

An aerial photograph of a coastal region. A wide river flows from the top left towards the bottom center. The riverbanks are heavily forested with dense green trees. On the right side of the river, there is a small peninsula or island. This land features a sandy beach, a small cluster of buildings, and a prominent, long, straight, light-colored strip that appears to be a runway or a cleared path. The water in the foreground is dark and calm, reflecting the sky.

Reality Check:

Waste Management with Sambaa K'e First Nation

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Road Map

- **Who We Are**

Introducing Sambaa K'e First Nation — a Dene community shaping its environmental future.

- **What Makes Sambaa K'e Unique**

Dene Laws, land-based values, and Traditional Knowledge shape our approach to waste.

- **A Legacy We Inherited**

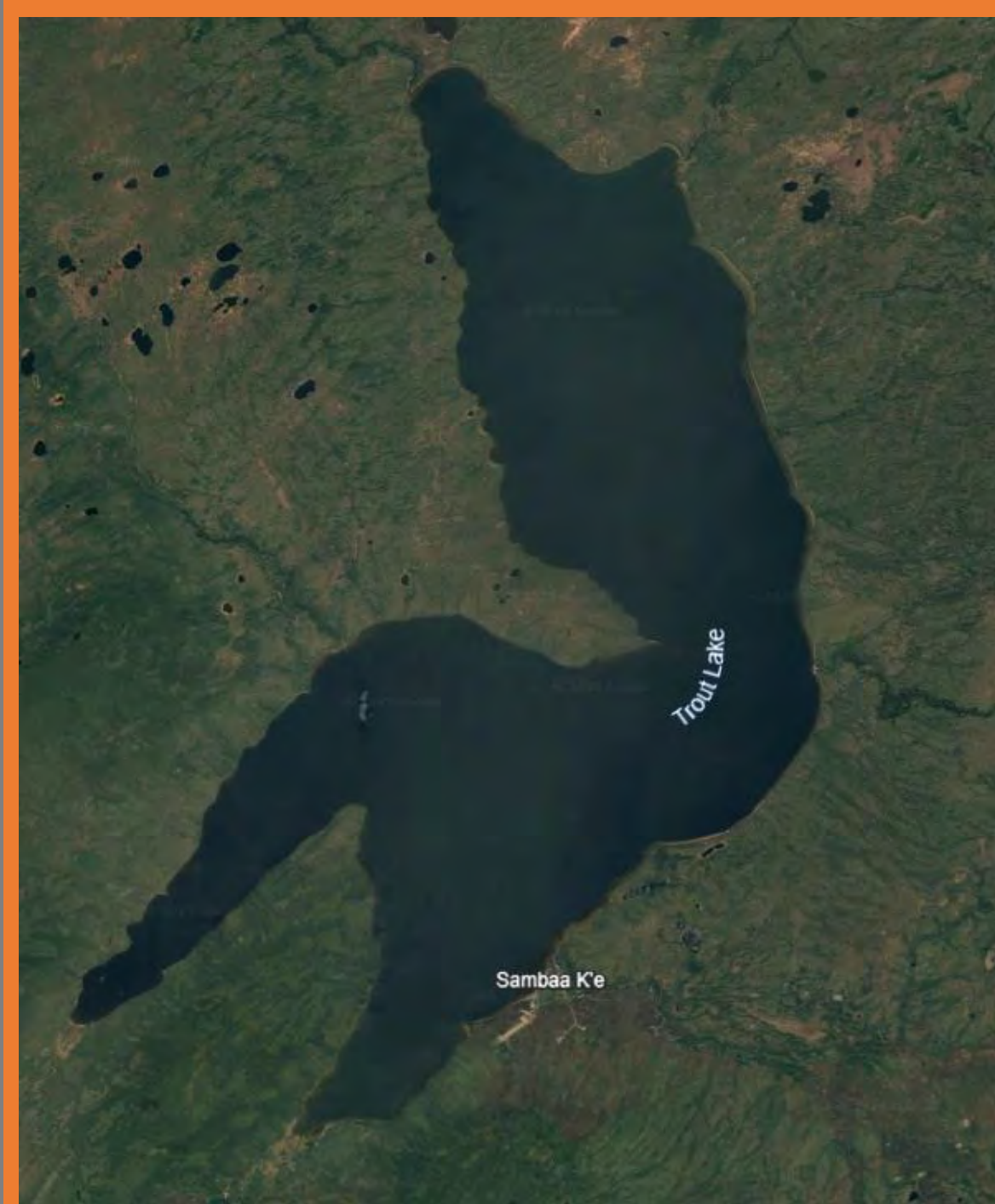
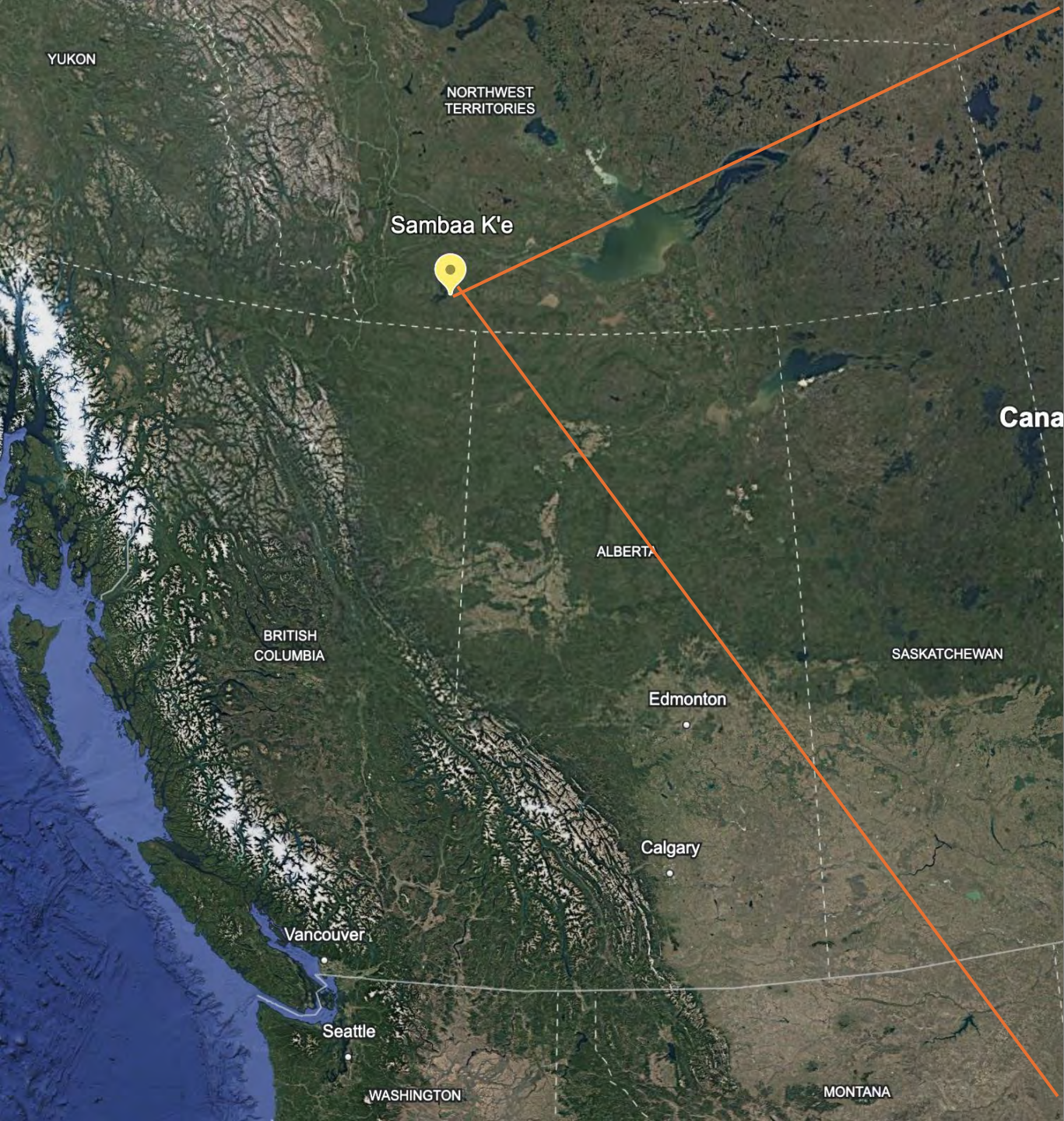
The colonial footprint: From imposed systems to today's reality in managing waste infrastructure.

