



BC Métis
FEDERATION

Traditional Land Use/Knowledge Report

**TC Energy: Groundbirch Mainline Loop
(GBML) (Saturn Section)**

May 31, 2021

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Executive Summary

This report was completed with the assistance from the Old Fort Métis Society, River of the Peace Métis Society, Fort St. John Métis Society, the Dawson Creek Métis Federation with the BC Métis Federation (BCMF).

Included in this report is the Métis historical background, methods and results from the site visits conducted along the Right of Way (RoW) for the proposed pipeline project by TransCanada Energy (TC Energy) called the Groundbirch Mainline Loop (GBML) (Saturn Section). The fieldwork portion of this report was completed the first week of May 2021.



Figure 1. Knowledge Keepers Rodney Lambert and Malcolm Supernault spot Elk tracks along the Right of Way (RoW) of the Groundbirch Project.

In summary, the site visits on the Groundbirch Project with BC Métis Federation members and associate members concluded that the proposed pipeline had no substantive impact on the traditional land use with the Métis that were engaged in the traditional land use study. There are however a number of recommendations to assist in protecting the animals, regrowth of native species along the RoW and with TC Energy being a good corporate neighbour to the people in the area. The final recommendations are included on page 14.

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Review



Figure 2. BCMF Monitors Malcolm Supernault, Sherry Daniels, and Rodney Lambert used all-terrain vehicles out on the RoW.

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the environmental consultation supported by the proponent TransCanada Energy (TC Energy) and conducted by BC Métis Federation (BCMF) in conjunction with the BCMF members and associate members in North Eastern British Columbia. The overarching aims of this environmental consultation are to ensure that BCMF and its members along the proposed pipeline right of way (RoW) have the opportunity to review the proposed project and assess the possible impacts on the land and on the BCMF Métis in the region.



Figure 3. Groundbirch Institute Hall

The Project

The Western Canada Sedimentary Basin (WCSB) is one of North America’s most prolific natural gas production basins, and it is of key importance to the Canadian economy. Natural gas producers have asked NOVA Gas Transmission Ltd. (NGTL), a wholly owned subsidiary of TransCanada pipelines Limited (TCPL), an affiliate of TC Energy to increase natural gas transportation service on their existing natural gas pipeline system. TC Energy is proposing to construct and operate an additional pipeline section, expand an existing compression facility as part of the Project.

The proposed Groundbirch Mainline Loop (GBML) (Saturn Section) would be located in the province of British Columbia within the Peace River Regional District. The installation of 23 km of 42-inch diameter (NPS 42) pipeline starts at the existing Saturn No. 2 Receipt Meter Station within the NW 21-80-20 W6M, approximately 32 km southwest of the City of Fort St. John and tie into a future valve site within NW 2-79-19 W6M, approximately 36 km west of the City of Dawson Creek, BC. The timeline for the proposed Saturn Section is below:

Date	Activity
Q4 2019	Engagement Start
Q1 2020	Project Notification
Q4 2020	Section 214 CER Application
Q3 2022	Construction Start
Q2 2023	In-service Date

BC Métis Federation (BCMF)

BCMF is a British Columbia provincial Métis organization with a democratically elected Board of Directors who represent their members across B.C. BCMF was formed in 2011 and is governed by the Bylaws of the BCMF Society.

The provincial and federal governments have a constitutional obligation to consult with Métis people regarding proposed developments that have potential adverse effects on their wellbeing. Our membership favours a balanced and responsible approach to development that is inclusive of our unique voice and perspective.

BCMF's work is focused on building and maintaining relationships with governments, and industry partners throughout the province of British Columbia. Work is done with organizations to meet the needs of our members, advance their concerns and ensure that their voice is represented. BCMF engages with regulatory agencies and other government entities in relations to issues of interest and concern to our members.

The process of environmental assessment provides an opportunity for the Crown and industry to engage in meaningful and valuable consultation activities with BCMF. Involving our communities in the environmental assessment is a necessary step of inclusion, and mutual obligation of ensuring that Métis rights are protected.



Figure 4. Low bush cranberries located along the proposed route.

