# MOOSE AND MINERALS: FIRST NATION OF NACHO NYÄK DUN ELDERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGE



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LACE - LABOUR MOBILITY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES (PI GERTRUDE SAXINGER)

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# METHOD(OLOGY)

LACE - Labour mobility and community participation in the extractive industries: case studies in the Canadian north Research Project 2014 – 2019; JOJO Fieldwork

Oral History Project – Elders' Opinions on the Impact of the Extractive Industry

aim: add to the understanding of the "complex pattern of mutual involvement and unequal impacts" (Winton and Hogan 2015:93)

13 Oral History Interviews; 30 - 90 minutes; mix between semi-structured and narrative/life-history interviews: 10 more narrative/life-history based, 2 more semi-structured, (depending on age and knowledge about the mining industry), 1 "ice-fishing" interview/discussion between 2015 and 2017

oral accounts and subjective memories accounts are treated as centre-piece to academic inquiry (Cruikshank 1990)

Presentation of preliminary findings (booklet) to Elders in 2016

**Verification of Transcripts in 2017 and 2018** 

**Poster: Memories of Mining > Timeline of Major Events** 

**Book: Dän Hùnày – Our People's Story2019** 

Online @ Dän Hùnày







## Memories of Mining: First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Elders' perspectives

### Pre-Contact 8 Fur trade era

"First Nations people have lived in our traditional territory since time began. Historically our ancestors lived on the land, main taining a balance between the environment, the animals and our people. Back then there were no borders and we would set up and move camp with the seasons and the food sources. People came to this traditional territory from as far away as Dawson City, Fort McPherson, For Good Hope and Tulita in the North West Territories." (Peter, Hogan and the FN of NND Lands Depart-

ment 2006:86)

The Yukon's First Gold Rush and

Establishment of Mayo

was made known, a gold rush occurre

on that creek in 1901/02 that triggered

as gold was found on other creeks in

the district and boomed with the

veries." (MacDonald and



Steamboats & Early associations with mining SG So tell me about that moment when the steam boat came, what was it like? BL: Yeah that was the first time we see new peonie on the steam host come in. And the only time men make a Dollar, when the steam boat come in they all come to Mayo. All the men from First Nation they load and unload steam boat. When the steam boat go by down village, they used to throw apple nd oranges to us. Doesn't matter, out on the rive we still go out and grab it. First time we taste something good, oranges and apple, that we ne-

Dollar to buy grocery for their family,

my dad was there too.

1915-1955

Childhood and Life in the

Old Village

FL: We used to have a lot of fun, you know, we don't

SG Do you remember anything about that time?

think about town - we didn't even know this town (Mayo)

existed. Growing up, people used to come in, get groceries

with the boat then, but we just stayed around the village. We

made our own games and we had lots of fun down there

HB: In summertime people do fishing, you know, king salmon. Ir

July they dry lots of dry fish and and they get it ready for winter.

You can't keep no fresh food in those days because there's no

such thing as a freezer, that's why they dry everything - as

much as they could for Winter. And we eat lots of fresh fish

and white fish, any kind of fish, you name it. And then

about around fall time - July, August - people go

out, three or four families go out in the bush to

From semi-nomads to semi-settlers "In 1915. Reverend Julius Kendi arriver at Fraser Falls, where many people of the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun were drying fish. A Native catechist of the Anglican faith. from the Peel River district, he asked the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun to decide on a site where they could establish their own VIIIage. The decision was made to locate two miles below the Village of Mayo on the banks of the Stewart Flyer. The area is now known as 'The Old Village'." (First Nation of Na-Cho Nya Dun 2018)

Picture credits: © Susanna Gartler

Poster by Susanna Gartler, student investigator of ReSDA Project "LACE – Labour Mobility and Community Participation in the Extractive Industry (2014–2019)", and Gertrude Saxinger (Co-PI n collaboration with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun

Relocation and Life in Mayo Eventually a relocation took place to the other side of the river, which proved to have severa negative repercussions, for example a sudden increase i consumption of alcohol. Nonetheless First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun elders emphasise their continued agency and told stories of how they guit drinking. Some families, instead of moving to Mayo relocated to their trapline or other places along the Stewart rive

. LI: Back in the 50s, the doctor ordered the First Nation to move to Mavo .. and it's something we didn't do, my family. Instead of going into town moved downriver twenty miles. ... We lived in a tent for a while, until we built a cabin, hunt and fish in that area for many, many, many years

Summertime in town: "When we were children, every day of summer held a promise of adventure. In the dusty long hot hours of continuous daylight, we would constantly cruise around on our bikes waiting r something exciting to happen. And most times it did. In ou little village, Main Street and the Sewart Flyer ran perpendicular to each other, which made surveillance easy from either the road or the dike built up on the riverban to protect us from spring floods. Life was good." (Profeit Le-Blanc 2005: 147f.



