



# Dena Cho

**Environmental and Remediation Inc.**

A Dena Nezziddi Development Corp. Company

**Dena Cho Environmental Limited Partnership (Dena Cho)** is a 100% Ross River Dena Council owned and operated environmental management company.

Dena Cho is committed to regularly communicating with the community of Ross River, and more importantly, gathering feedback and direction on our projects. With this goal in mind, we are providing regular newsletter updates to Ross River community members and leadership. We also post our newsletters and other updates on our new website: <https://denacho.ca/>.

We encourage feedback on the content of this newsletter as we aim to keep our community informed and engaged. Please contact Jody Inkster ([jinkster@denacho.ca](mailto:jinkster@denacho.ca)) if you have any questions or concerns.



AUGUST—OCTOBER 2021

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## Whitehorse Office

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*Fireweed growing at the Ketzka River Mine site (August 2021).*

## Our Team

Mary Maje, Elder Support (on-call)

Ted Charlie, Elder Support (on-call)

Nora Ladue, Elder Support (on-call)

Franklin Charlie, Elder Support (on-call)

Jody Inkster, Environmental Scientist and Project Lead

Billie Maje, Field Technician and Project Lead

Cassia Jakesta, Environmental Scientist and Lead

Danika Maje, Field Technician

Eric John, Field Technician

Stu Van Bibber, General Manager

Caitlynn Beckett, Researcher and Lead

## Current Projects

- ✧ Faro Mine Remediation Projects:
  - Leading the Faro Community-Based Revegetation Strategy
  - Reviewing and reporting to Kathlene Suza, Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation, the Ross River YESAB office, the Ross River Lands Office and RRDC Leadership on the Faro YESAB process.
  - Coordination of an Environmental Monitoring Program with Golder Associates
- ✧ Ketzka River Mine Projects:
  - Ketzka Mine Remediation and Working Group
  - Coordination of an Environmental Monitoring Program with Hemmera
  - Ketzka River Bridge #4 Fish Salvage and Preservation
- ✧ Wolverine Mine Project
  - Coordination of an Environmental Monitoring Program with Environmental Dynamics Inc.
- ✧ North Canol Trail Projects:
  - Telegraph Wire Cleanup
  - Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)
- ✧ Cantung Mine Remediation Project
  - Reviewing and participating in a Cantung Review Committee, reporting to Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation and RRDC Leadership.

## Faro Mine Remediation Project

**Faro Community-Based Revegetation Work:** In June, Dena Nezziddi Development Corp. (Dena Nezziddi) contracted Dena Cho to hire 14 Kaska Dena to plant 36,000 trees at the Faro Mine Site. We are very proud of everyone that was involved in the program and we are appreciative of the support provided by CIRNAC, Integral Ecological Group, Dena Nezziddi, Wildside Reforestation, and RRDC. This tree planting program was the largest Kaska-led program at the mine site and the largest tree planting program in Yukon to date! We are now working on the next steps for the Community-Based Revegetation Work, planning for another tree planting program next summer (stay tuned for hiring information in April 2022).

We are also working to begin research on contamination and metal uptake in plants at the Faro site and a seed collection program. We will be having discussions with Elders and other community members over the coming months to determine community future land-use objectives at Faro and how tree planting and other research should be shaped by Dena protocols.



*Sheep along the road at the Faro Mine Site.*

**Faro YESAB Review Updates:** The Faro Mine Reclamation Plan is still being reviewed by YESAB (Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board), the organization in Yukon responsible for assessing projects before they start, including protecting and promoting the well-being of First Nations and guaranteeing the use of First Nations' knowledge and experience in the assessment process. Currently, the Faro YESAB review process is moving from the 'Adequacy' stage to the 'Screening' stage.

In the fall, YESAB published a Preliminary Scope of Assessment for Faro - this document outlines a preliminary list of 'valued environmental and socio-economic components' that will be considered in the assessment of the Faro mine Remediation Project. These 'valued components' include: surface water quality, wildlife and wildlife habitat, heritage resources, human health, community infrastructure and services, community wellbeing, and First Nations' cultural vitality, to name just a few. You can find the full report [here](#). Dena Cho and the Faro Secretariat (Kathlene Suza) attended a workshop in October to review this Preliminary Scope of Assessment and provide feedback.

If you are interested, you can view all Information Requests/Answers for Faro [here](#). For more information on the YESAB process, check out [this link](#).