Methodology

BCMF engaged with TC Energy to ensure that BCMF, its members and community partners were included in the consultation process for the proposed GBML Project.

BCMF analyzed the information provided by TC Energy to better understand the scope of the project, then engaged virtually with the assistance of TC Energy and the BCMF membership in the NE BC region, as to the potential impacts on Métis in that area. Monitors and members used ATV's and walked the proposed RoW route gathering information of what if any impact the proposed route could have.



Figure 5. BCMF Monitors located a Beaver dam and lodge along the proposed route.

Métis Knowledge

Métis rights are constitutionally protected by Section 35 under the Constitution Act of 1982. Our members have extensive knowledge on the social and economic landscape of the region in which they reside in. Our members are committed to defending and protecting the natural environment for future generations to come. BCMF will continue to engage with their members in a research capacity to provide insight on these delicate matters.

Environmental concerns and impacts may vary from one community to another; however, the underlying principle is to ensure that the Métis perspectives and concerns are properly understood and considered in these processes.



Figure 6. Evidence of Moose and Elk eating nearby Farmers' Hay. Indicating a disruption of normal feeding habits.

Historical Considerations

TC Energy provides funding so that Métis community groups can conduct studies on their history, past, present, and prospective land use, and traditional ecological knowledge in relation to TC Energy Projects. Typically, land use studies do not have adequate mechanisms or intellectual frameworks to describe accurately the lived experience of Métis in BC. The purpose of the BCMF's engagement with TC Energy's Groundbirch Mainline Loop situated in northeast British Columbia is to provide credible research that will allow its member communities to meaningfully engage in mitigation and management issues that are necessary for securing a sustainable future for all Métis peoples in British Columbia. In this brief report we will establish the following:

- Métis self-determining communities existed throughout the Pacific Northwest, including the region in and around what is northeastern British Columbia, prior to any claim of effective control by the British Crown.
- In the early provincial period (1871-1920) federal, regional and local levels of government, as well as private and public industries, systematically targeted Métis self-determining communities for the purpose of eliminating them, thereby pushing them to the margins of the social, economic and political life of the Province.

- Self-determining Métis communities continued to function and exercise their agency on the land with strategies and forms of resistance that allowed them to survive. At this time of Métis resurgence in BC, we are reconstituting our history, repatriating our communities/kinship networks, and re-engaging with governments and industries as a self-determining people.

Cumulative effects studies like TC Energy's Groundbirch Mainline Loop are opportunities for BCMF and its members to regain our position as partners in the economic future of the Province.



Figure 7. Métis sashes - Chris Corrigan, Flickr

The historical record is clear: Unique groups of Métis peoples have a long history of establishing free and independent communities throughout BC and in TC Energy's Groundbirch Mainline Loop corridor. As early as the late 18th century, Métis fur traders, diplomats and voyageurs established themselves in the region, making the whole of Pacific Northwest prior to British colonization a large interconnecting Métis province that was characterized by a vast mobile community that stretched all the way down into Oregon, all the way over into Montana, up into the foothills of Alberta and encompassing British Columbia and into the Yukon territory. Alongside the expansion of the fur trading companies, like the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, and First Nations, Métis self-determining communities asserted their own self-interest as freemen and established families and broader kinship networks in an attempt to secure a future in the political, economic, social and cultural transformation of the region. The archival record and Métis community knowledge in the Pacific Northwest is consistent with the evidence of a Métis presence on the land and water in northeastern BC where they established settlements and kinship relations with other Indigenous nations.

As early as the late 18th and early 19th century, Métis peoples came to the area either in the service of the fur trade or as freemen working alongside the Northwest Company or the Hudson's Bay Company. By

the early 1800s, three types of men were described as working within these companies' influence: white Canadians, half-breeds and Iroquois Indians. "Half-breeds" worked alongside major figures in the Northwest Company such as Mackenzie, Fraser and Thompson to negotiate good relations with local First Nations and to establish forts and supply depots in the Peace country and central BC.