Aggressive assimilation policies and espe cially the fact that some children were taken to residential school created much tensions that still need to be resolved today. When I asked on of the elders if he lived in Mayo all his life he tells me

WP: Oh, off and on, away. In 1955, I was stolen from my home. Until 1960 the government took me away to residential school. That's what's all the commotion going on today, it's about that. Government taking them kids, forcing them, well not forcing - where they don't want to be, but still they take us like we're criminals or something. If we don't go they said they gonna put our parents in jail. That's how they were. SG: How old were you when you came out? WP: I was only thirteen. never came out, I ran away. SG: Oh really? WP: Yeah, some of us run way. Run away from school, it took us three days to get back to Mayo.

SG: Good for you! Eventually his mother was able to protect him from having to go back, but the negative repercussions proved to be farreaching, making it difficult to learn in school for example Moreover many of this generation's children and randchildren have to deal with the interger rational effects on their healing

> 1950s to 1980s Opportunities to work for the United Keno Hill Mines company in the Keno and Esa area were taken advantage of by a number of young First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun men Many started working early in the mines and take pride in being successful in this sector (see also Winton and

SG: How old were you then when you started work? FP: I was probably seventeen. I had to quit school at grade ten because our family was so big. We were eleven in our family and my mum was a single parent. So I had to go to work. So that's what I did. But I was very fortunate, because was a natural born operator Louess. And Liust moved on to equipment and learned and experienced every jurisdiction that I could. I was operating CAT's, scrapers, trucks, loaders,

graters, so on and so forth

## Signing of the Af er the signing of their self-government agreeme with Canada the relationship between the First Nation and mining companies became more regulated. Nowadays. mining companies need to negotiate Impact Benefit (or similar) Agreements. Representatives of the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyāk Dun,

"Our position in regards to mining is that we must be part of the development of the mine. ... The integrity of the environment is very important for First and foremost." (Chief and Elder Smon Mervyn) Elder Jimmy Johnny says: "Mining can be good for people, they say we're going to make mo ney. But they have to learn how to respect the land and water. There

who recognise the importance of the industry for local employment,

stress the role of environmental protection and position themselves a

'stewards of the land':

should be no pollution". 3oth quotes stem from the LACE film "Mining on First Nation Land - The First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun in Mayo/Yukon Territory" (2017), which can be watched online

## Reclamation and Opening of Victoria Gold

Af er the shutdown of United Keno Hill Mines a company was charged with remediating the site simultaneously continuing to extract galena or silver ore. Recently a new large gold mine started operations in the vicinity of Mayo. Several community members men and women are employed there currently. Atwo weeks on, two weeks of shif-rosters seems to allow enough time for most people to pursue hunting, fishing and other traditional activities, including obligations related to kinship-ties. Achallenge that remains is that First Nations and especially young women, are of en

views, participant observation, research i archives and museums, and a literature review Susanna Gartler has conducted several long-term field-stays in Mayo over the past several years. The methodology for this poster was inspired by oral history, especially the work of Julie Cruikshank (1990), Winton & Hogan (2016) and indigenous methodologie (Koyach 2009)

I understand my collaboration with the First Nation of with outside institutions, based on the the exercise of autonomy and self-determination. This poster lescribes events, materials, people, and places tha carry meaning for the participants of the study. of the author and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nväk Dun





## Methods

Na-Cho Nyāk Dun as part of the building of relationships



Shutdown of United Keno

Hill Mines and the change from

mining towns to FIFO (fly-in/fly-out)

When the mine shut down it had a profound of ect on

the area, many people moved away, and never returned.

people during winter time.

WP: There used to be lots of houses (in Elsa) and that was good for

Mayo that time. On the weekend they come down, they buy groce-

ries down here and people make money of the miners too. There

was a bar down here too. They come down and have a drink, all of

them, that was pretty good in those days. In the 50ies, 60ies, 70ies

until the 80ies, when the mine shut down. The way it is now it's

not very good for Mayo. They bring in workers from BC. Alberta

across Canada, for maybe two or three weeks and then they

rotate their shif. And all they do is board the plane and

take the money back out of the Yukon. They don't

spend their time in Mayo, they don't spend

nothing in the Yukon. Which is not

Gendered Experiences

ponsible for care work and raising children. One elder, who lived

Bsa with her husband, decided to go back to Mayo and live with

her mother, raising her kids there, because she felt she didn't have much freedom of movement. Some people thus remained resilien

and social ties intact under these conditions. When asked what she

JB: The mine was good too. You know, they had grocery stores there,

wives, and things. Yeah, it was pretty good, but it was kind of ...

