

People and Tailings Dams Symposium Report



May 13, 2015

Executive Summary

On February 24, 2015 the National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association (NAEPA), with the assistance of the Fraser Basin Council, hosted a symposium regarding the state of mine tailing practices in British Columbia. The one-day event took place at the River Rock Casino and Conference Center in Richmond, British Columbia. The Symposium was held to educate the participants on the state of mine tailing practices in the province and gain perspectives and ideas related to present and future mine tailing management.

The Symposium attracted 114 participants representing Aboriginal and Metis communities from around the province, the minerals and mining sector, government and academia. The event started with a prayer, traditional dances and welcome to Aboriginal lands. The morning consisted of a panel speaking to the Mount Polley tailings spill and industry presentations which provided participants with important information. During the afternoon the Symposium switched to a dialogue with Aboriginal participants given the floor to ask questions of the presenters from the morning and speak to the group as a whole, followed by breaking into groups with facilitators to determine recommendations.

The key themes related to tailings dams that emerged during the Symposium were:

- environmental protection;
- new technologies;
- improving monitoring of systems;
- water quality;
- capacity development;
- relationship building; and
- liability and accountability.

Four findings emerged from the Symposium. It is felt that consideration of these findings would provide a foundation of continued collaboration between First Nations, the minerals and mining sector and government in British Columbia on thoughts, ideas and opportunities to improve mine tailing practices. A key foundation would be to build confidence that regulations and oversight of tailings dams is adequate. The findings support and identify consideration for the following:

1. form a mine tailing working group;
2. encourage constant improvement, support innovators and green technology;
3. establish a central point for information; and
4. build capacity for all parties identified.

Dialogue sessions, such as the People and Tailings Dams Symposium, where traditional knowledge, cultural and information exchange and sharing happens between First Nations and the minerals and mining sector and Governments are crucial to strengthening working relationships between the groups. We all share this land and agree that it should be protected.

Table of Contents

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	4
National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association	4
Symposium Organization	5
Morning Welcome	6
Opening Prayer	6
National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association	6
Tsatsu Stalqayu Dance Group	6
Squamish Nation Opening Remarks	6
Fraser Basin Council Welcome	7
Morning Panel Session	7
Morning Presentations Overview	8
Presentation: Dam Investigation: Tsilhqot'in Remarks	9
Presentation: Tailings 101, An Overview of Mine Tailings and the Management Methods Currently Employed by the Industry	10
Presentation: Tailings Management, Teck's Perspective	10
Presentation: Application of 'Towards Sustainable Mining'	10
Presentation: Consulting Engineers and Tailing Dams	11
Afternoon Discussions	11
Symposium Dance	11
Open Discussion	12
Breakout Session	12
Key Themes from the Open Discussion and Breakout Session	12
• Environmental Protection	12
• New Technologies	13
• Improving Monitoring of Systems	14
• Water Quality	14
• Capacity Development	15
• Relationship Building	16

People and Tailings Dams Symposium

	• Liability and Accountability	17
Summary of Findings		17
	• #1: Consider the Formation of a Mine Tailings Working Group	17
	• #2: Support Innovators and Green Technology	17
	• #3: Desire to establish a Central Point for Mine Tailings Information	18
	• #4: Need to Build Capacity for All Parties	18
The Path Forward - Recommendation		18
	• Further Dialogue Sessions	18
Conclusions		19
Thank You		20

Introduction

On February 24, 2015 the National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association (NAEPA), with the assistance of the Fraser Basin Council, hosted a Symposium regarding mine tailing practices in British Columbia. The Mount Polley tailings spill¹ had underlined the importance of bringing First Nations, the minerals and mining sector, and government together to discuss these practices. The Symposium was held to educate and inform the participants on present and future mine tailing management in the province to gain their perspectives and ideas.