- **The Hard Truths**

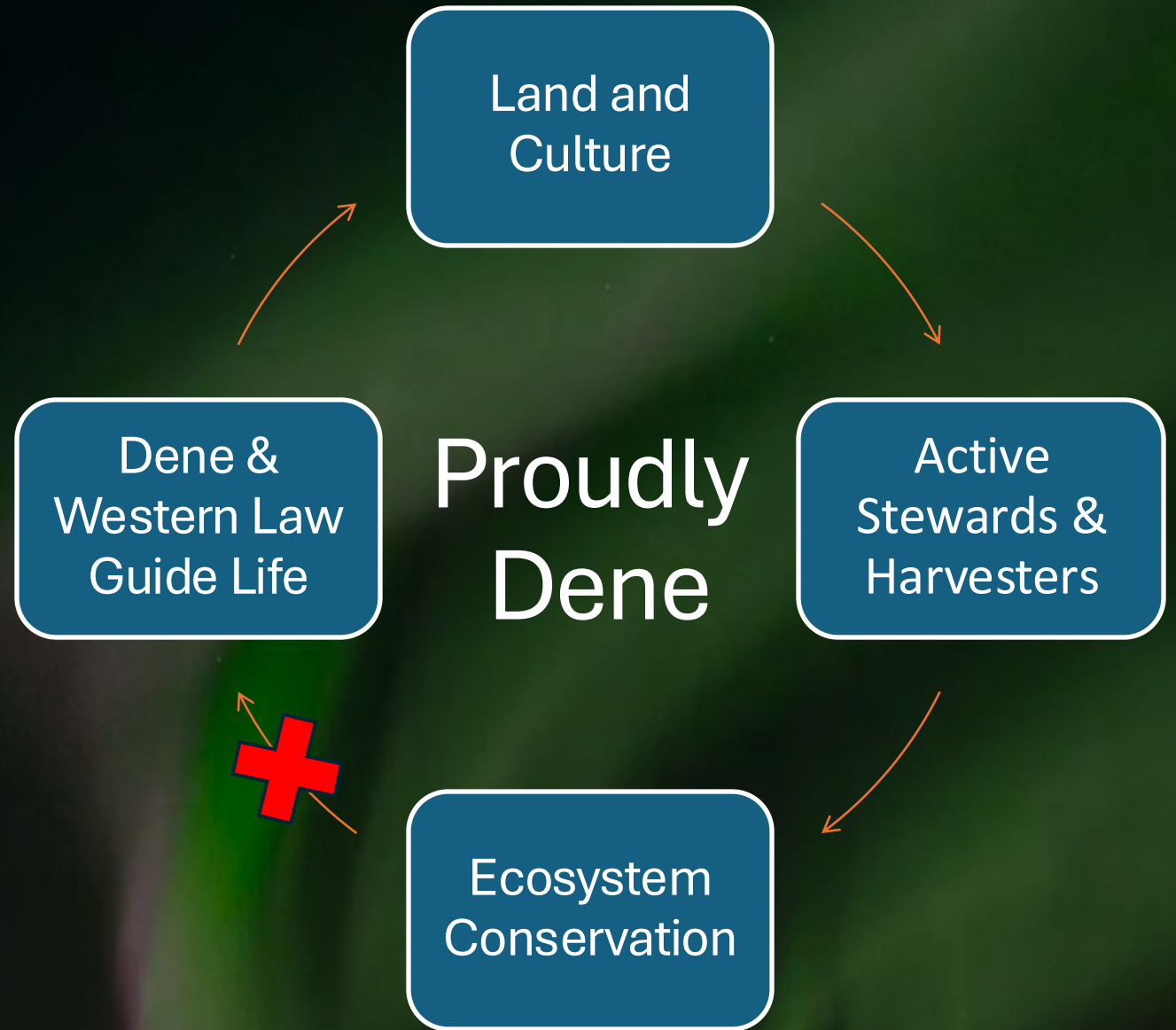
Key challenges we face — from access and cost to remoteness and regulatory gaps.