don't know how to say it. I don't know very much about mi-

ning, what they were doing. Just big checks were going

back and forth there, and then... I didn't go out to

was about it, I just didn't went out

to pick berries.

thought that mining brought along she articulates her unea

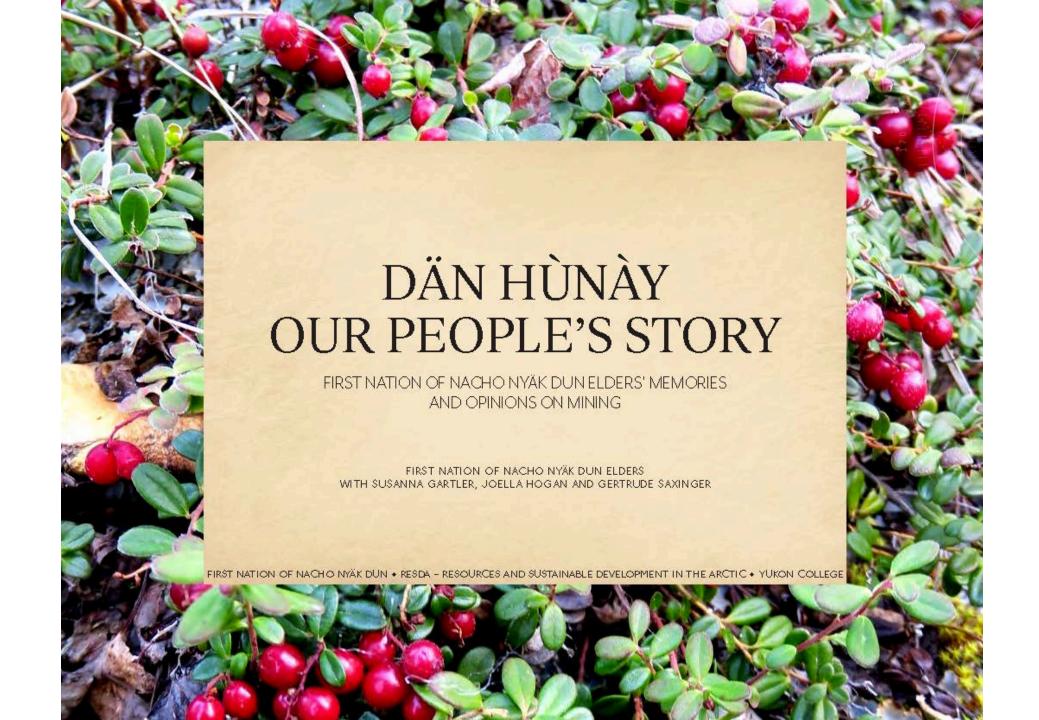
day, Bsa is a ghost town and Keno is populated by some te