The one-day event was held at the River Rock Casino and Conference Center in Richmond, British Columbia. The event started with a prayer, traditional dances and welcome to Aboriginal lands. The morning consisted of a panel speaking to the Mount Polley tailings spill and industry presentations which provided participants with important information. During the afternoon the Symposium switched to a dialogue with Aboriginal participants given the floor to ask questions of the presenters from the morning and speak to the group as a whole, followed by breaking into groups with facilitators to determine recommendations.

The Symposium attracted 114 participants representing Aboriginal and Metis communities from around the province, the minerals and mining sector, government and academia. There were 80 Aboriginal people who attended including Chiefs, community members, business and First Nation's government representatives. The next largest group was drawn from the minerals and mining sector. There was limited government and university participation.

This document provides an overview of the Symposium. It reports on the key themes from the presentations, open dialogue and breakout session. Recommended actions are presented to ensure continued collaboration between First Nations, the minerals and mining sector and government in British Columbia on ideas and opportunities to improve mine tailing practices.

National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association

The National Energy and Power Association mission is to contribute to the advancement of economic development through support, facilitation, and promotion of an economically and environmentally sustainable Aboriginal energy and power sector. The Association will deliver conferences, symposiums and workshops on the power production, transmission, oil and gas and resource sectors with a key focus on Aboriginal community engagement and business development.

NAEPA events will provide unique opportunities to share information and provide a broad scope of networking opportunities for Aboriginal peoples, mining, energy and power companies and governments. Conferences will focus on the positive exchange of knowledge and information related to energy production, transmission, and oil and gas development and operation that balances social, economic and environmental needs through inclusive processes.

¹ The Mount Polley mine tailings spill began in the early morning of August 4, 2014 with a breach of the impoundment dam. A mixture more than 25 million cubic metres of water and rock tailings spilled out and down Hazeltine Creek and into nearby Quesnel Lake. Some of the tailings dammed up the outflow from Polley Lake. Fortunately there was no loss of life or injuries associated with the spill. The mine owner and the British Columbia government have been working with the local First Nations since the dam failure to assess the environmental impacts, support the local communities and start the clean-up. The breach in the tailings dam was closed with a new dam structure in October, 2014 to contain the majority of tailings that remained in the impoundment following the spill.

People and Tailings Dams Symposium

For more information, please see the NAEPA website at <http://naepa.ca/>.

Symposium Organization

The Symposium was initiated and core funding provided by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Klohn Crippen Berger, Knight Piesold Consulting, New Gold Inc., Seabridge Gold Inc. and Teck Resources Limited complemented the core funding by sponsoring the event. A Host Committee for the Symposium, working with some key advisors, drew up the agenda, identified the speakers, and guided the process for inviting representatives from Aboriginal communities, minerals and mining sector, government and academia.

NAEPA contracted Mahigan Development Inc. and Aboriginal Travel Services to coordinate the event logistics and help manage the event. This report was written by Tamara Goddard and Dave Lefebure with input from the Host Committee and facilitators for the breakout session.

Host Committee

Justin Himmelright, Committee Chair and President, Siden Consulting Ltd.

Jerry Asp, President, C3 Alliance Corp.

Flavio Caron, Interim Executive Director, National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association

Tamara Goddard, President, Mahigan Development Inc.

Dan Jepsen, CEO, National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association

Bob Purdy, Director, External Relations & Corporate Development, Fraser Basin Council

Sarah Weber, Operations Manager & Senior Researcher, C3 Alliance Corp.

Advisors – Host Committee

Heather Lawrence, Leader, Indigenous Initiatives, Teck Resources Limited

Joe Ringwald, President & CEO, Selwyn Resources Ltd.

Rick Siwik, Siwik Consulting

Dirk Van Zyl, Professor, University of British Columbia

Breakout Session Facilitators

Kim Baird, Kim Baird Strategic Consulting

Dr. Dave Lefebure, Principal, Lefebure GeoLogic Ltd.

Keith Matthew, President, National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association

Annita McPhee, Strategic Advisor, Annita McPhee Strategies

Bob Purdy, Director of External Relations and Corporate Development, Fraser Basin Council

Corey Rich, Mahigan Development Inc.

