

# Birch Narrows Dene Nation

## Administration

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November 15, 2022

### Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

(Per E-mail)

Attention: Nicole Frigault,

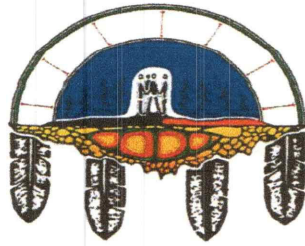
On behalf of the Birch Narrows Dene Nation (BNDN), I am writing this communication in relation to the development of NexGen's Rook I Project located in Saskatchewan's south Athabasca Basin.

In response to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's (CNSC) 90-day federal public review of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for NexGen's Rook I Project, this letter is intended to express BNDN's sentiment for the Rook I Project and confirm that through various long-term collaborative engagement processes, BNDN has been made aware of, contributed to the information provided in the Rook I Project draft EIS. As you will have seen, the BNDN community took the time to review and provide commentary on the Draft EIS, both from a community perspective as well as with the aid of Tamarack from a more technical perspective.

NexGen's approach to Indigenous engagement has been evident from the start, beginning with respectful honest dialogue with BNDN since 2017, to create the conditions for community feedback on the potential impacts of the proposed Rook I Project, and intentional collaboration for the development of meaningful community programs that stand to benefit current and future generations in the Local Priority Area (LPA). Since 2017, BNDN and NexGen have been working together to review and amend these community initiatives as required to meet our changing needs. The community initiatives span from supporting our minor sports teams, to providing ongoing funding for continual development of our communities, including a Traditional Land Use (TLU) study, and supporting our community food center, just to name a few. We work closely with NexGen to define community needs and requirements that can maximize community involvement and provide positive and sustainable support for our community members.

On September 30, 2019, BNDN and NexGen entered into a Study Agreement, formalizing our collective commitment to work collaboratively with the community members and BNDN Leadership to review and provide insight on the Rook I Project. Joint Working Groups were established and a self-directed TLU (both fully funded by NexGen) was conducted to facilitate the inclusion of BNDN's traditional knowledge throughout the EA process, and ultimately the EIS.

The result of this genuine approach to engagement has led to an industry leading Mutual Benefit Agreement between NexGen and BNDN, providing BNDN certainty for our community members around continued community programs that focus on culture, education, and health and wellness, as well as significant economic capacity building opportunities through infrastructure, employment, and business development.



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As noted in the MBA video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekB1t2URkng>, community enhancement and economic capacity building is a massive benefit, but the environmental protection is of utmost importance to BNDN community members. Through the MBA, an Environmental Committee (EC) was established providing a collaborative platform for BNDN and NexGen to work together throughout the life of the Project. The EC provides further environmental assurances and oversight on the Project directly by the community while maintaining our strong ties to the land. BNDN acknowledges NexGen's long-standing commitment to an open transparent engagement process whereby BNDN was engaged early by NexGen, and provided with opportunity throughout the EA process to bring forward questions, feedback, and input that helped to inform the Rook I Project draft EIS. The Rook I Project EIS that was released by the CNSC on July 13<sup>th</sup> for public review reflects BNDN's input throughout the engagement process, and confirms NexGen's commitment to setting new standards for environmental performance that include maintaining a small surface footprint, and ongoing reclamation throughout the lifespan of the Project.

In conclusion, BNDN have submitted comments to the CNSC related to the Rook I Project draft EIS, BNDN is confident that based on the collaborative working history between BNDN and NexGen these comments will be addressed satisfactorily along with Community Information Sessions to ensure the community are fully aware of the planned approach to the Rook I Project. BNDN confirms by way of this letter the sincere and authentic approach that has been taken by NexGen since 2017 to ensure effective and impactful engagement with BNDN for the most responsible development possible of the Rook I Project. Furthermore, NexGen's proven commitment to the communities where it operates is setting new standards for both social and environmental stewardship in the mining industry in Saskatchewan and Canada.

We look forward to working in partnership with NexGen to responsibly advance this generational project that will deliver significant economic and social benefits for current and future BNDN community members.

Thank you

Chief Jonathon Sylvestre

Birch Narrows Dene Nation