For example, Simon Fraser, James MacDougall, and John Stuart established Rocky Mountain Portage House for the NWC in 1805. Métis company men and freemen were integral to both the Northwest Company and then the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), both of which wished to dominate the Peace region through the early part of the 1800s. And, after the 1821 merger between the NWC and the HBC, Métis peoples worked within and outside of the HBC to consolidate a network of trading routes across the Rocky Mountains, across northern BC to the coast and down through the interior following various routes to the south coast, and through the Okanagan into Washington and Oregon. With an extensive lived-experience on the land in what would become northeastern BC, Métis worked as intermediaries and guides for later government-sponsored expeditions such as the Sinclair expedition (1841), Palliser Expedition (1857-1860), and McMicking expedition (1862) and they also encouraged their extended Métis kin to migrate west. The result was that by 1860, local accounts describe "a great number of half-breeds" in the region who were associated with the HBC in various capacities. Some of the original families that came to the region, such as the Whitfords, Testawits, Monkman, Cardinals, Lafleurs, Gladues, Lafrieneres, Letendres and others, still have a presence in the area. According to local northeast resident Earlene Bitterman, the Monkman family journals prove that Métis diaspora from the Prairies had established themselves in the northeastern region of the province well before the 1885 Northwest Resistance by Louis Riel, a pace that quickened when displaced Métis from Saskatchewan joined their extended families in the area of TC Energy's Groundbirch Mainline Loop.

From these early beginnings, Métis kinship networks extended into the northeast region and they established vast harvesting areas. In the Peace River area, Métis freemen, alongside Quebecois and Iroquois integrated into First Nation's kinship networks or negotiated consent in order to gain access to land and resources. In the 1860s, when the search for gold and other minerals brought additional interests to the area, Métis freeman once again functioned as interpreters and guides and acted in their own self-interest when opening up new regions. Typical are news reports like the ones from 1897 that identify land-wise "northern Indian and half-breed guides" as critical sources of information for government cartographers who were attempting to establish trails and water routes from Edmonton through northern BC and to the Yukon gold fields. Interestingly, the eventual route to the Klondike followed a fur trade corridor from Edmonton to Fort St. John, which in large part had been established and worked by Métis peoples. In this mineral resource rush of the late-19th century, Métis continued to migrate into the region, joining established kinship networks that had accessed the fur, mining, ranching, forestry and fishing industries in order to maintain their self-determination.

For these Métis families it is impossible to understand their identity without understanding the expansive kinship network extending out from the Red River and generating independently within the Pacific Northwest, and among both their European and indigenous relations. Self-determining mixed-ancestry communities within the TC Energy's Groundbirch Mainline Loop were the product of cohesive and exponential kinship networks, an interconnectedness that included localized spaces that were part of a vast, integrated economic and social network across northern BC to the coast and down through the interior following various routes to the south coast, and through the Okanagan into Washington and Oregon.

Métis self-determining families formed traditional Métis settlement areas in northeastern BC as interracial 'clusters' that first appeared around fur trade corridors and then congealed with other resource industrial opportunities. For example, Métis clusters in areas like Hudson Hope have a lived experience in the region that dates back to the early 19th century and continues through to the 21st century. Although historians are just beginning to understand the scale and scope of Métis self-determination in and around northeastern BC, a number of other examples from the primary record speak of Métis presence and knowledge of the land and their importance in the development of the province:

- Most think of Métis history in terms of place, but their lived experience on the land is more accurately described as fluid and complex, a shared past with First Nations and settler society. For example, 'Iroquois half-breeds', as they were described on scrip documents, were mobile and viewed their harvesting regions as constituting multiple geographies. Although they viewed 'home' as Jasper House, they hunted far north around Dunvegan, which is just east of Dawson creek. When the Canadian government offered them half-breed scrip in order to "extinguish" their title to the area, their applications showed evidence of half-breed mobility on the BC side of the Rocky Mountains as well northwest of Edmonton between the Rocky Mountains and Grande Prairie, which is in proximity to the Groundbirch Mainline Loop.
- The Crown evidently understood Métis in northeastern British Columbia as self-determining communities when Treaty 8 was negotiated in 1899. Métis scrip was included in Treaty 8 negotiations and Treaty Commissioners were instructed by the Canadian government to facilitate the process of "extinguishing" First Nations and Métis title in the northwestern part of Alberta and northeastern regions of BC.
- Into the twentieth century, a 1913 newspaper column entitled "Hudson Hope's District Rich" discusses mineral potential in the region and cites the significance of Indians and half-breeds as chief trappers in the fur catching industry. "Half-breeds" and Indians were asked to help so-called government "experts in 1913 when the extraction of "rich undeveloped mineral, asphalt, gas and oil resources" became feasible in the Peace River country.
- While accessing and working within the natural resource industrial economy, Métis continued to harvest across the region even as they "settled" in towns like Chetwynd, which is located southwest of the Groundbirch Mainline Loop project. As the lumber economy and hydroelectric power projects developed, these communities readily supplied the labour and expertise necessary for their success. It is noteworthy that Métis asserted their self-determined interests within the confines of laws that were designed to eliminate them by establishing a co-op in a Métis neighbourhood in Chetwynd known as Wabi Crescent.
- Métis peoples and communities have existed and continue to exist on the land in the Northwest region. Their hidden or forgotten histories are evident in the family names that populate the gravestones around Dawson creek, which is southeast of the Groundbirch loop. French-Métis surnames like Gladue, Mineault, Boucher, Desjarlais, Belcourt, Cardinal and Lizotte, English 'half-breed' family names, and Iroquois surnames from eastern Canada like Calihou illustrate the diverse makeup of the communities they helped to establish. This deep connection to place is made all the more profound when one considers the kinships that these mixed-ancestry people developed by intermarrying with local First Nations. Their impact and ongoing importance is not inconsequential: The 2016 census identified some 3900 self-identified Métis in the Peace River district.

In supporting their own self-determining future, Métis were prominent and integral in the early development of the province. In the early 20th century, Métis or 'half-breeds' were publicly described as "so common over Canada". In the far west, Métis people were often the founders of towns and cities and were prominent leaders in ushering in a new resource-development economy. In 1891, settlers were surprised to find "so many of the Indian blood," who were "already in possession of the most valuable town and country estates," and moving in the "best society". Métis worked in lumber mills and farms, as militia, as labourers, boatmen, hunters, guides, interpreters, trappers and cultural and local knowledge translators. They asserted their economic interests, as families and kinship networks throughout the Groundbirch corridor. They engaged as kinship groupings, as families, as business partners, or as individuals, often side by side with First Nations and a growing settler society.

Governments consistently targeted Métis 'self-determining' communities in order to eradicate them and to reduce their ability to govern their own lives. The systemic attacks on mixed-heritage populations in British Columbia in the late 19th to 20th centuries were consistent with colonial systems that sought to eliminate indigenous diversity and limit economic competition that they considered to be a hindrance to settler society 'progress'. By the time BC entered into Confederation in 1871, Métis in the northeastern part of BC transitioned from being an integral part of their communities to being viewed as impediments in the way of economic, social, cultural and political future of the region.

In the 1890s in British Columbia, Arthur Vowell, the Federal Superintendent of Indian Affairs in BC, identified Métis across the Province for the purpose of removing them from Indian reserves and assimilating them into the general population. Vowell's 'Report on Halfbreeds' used the provisions of the Indian Act (1876) to remove Métis from their kinship networks and dispossess them from their land. As an extension of early colonial rules that maintained white-ness or Indian-ness as separate categories, the BC government decided to methodically deny the historical uniqueness of Métis self-determining communities throughout the province. Tragically, for the better part of 150 years in British Columbia there has been a concerted effort by governments and settler society to deny self-determining Métis communities their very existence and to dispossess them from their land and harvesting regions. National, provincial and local governments used the force of law and racialized policies to diminish Métis existence, separate them from their kinship networks, ignore their rights, dispossess them from their land, limit their access to resources, and restrict their mobility.