Morning Welcome

Opening Prayer

The Symposium started with Musqueam Elder Jewel Thomas providing a welcome and opening prayer for the symposium which took place on Musqueam Traditional Territory.



National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association



Keith Matthew, President of the National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association and former Chief of the the Simpcw Band, acknowledged the Coast Salish First Nations and the Musqueam Traditional Territory. He welcomed the participants to the Symposium and gave a brief introduction for the National Aboriginal Energy and Power Association (NAEPA).

Tsatsu Stalqayu Dance Group

Tsatsu Stalqayu (Coastal Wolf Pack), the Musqueam Dance Group, performed several traditional dances that were very well received by the audience.



Squamish Nation Opening Remarks



Chief Ian Campbell of the Squamish Nation spoke eloquently to the participants during his welcome. He encouraged First Nations, government and the minerals and mining sector to work in a cooperative and respectful manner in the Symposium.

Fraser Basin Council Welcome

On behalf of the Fraser Basin Council (FBC), Bob Purdy welcomed the participants. The Director of External Relations and Corporate Development, he explained that the Council facilitates bringing people to a safe table to discuss matters of concern. While the Council initially focused on the Fraser River area, it is now working throughout British Columbia. They were on the ground after the Mount Polley mine tailings spill. They recognize tailings dams as an emerging issue which requires addressing to ensure the safety of these structures.



Morning Panel Session

The Symposium Host Committee invited key people to start the morning by providing the audience with their insights into the Mount Polley mine tailings spill. They included representatives from the local and provincial government and one of the authors of the Mount Polley Tailings report² issued on January 31, 2015.

- Panel:**
- Al Richmond, Chair, Cariboo Regional District
 - David Morel, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Energy and Mines
 - Dr. Dirk Van Zyl, Professor, University of British Columbia
- Moderator:**
- Lana Eagle, Interim Executive Director, Industry Council for Aboriginal Business



Al Richmond spoke first from the local government's perspective of being in the region when the tailings dam broke and the spill happened. On the morning of August fourth he was one of the first people off the site to learn about the tailings spill. He played a key role for the Cariboo Regional District in responding to the environmental disaster. After describing his involvement that morning, he showed some of the video footage shot by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at that time. The video showed the breach in the tailings impoundment, the tailings and water slurry running down Hazeltine Creek, and some footage of Polley

and Quesnel lakes.

² The report is posted at the following website:
<https://www.mountpolleyreviewpanel.ca/sites/default/files/report/ReportonMountPolleyTailingsStorageFacilityBreach.pdf>

He then gave a presentation titled *“Mount Polley Mine Tailings Pond Breach - A Local Government Perspective”*. During his presentation he provided considerable detail on how local government responded to the spill and interacted with the First Nations and communities.

The second panel member to speak was Dirk Van Zyl who presented a summary of the independent Report titled *“Report on Mount Polley Tailings Storage Facility Breach”* released on January 31, 2015³. The comprehensive report explains in considerable detail the history of the tailings dam, the scientific approach used to understand the breach, and the cause of the failure. It ends with recommendations. The executive summary in the report provides a good review of many the points made by Dr. Van Zyl’s during his oral presentation.



David Morel, Assistant Deputy Minister for the British Columbia Ministry of Energy and Mines was the final panel member to speak. He started with his own personal story of learning about the spill while on holiday in Spain and returning immediately to find this very serious tailings spill. He emphasized how important it is to “make sure that it doesn’t happen again”. He outlined the priorities for his ministry to respond to the spill were:

1. the health and safety of the people in the region working with the Ministry of Environment and Regional Health services,
2. to work with the Chief Sellars and Chief Louie of the two local First Nations by signing an agreement within two weeks on how to work together, including helping to establish the independent review panel previously described; and
3. to have the Chief Inspector of Mines to immediately start the process to review the tailings dams at the 60 active mines and 30 closed mines in the province. The results of the review were made public in January 2015.

