

# The EKATI MONITOR

Issue 21, Spring 2020

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Executive Director Marc Casas presenting at the Agency's ICRP Wildlife & Closure Workshop (February 12-13, 2020). See inside for more.

## IEMA Office Closure

In a precautionary step regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, IEMA (the Agency) made the decision to close our office to the public on March 20, 2020. Regardless, it is business as usual for the Agency as we continue to monitor environmental reporting and programs at the Ekati mine. For more information about Ekati's temporary closure, see the next page of this newsletter.

Agency staff continue to monitor e-mail and phone lines, and will update our Society Members and the public when our office is open again.

Mársi, mahsì, qujannamiik, quana, merci, thank you for your understanding.

Questions or concerns? Call IEMA: 867-669-9141 or e-mail us at [monitor2@monitoringagency.net](mailto:monitor2@monitoringagency.net)

## Ekati Mine Operations & COVID-19

On March 20, 2020, Dominion Diamond Mines ULC (Dominion) [announced](#) it would begin an immediate, temporary shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The shutdown has meant the majority of Ekati's employees have been sent home from the mine site, leaving a crew of approximately 60 workers for each shift rotation (120 total). These workers will be keeping the site in a state of care and maintenance to make sure the site is taken care of, and monitoring continues during the shutdown so that it will be ready to start back up once travel and social distancing restrictions are lifted in the Northwest Territories.

### *What does "care and maintenance" mean?*

"Care and maintenance" in the mining industry is a term used to describe a mine site that has stopped production or has closed, with the intention of resuming operations at a later date. Though production may have stopped, the site is still managed to make sure it stays in a stable and safe condition.

As a result of the temporary shutdown and a global halting of diamond sales, Dominion has had to consider the financial risk moving forward. On April 22, 2020, Dominion announced it was entering into credit protection, or insolvency protection. This has meant that since then, a court-ordered process is required to approve any spending the company wants to do. For the Agency, this has meant we have had to wait for some reports that are awaiting financial approval before they are finished and sent to us for review.

The Agency remains in regular contact with Dominion to ensure we have the latest information on environmental monitoring and reopening of the mine. Dominion has assured the Agency that the site will remain in compliance with their regulatory obligations during this time.

Staff and Directors at the Agency continue to our work to monitor environmental programs and reports as they are received. We will keep Society Members and the public informed of any major changes or announcements.

## IEMA Wildlife & Closure Workshop

On February 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> the Agency held a workshop for our Aboriginal Society Members to provide a venue to discuss wildlife and closure of the Ekati mine. The idea for this workshop came from both feedback the Agency received during our community visits last winter, where we presented the latest version of Dominion's Interim Closure & Reclamation Plan (ICRP Version 3.0), and reviewer's comments on this interim plan. The workshop started with a review of the current plans the company has for facilitating the safe movement of wildlife through the site after closure. We provided maps and images around the room to help illustrate these plans. Facilitators, with experience collecting community input, lead the round-table discussion which made up most of the workshop.

The Agency is working with the facilitators to create a report of what we heard, and outline recommendations that came out of discussions. When the final report is completed it will be distributed to Society Members, posted to our web site and provided to Dominion and the Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board (WLWB) for their consideration.



**The Agency wishes to thank all who attended the workshop and shared their thoughts, concerns, and knowledge. It is important that the Agency hears directly from our Aboriginal Society members, and it was our pleasure to host.**



# Project Updates

## Annual Reports

As Dominion has been addressing temporary shutdown, there have been significant delays in the release of some key annual reports that would normally have been released and posted to the Public Registry by the end of April. Specifically, reports that have been delayed include the 2019 Aquatic Effects Monitoring Program Annual Report, and the 2019 Water Licence and Environmental Agreement Annual Report. The WLWB approved Dominion's request to extend the submission date for these reports to May 29, 2020. The Agency looks forward to reviewing the reports and providing a summary of the findings in our own Annual Report which will be available later this summer.

## Point Lake Project

Point Lake is one of the original places diamonds were found in the region back in 1991, which led to the establishment of the Ekati diamond mine. Dominion is currently in the first stages of pre-engagement for the development of the Point Lake Project. As proposed, this project will encompass three kimberlite pipes which are intended to be mined using a traditional single open pit. As COVID-19 has meant travel between NWT communities is not possible, engagement on the project is being postponed, and therefore the Agency doesn't expect permitting applications for this project to be submitted this year.

Dominion continues to look for the best ways to engage with communities on this project. The Agency will inform our Society Members of updates on engagement as they become available.



The green star shows the location of the planned Point Lake development. Map Courtesy of Dominion Diamond Mines ULC

## Closure & Reclamation Planning

Version 3.0 of the Interim Closure & Reclamation Plan (ICRP) was approved by the WLWB on February 19, 2020. However the approval came with requirements for further engagement, additional information, and revisions. The Agency agrees with this conditional approval, as we submitted many comments about ICRP V 3.0 ([which you can read here](#)) and recommended it not be approved in its current form.