Because Métis kinship networks/communities in Northeast BC region in Hudson's Hope, Chetwynd, Fort St. John and Dawson Creek, all of which are in close proximity to the Groundbirch project corridor, have been effectively erased from the historical record, the priority of the BC Métis Federation is to support the repatriation of its partner members and communities, the revitalization of a self-determined indigenous right to protect their way of life, and the recognition that our people should benefit from developments in their traditional harvesting regions. In the last decade, the province of BC has not created meaningful space nor the proper relationships with historic communities to hear the full extent of Métis stories, histories traditions and kinship networks. They continue to ignore and dismiss their own complicity in the long history of systemic discrimination. Current land use research by industry and governments ignores the historical roots of racial boundary-making in Canada that has shaped the lives of all indigenous peoples, thereby contributing to ongoing intergenerational trauma, family division and kinship separation, and the resultant inequality and dispossession.

The Groundbirch Mainline Loop land-use study is part of BCMF's strategy to develop community expertise and knowledge that will enable our members to effectively sustain long-term partnerships

with other Indigenous nations, governments and Canadian society and to mitigate, manage and monitor the impact of development on lands and resources associated with Métis ways of life. BCMF represents many self-determining people and communities from across the whole Pacific Northwest that are in the process of recovering their history. BCMF seeks to partner with government and industry in ways that allows these local communities to rebuild their own knowledge capacity and enhance their own knowledge networks. In asserting Métis self-determination and cultural resurgence, any knowledge produced for TC Energy terrestrial impact reports is owned by the community so that we can enlarge our inventory of datasets and skills to respond meaningfully to resource development projects, all in an effort to meet the needs of each unique community. Our goal through this and other projects is to work with kinship networks and communities to repatriate their knowledge and then publish that knowledge in public forums where it can be recognized. In projects such as the TC Energy's Groundbirch Mainline Loop we anticipate our growing community capacity will allow us to enter meaningful negotiations on issues of economic development and to engage in ongoing consultation on how natural resource projects impact the right of self-determining communities to harvest, hunt, fish and gather. Self-governing Métis communities have a responsibility to look after the land and resources that have been entrusted to them and to benefit from the natural resources development that take place in the Peace region and all of Northeastern BC.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that BCMF monitors be engaged during the construction and reclamation process.
2. It is recommended that on future projects, that maps provided show more of the common landmarks in detail like highways, side roads and communities in connection to the project.
3. It is recommended that where possible the line of sight be mitigated to reduce predators (including the human kind) from sighting game animals.
4. It is recommended that through the reclamation process that native plants be replanted and environmentally specific fertilizers be utilized in order to accommodate regrowth as fast as possible.
5. It is recommended that any trees that were cut for the right of way be made available to local communities for firewood or provided to local businesses for processing.
6. It is recommended that where possible a detour be created around the beaver lodges.
7. It is recommended that where diamond willow grows along the edges of the right of way, that care be taken not to disturb them.
8. It is recommended that BCMF be notified if any birch trees with chaga growing on them are cut down and those trees be placed in an area that can be accessed by local BCMF members.
9. It is recommended that when Industry provides an overview of their project; that they include more detailed information on the regulatory body and how the project gets approved.
10. BCMF recommends to industry partners to increase capacity support for Métis members to better understand the importance of the regulatory process. Existing complementary capacity funding by the company is insufficient to provide ongoing effective Métis engagement. The land use study is important for local Métis members but there is a serious challenge in understanding why the study impacts their local Métis community.

Closing

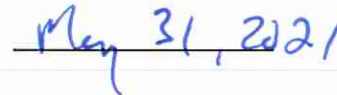
In closing BCMF would like to thank the BCMF members and associate members for contributing to the “ground truthing” part of the field study and attending the only way possible for the map review which was held virtually due the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic we are currently in.

BCMF has prepared this report for NOVA Gas Transmission Ltd. (NGTL), a wholly owned subsidiary of TransCanada Pipelines (TCPL), an affiliate of TransCanada Energy (TC Energy) or their decision-making process on the Groundbirch Mainline Loop (GBML), Saturn Section and their filings to the Canada Energy Regulator (CER).

These projects are both fulfilling and challenging, and we would like to specifically thank our Monitors for their perseverance and commitment. From long days on rough terrain, or struggling to read map files and getting delayed, the experience is sure to not be forgotten any time soon. Navigation proved to be especially challenging for this project, but thankfully we all picked up some new skills along the way and everyone is grateful for the opportunity.



Keith Henry – President & CEO BC Métis Federation



Date

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