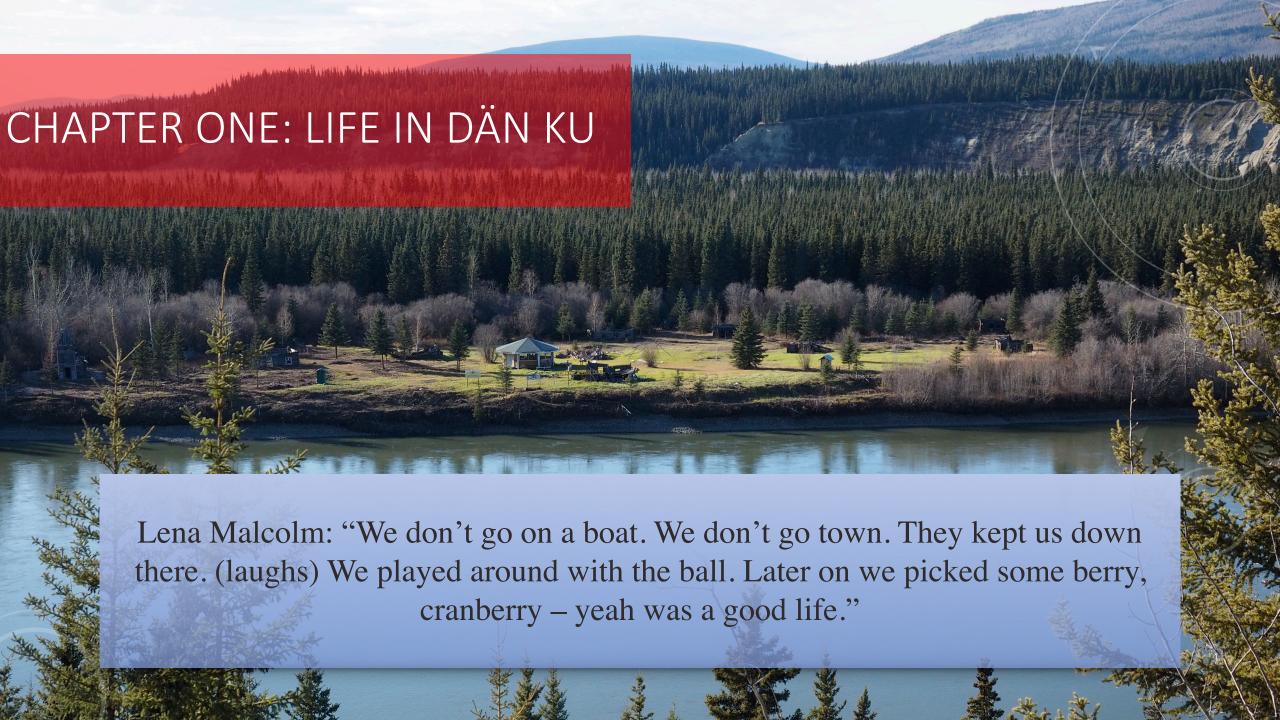








FIRST NATION OF NACHO NYÄK DUN ELDERS who participated in the project



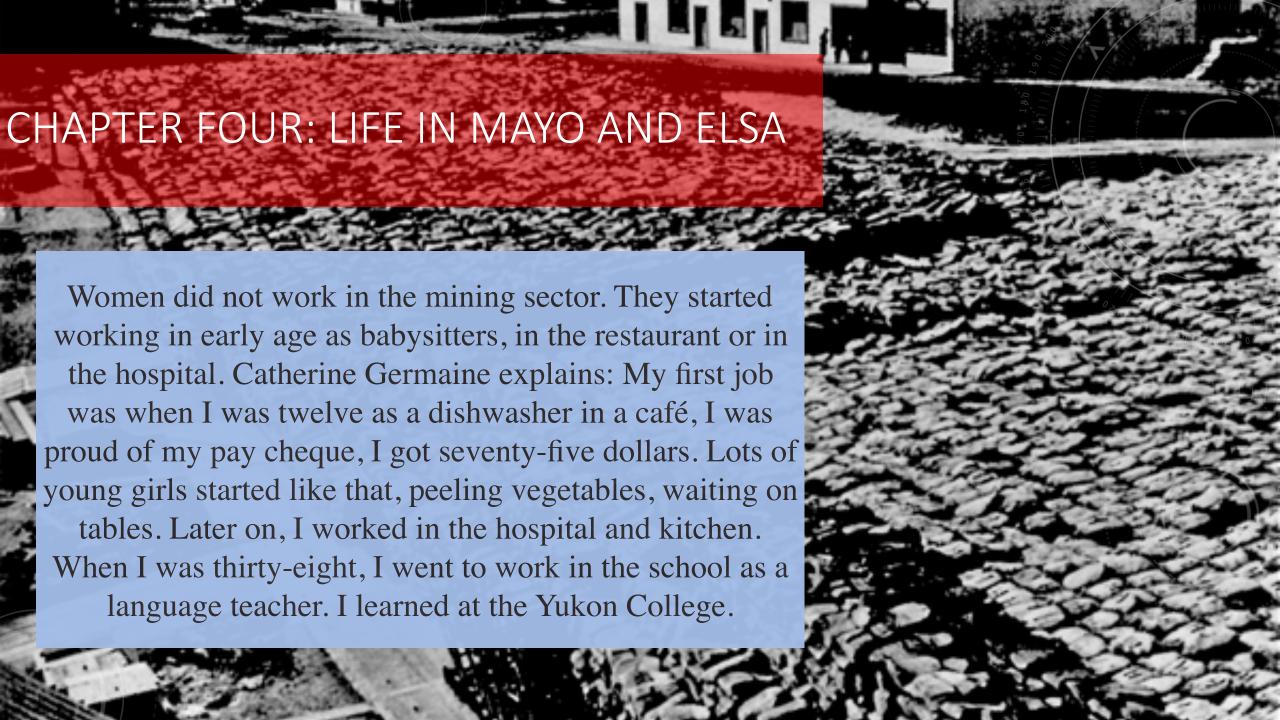
# CHAPTER TWO: RELOCATION

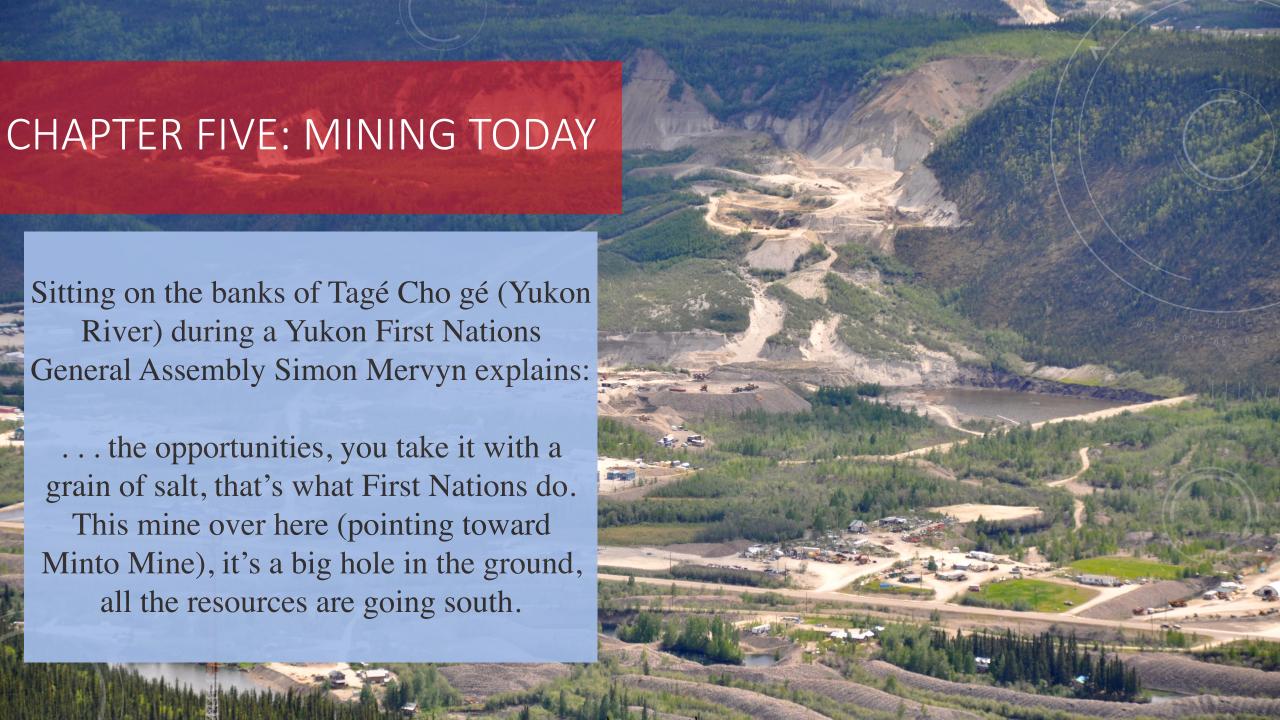
The late Helen Buyck tells that there might have been systemic reasons:

"They never told us what we could do about the water, we were given no alternatives. A well could have been drilled; something could have been done because there is plenty of good water there. Maybe at that time government people did not want Indians to get too wise." (Helen Buyck 1983 in Mayo Historical Society 1990: 252f.)

## CHAPTER THREE: RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

Betty Lucas: While we were living in a cabin and I got eight children with my husband. We got three little bedroom, one little kitchen and sitting room out there, for eight, nine, ten of us. We filled up in that little house and we never complained. We got something better than a tent. Anyway, when some of my kids grew up and they take them to residential school. My kid. Then we've been having problems, my husband and I, we used to drink liquor then. We both quit. Now we are thinking about our family, he told me let's move to a trapline. Let's move to a trapline, save our children, my kids.







# FILM: MINING ON FIRST NATION LAND



## **CONCLUSION**

- Nacho Nyäk Dun Elders' perspectives shed very different light on recent history of the Yukon and contact
  than common narratives of 'discovery', 'empty lands' and previous accounts of past events that are
  purely oriented towards mining proponents and processes
- more nuanced understanding of how mining colonialism was/is experienced
- ONLINE VERSION OF D\u00e4n H\u00fcna\u00e4y is available on fnnnd.com/heritage
- Second print run already planned
- Continuing research relationship with First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun and other First Nations across the Yukon
- Continuing collaboration with individuals
- Next step: Write-up Dissertation, Presentation of Results to Community in Fall 2020.