to that. At that time of the day I hope that we can come up with some really strong action."

Tr'ondek Hwech'in Chief Eddie Taylor called on the government to move away from dependency on fossil fuels like natural gas.

"We urge the Yukon government and Yukon Energy to meet the growing demand for electrical energy through renewable energy sources and make carbon-neutral energy a primary goal," said Taylor in a press release.

The Hamlet of Mount Lorne has also recently voiced its concern with oil and

gas development.

"We've asked the minister not to issue any permits for the exploration, the extraction or the processing of hydrocarbons within or under the boundaries of the Hamlet of Mount Lorne," said Peter Percival, chair of Mount Lorne's local advisory council.

At the time of the interview, the letter had been approved by council but not finalized.

The council has no authority except to give advice to the minister, said Percival.

Most of the community opposes any oil and gas development in the area, he said.

"Most people's concern is that it might have some effect on the water, and most of us rely on groundwater resources for our drinking water. And some of us rely on surface water for irrigation for gardens and lawns and greenhouses and livestock."

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