



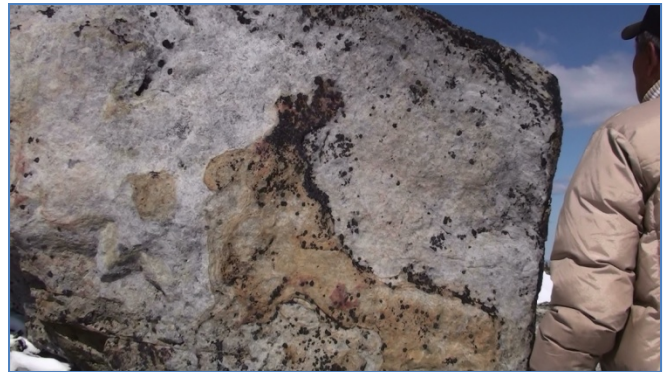
**Skull Formation**

## **Saulteau First Nations not in agreement with Hackney Hills Wind Project in BC Hydro's call for "Clean Power"**

On March 11, 2010 BC Hydro posted an update to their website in regards to the first set of Electricity Purchase Agreements awarded under the *Clean Power Call*. Nineteen projects were awarded electricity purchase agreements. The projects are intended to provide a step toward building a "clean energy powerhouse here in BC."

Further to these agreements, and currently under consideration by the BC Utilities Commission, is the Hackney Hills Wind Project. The Saulteau First Nations are not in agreement with the project as it threatens a significant First Nations cultural heritage site. "In the province's bid to supply the future energy needs they are following a process that results in the destruction of sacred sites," states Chief Harley Davis. The Saulteau First Nations believe that development of these sacred mountains will result in a loss of aboriginal culture and history for future generations. "The preservation of the large stone skull monument on the sacred mountain is representative of how the land and resources could be used or abused," notes elder Jack Davis. "The cultural impacts and potential infringement of rights could result in economic and social problems for generations if the project were to proceed at this location."

On November 9<sup>th</sup> 2009 Saulteau First Nations contacted the BC Union of Indian Chiefs regarding the protection of the Hackney Hills Sacred Mountains, and Bill M203 introduced by MLA Maurine Karagianis amending the Heritage Conservation Act. This bill would have provided an extended timeline for additional research and tools to deal with imminent threats to First Nations identified sacred sites. "It is an important bill that identifies the culture and heritage of our traditional land use" states Chief Harley Davis of Saulteau First Nations, "enhancing the ability to properly identify ancestral sites." The bill was quashed in its first reading, and ruled out of order by the BC Liberals. The Saulteau First Nations believe this action shows a lack of commitment towards protecting sacred sites from damage and destruction. "The bill was out of order as it would have resulted in expenditure of public funds," notes Chief Davis. "Protection of ancient native sites is a First Nations' and public issue that should not be disregarded over monetary issues."



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“The sacred mountain and monuments are a symbol of the challenges faced over ever-expanding demands for energy and resources,” notes Chief Davis “and it is alarming that BC Hydro and the provincial government are failing to respect this heritage site.” “BC Hydro has not consulted with the Saulteau First Nations regarding the project or Electricity Purchase Agreements.”

Further, an archaeological report (Stan Copp 2009) investigating the Hackney Hills site considered it culturally significant as a sacred site to the First Nations communities within those traditional territories it lies, which is reason enough to protect it. Community elders have stated that consultation must be conducted immediately and prior to any agreements reached between BC Hydro and the project proponent. In a recent article in Northeast News dated March 11<sup>th</sup> 2010 it states that Aeolis Wind Corporation and the Doig River first Nation have reached a protocol agreement within Treaty 8 territory. The Saulteau First Nations are respectful of the outcome; however this does not address the environmental and aboriginal rights concerns of the Saulteau and other First Nations’ communities. “We want to ensure that BC Hydro does not confuse this agreement with the outstanding lack of consultation with the Saulteau First Nations regarding the spiritual and historic lands on which the project overlaps.”

The Hackney Hills Sacred Heritage Mountain is also a culturally important area for caribou winter range



and migration. “The ridges form critical habitat due to the topography,” notes elder Ron Letendre. “The Saulteau First Nations are concerned with the potential consequences of the ecosystem and cultural disruption which could result from the project,” states Chief Davis. “In terms of scientific evidence, caribou inventory work is currently being conducted in order to delineate critical habitat for permanent protection and we ultimately hope that restoration of the land can become a higher priority with the BC Government.”

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