As part of the conditional approval the WLWB recommended that another workshop be held by Dominion on or before November 16, 2020 to work through some of the outstanding issues. As deadlines and timelines of projects are being postponed due to COVID-19, Dominion requested a 4-month extension for this workshop. The WLWB approved March 16, 2021 as the new 'on or before' workshop deadline.

[Read the full approval letter for Version 3.0 of the Interim Plan from the WLWB.](#)

## CONTACT US

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## DIRECTORS

**Jaida Ohokannoak**  
(Chairperson)

Appointed by Kitikmeot  
Inuit Association

**Emery Paquin**  
(Vice-Chairperson)

Appointed by Dominion  
Diamond/Canada/GNWT

**Kim Poole**  
(Secretary/Treasurer)

Appointed by Tłıchǫ  
Government

**Ron Allen**  
Appointed by Dominion  
Diamond/Canada/GNWT

**Tim Byers**  
Appointed by Akaitcho  
Treaty 8

**Jesse Jasper**  
Appointed by Dominion  
Diamond/Canada/GNWT

**Bill Slater**  
Appointed by North Slave  
Métis Alliance

## STAFF

**Marc Casas**  
Executive Director

**Shannon Moore**  
Communications &  
Administrative Specialist

## Who Are We?

HEMA (the Agency) is the public watchdog for environmental management at the Ekati mine. The Agency was created in 1997 under the Environmental Agreement, which requires Dominion Diamond Mines ULC (Dominion) and the federal and territorial governments to protect the environment and land-based way of life of Aboriginal peoples of the area.

The Agency makes recommendations to Dominion, government, and regulators on how best to protect the environment at Ekati. We are set up as a non-profit society in the Northwest Territories. The Agency's Board has seven Directors appointed by our Society Members:

- Akaitcho Treaty 8 (łutsel K'e and Yellowknives Dene First Nations)
- Tłıchǫ Government
- Kitikmeot Inuit Association (KIA)
- North Slave Métis Alliance
- Government of Canada (Crown Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada—CIRNAC)
- Government of the Northwest Territories
- Dominion Diamond Mines, ULC

Our Directors are independent of their appointing parties and work together in the best interests of the environment and the people affected by Ekati.

We have two staff members and a resource library of information about Ekati in our office in Yellowknife. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns about the Ekati mine.

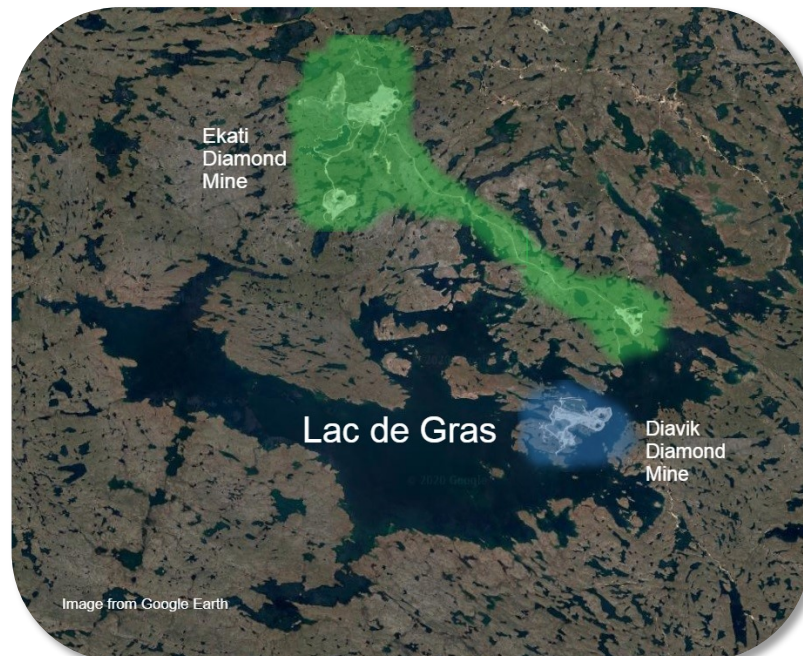
## Ekati Facts: What's in a name?

**Did you know** that “Ek’a Tì ” means “fat lake” in the Tłıchǫ language?

This is the equivalent meaning of the French name of the lake that the mine operates beside, Lac de Gras. It has been determined that the French influence on lake names in the region comes from the Metis population that traditionally uses this area.

Though most of us pronounce the word “ee-cat-ee”, the correct pronunciation is “ee-kah-tee”. The emphasis should be placed on the last syllable instead of the second syllable.

The Tłıchǫ Yatì Enjhtl'è (Tłıchǫ/Dogrib Dictionary) was used as a resource for this feature. [Check it out here!](#)



This image shows where the Ekati and Diavik mines are in relation to Lac de Gras—where Ekati got its name.