**Faro Mine Environmental Monitoring:** Dena Cho assisted Golder during the surface water monitoring programs in August, September, and October. The September quarterly monitoring program was extensive, which included groundwater, contact water, seepage, and drinking water sampling. Annual groundwater samples were collected from the tailing impoundments. Currently, Cassia Jakesta is the lead on this project on behalf of Dena Cho with the support of Golder and Dena Cho field technicians: Eric John and Danika Maje.

## Elder's Quote

*“If we had the power, we will stop the mine development completely. Until compensation is made with the Band and Band members, that utilize the land for trapping and subsistence.”*



*Faro Mine landscapes (Photo by Eric John)*

## Ketza River Mine Projects

**Ketza Remediation Project:** Dena Cho attended monthly Ketza Mine River Working Group meetings with the Yukon Government, Government of Canada, and participating First Nations (i.e., Liard First Nation and Teslin Tlingit Council).

You can find additional information (i.e., an infographic, backgrounder, and virtual site tour) on our website at [www.denacho.ca](http://www.denacho.ca).

**Ketza Environmental Monitoring:** Dena Cho supported Hemmera with the monthly surface water programs from August to October. In August, the annual groundwater program commented with Yukon Government in attendance for the groundwater audit which will determine if changes are required to the program (e.g., number of sampling wells, monitoring frequency, and maintenance).

**Ketza River Mine Fish Salvage Program:** Dena Cho and Hemmera completed a fish salvage program before bridge #4 construction in September 2021. Minnow traps and a dipnet were used to capture fish in order to move them downstream out of the construction zone. In total, 39 slimy sculpins were safely captured in the Ketza River.





*Jody collecting a groundwater sample at the Ketza Mine.*

## Wolverine Mine Environmental Monitoring

One of Dena Cho's long-term projects is the environmental monitoring program at the Wolverine Mine, which includes a weekly sampling of local streams and creeks, groundwater monitoring wells, tailings storage water and water coming out of the mine portal.

Billie Maje continues to lead this project on behalf of Dena Cho, with the support of other community members. Lead contractor EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc. continues to lead the program, with support from Dena Cho.

All of the environmental monitoring done is required under the Wolverine Mine Water Licence (QZ04-065) issued to the Yukon Zinc Corporation. It is Dena Cho's job to make sure that the water collected is done properly and is done by Ross River Dena members.

## North Canol Wire Cleanup & Phase 1 ESA

In the summer of 2021, Dena Cho continued our work with Hemmera to clean up the remaining telegraph wire along the North Canol, between km 75 and km 232 (to the NWT border). Our team, including Ted and Franklin Charlie, surveyed and removed the remaining telegraph wire, as well as historic material associated with the North Canol.

The purpose of this program was to flag clean up, and dispose of old telegraph wire, making the lands safe again for Ross River Dena members and wildlife alike.

Dena Cho is also working on a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), in coordination with Stantec, along the North Canol Road from Ross River to the NWT border. The purpose of this ESA is to locate and record any potentially contaminated sites (for example, areas on the road where spills have happened or contaminated areas where truck shops were located) along the North Canol Trail. This work includes archival and aerial photography research to identify potential contaminated areas; interviews with Ross River community members to help identify sites of concern; summer 2022 fieldwork to 'site truth' our desk research and characterize the sites that require cleanup. Our findings will be presented to RRDC leadership at the end of 2022.

## Northwestel YESAB Fiber Optic Line

Northwestel is planning on installing a new fiber line to Ross River in the summer of 2022. This line will extend from Carmacks to Ross River along the Robert Campbell Highway right-of-way. The purpose of this project is to provide reliable high-speed internet to Ross River.

Northwestel's first step in their planning was to allow Dena Cho a chance to review their project prior to going into the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment (YESAB) process. Our review included support from Jody Inkster, Mary Maje, and Nora Ladue.

Our advice was mainly to suggest that Northwestel include their project the following activities:

- Provide a plain-language summary to members of RRDC and leadership;
- Engage with RRDC's Lands Office; and
- Involve Dena Nezziddi Limited Partnership and community members with companies in the fiber line upgrade.

Northwestel has committed to the above and will be in contact with RRDC Lands Office for their input into the project, as well as Dena Nezziddi for involvement in any economic opportunities related to the line upgrade.