He then spoke to the recommendations in the *“Report on Mount Polley Tailings Storage Facility Breach”* noting that the Minister of Energy and Mines had accepted all of them.

Morning Presentations Overview

Representatives from the minerals and mining sector and First Nations were invited by the Host Committee to present their company practices, to profile existing and new technologies, and to

³ An independent report commissioned by the British Columbia government to establish the cause of the dam failure was published on January 31, 2015. Two other government reports by the Conservation Officer Service and the Chief Inspector of Mines are in progress.

speak about community involvement with respect to mine tailings and related dams. A very short summary of each presentation is given below.

The individual presentations will be posted to the NAEPA website at: <http://naepa.ca/>.

Presentation: Dam Investigation: Tsilhqot'in Remarks

Chief Bernie Mack, ?Esdilagh First Nation, Tsilhqot'in National Government

Chief Bernie Mack has seen the Mount Polley tailings storage breach. There are concerns for the tailings dam as a wet season is approaching. The ?Esdilagh First Nation has the Gibraltar Mine in its backyard and this has led to concerns about their operation and tailings dam. Chief Mack wants to see a full impact assessment completed following the Mount Polley disaster.

He spoke to the issue of regulation of tailings dams and the processes used by the Canadian Dam Association and the Ministry of Energy and Mines. Both rely heavily on the seal of the professional engineers who prepare designs or perform inspections. More attention needs to be paid to these processes and ensuring reports are completed in full and submitted to the correct agencies.

“We as First Nations don’t want mine operators to have a false sense of security. I want to ask what went wrong but we do not have the skills or capacity to deal with assessments and reviews. I am not appeased by how we have been responded to. If being nice doesn’t work and questions are not answered then what else can we do?”

– Chief Bernie Mack



While it is good that there is renewed funding for inspectors in the Ministry of Energy and Mines, more funding for the Ministry of Environment is required. Government’s focus has tended to be towards approving new mines, rather than inspecting and assessing current operating mines performance.

Chief Mack asked the question if First Nations have the capacity to complete tailings dam reviews and gave examples of visual inspections that are completed by mining company employees and contractors. He also discussed concerns about the Gibraltar mine and the communication gap between the Nation and the company. Towards the end of his presentation he mentioned that it is important in his territory to move forward on the issues he discussed, as forestry is a sunset industry, while mining is on the sunrise side.

Presentation: Tailings 101, An Overview of Mine Tailings and the Management Methods Currently Employed by the Industry

Dr. Dirk Van Zyl, Ph.D., P.Eng., Professor, University of British Columbia

This presentation outlined the common disposal options for tailings, including at surface or below water along with their composition before deposition which can vary from a conventional slurry, to thickened tailings to dry filter cake. Dr. Van Zyl then discussed the methods of containment of the tailings, speaking primarily about dam construction.

He finished his presentation by speaking to examples of thickened, paste and filtered tailings which can allow for more effective storage of tailings.



Presentation: Tailings Management, Teck's Perspective

Chris Anderson, Projects & Engineering, Teck Resources Limited

Teck has corporate governance that require the use systems and processes for monitoring their tailings facilities with associated emergency response plans. They carry out daily or nearly daily inspections of their tailings dams with dam safety inspections by a professional engineer of record on an annual or quarterly basis. There is a major dam safety review every five to ten years. They have a tailings dam review board at some sites which includes a qualified stakeholder member. The reviews on tailings facilities that they complete are submitted to government. Teck has meetings with communities and Chiefs and Councils from First Nations to provide information related to mining tailings and other aspects of mine operation.



Presentation: Application of 'Towards Sustainable Mining'

Tim Bekhuys, New Gold Inc., Environment and Sustainability Director

New Gold has adopted the Towards Sustainable Mining⁴ tools and indicators developed by the Mining Association of Canada and adopted by the Mining Association of British Columbia for their tailings facilities. There are three guidebooks for tailings facilities that cover management, audit and accounting, and monitoring. A key element of the guidelines is transparency which includes reporting on performance. Each facility is assessed and given a grade that is published on line.