- **Let's Talk Solutions**

Your role in supporting Sambaa K'e's waste transformation — and questions we want to explore together.



Sambaa K'e First Nation



What Makes Sambaa K'e Unique

How Dene Laws, land-based values, and Traditional Knowledge shape our approach to waste.

- Dene laws are rooted in land, respect, & balance
- Everything taken from the land is to be returned with care — there was no "waste" — this is their relationship with the land
- Materials are sacred — gifts from the Creator, not trash
- Colonization disrupted this balance — bringing materials that don't belong or come from the land
- Modern waste must be managed differently — but our laws still guide us

What Makes Sambaa K'e Unique

How Dene Laws, land-based values, and Traditional Knowledge shape our approach to waste.

A Hybrid approach to waste management

Specially designated sites which respect Dene Law

- Diaper dump – A designated site for baby diapers which aims to honour the gift of new life
- Bone Dump - A designated site which honours the reciprocal relationship of humans and animals while respecting sacred cycles



A Legacy We Inherited

The colonial footprint: From imposed systems to today's reality in managing waste

- Early waste practices were minimally planned & largely unregulated
- Rapid growth outpaced infrastructure, education & oversight
- Multiple unmanaged dump sites scattered across the community
- Little investigation into environmental or health impacts
- Sites receive nearly all waste types including solid waste, liquid waste & hazardous liquids (eg. used oil, toxic solvents, batteries)

Unseen. Unchecked. Unsafe

Beside our community, school & key water ways:

- unmarked lead acid battery sites
- hydrocarbon contamination
- 1940s abandoned army chemical containers



Active Locations (6+)

- Solid waste site(s)
- Sewage lagoon
- Bone pit
- Diaper dump
- Scrap wood pile
- Compost



Working face... this was a trench



Closed cell housing new hazardous

Tires

Multi-chemical
Contaminated soil

Toxic ash





Wood Waste Management



Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheap & efficient• Community used to it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forest fire risk• Incentivizes unauthorized dumping• Creates toxic ash near waterways

Current solid waste site (began 1992)

 Pros	 Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimal Production & Natural attenuation of leachate (passive treatment)• On-site heavy equipment available (CAT D5 dozer/loader)• Potential expansion space for one 1,500 m³ cell (50m x 10m x 3m)• Semi-reliable door-to-door collection three times a week• Semi active surface water ditch on south side semi-protects nearby stream• 2060 m setback from nearest fish-bearing water body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No regular compaction or cover schedule• Inconsistent cover material placement (e.g., contaminated soil used)• Flood-prone during spring melt• Unlined — high leachate and groundwater risk• No public access control — open, unmanaged entry• No signage to identify stockpile/material areas• Damaged perimeter fence — no gate or lock

The Hard Truths

Key challenges we face — from access and cost to remoteness and regulatory gaps.

- **Aging landfill** — site nearing end of life
- **Limited capacity** — space is running out
- **Small population, big footprint** — waste volume outpaces system design
- **Remote location** — high costs for hauling, materials, and technical support
- **Underfunded** — chronic shortfalls in operations and infrastructure investment
- **Limited authority** — jurisdictional gaps as a Designated Authority
- **Gravel shortages** — critical for cell construction and cover material
- **Permafrost & muskeg terrain** — restricts siting and increases costs

A Community Effort

- Spring Dump Clean Up
- Community Garbage Pickup Day
- Guardian Lake Clean Up
- Local Composting
- Recycling Depot



SWANA, please chat with us!

- Design a **waste management plan adapted** to our **Northern context**
- **Support waste diversion** — help us reduce what ends up in the landfill
- **Develop & Fund winter backhaul operations** — use empty trucks to ship waste out during seasonal supply runs
- **Invest in training & fund local jobs** — empower SKFN members to lead operations
- **Identify appropriate suppliers** — fences, spill kits, waste storage SEACANs?
- **Fund ongoing operations & maintenance** — make the system sustainable, not just a one-time fix

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