⁴ <http://mining.ca/towards-sustainable-mining>

Tim Bekhuys emphasized that New Gold is a guest on the land where they operate and must interact with Aboriginal communities. At the New Afton mine near Kamloops they have a joint monitoring board which includes the two First Nations and government officials.

Presentation: Consulting Engineers and Tailing Dams

Harvey McLeod, Principal, Klohn Crippen Berger

During his presentation, Harvey McLeod focused on the role and responsibilities of consulting engineers with respect to dam design and construction, professionals and companies. The term Engineer of Record is relatively new and can be difficult to give the person the authority commensurate with the responsibility for tailings dams operating over periods of 40 years or more. He went on to talk about the various key aspects of tailings dams with observations on some of the newer technologies.



Afternoon Discussions

Symposium Dance

Following lunch, the afternoon began with Chief Ian Campbell and Amanda Nahanee of Chinook Song Catchers, leading all the participants through an opening dance. As you can see from the accompanying pictures, it got everybody warmed up for the afternoon.



Open Discussion

In the afternoon both the panel members and presenters were asked to Come up to the front of the room to respond to questions from the audience. It also allowed some of the participants to share their perspectives on mining and mine tailings practices.

Breakout Session

For the last session of the day presenters and participants separated into six groups who worked with facilitators to discuss their thoughts and recommendations for moving forward. The information and recommendations were recorded on flip charts and by people recording notes on laptops.



Key Themes from the Open Discussion and Breakout Session

Environmental Protection

The extraction of natural resources has been the fuel upon which Canada has grown in the past 400 years. This has been important to both First Nations and the mining and minerals sector in a number of ways. Despite this extended joint history, there is a clash in perspective observed when First Nations communicate with industry and vice versa.

Industry often speaks about systems, regulations, technologies and processes used to minimize negative effects to the environment. Ongoing growth of business and the economy are important goals for this group.

First Nations communicate that there is no security, no future without a healthy environment. Their stance is if the land cannot be protected, or remediated to its original state, then projects should not proceed. First Nations participants at the Symposium expressed they are

“Can you put the land back to the state you got it? Why not? Because it would cost too much money. - Fly-by-night companies coming to our territories are not going to be here to clean up the mess left behind. Right now the only solution that is 100% no contamination is no mines in any of our territories.”

- Chief Norman Moore, Gitxsan Hereditary Chief

not against development, but would like to participate in responsible development.

New Technologies

In his first presentation Dirk van Zyl spoke to the need for industry to adopt new technologies and best available practices at mines producing tailings in British Columbia. Harvey McLeod also spoke to new technologies that were being utilized at some mines or being considered for current or future sites.

“As academics we do research on applications of systems and technologies. How can the system be more about the science? The science is very advanced yet the application is weak.”

– Dr. Dirk van Zyl, University of British Columbia



Many of the Aboriginal representatives came to this conference having researched solutions. In the afternoon many delegates asked about using new technologies for mine tailings. Some of them also had suggestions for technologies that are in use internationally or are in the final development stages.

“New technology is all over the world, we should be looking at this too.”

– Grand Chief Richard LeBourdais

Some contacts were made between industry and Aboriginal participants who agreed to talk further about exploring new, green solutions.

Further meetings, symposia or conferences to showcase these alternative green technologies would be advantageous. Government and First Nations have an important role to play as mines develop better solutions for environmental protection and remediation. Additionally, the opportunity exists for First Nations and mining companies to form partnerships in the area of new technology.

Some of the technology of interest to First Nations included:

- water purification and treatment;
- alternatives to mine tailing ponds (dry stack);
- innovative solutions or better monitoring mine sites (find problems before they happen); and
- alternative energy sources for mines and mining camps.

Improving Monitoring of Systems

One question from an Ojibway guest sparked discussions regarding whether mines would consider ISO 14001 which is an environmental certification standard. ISO 14001 certification would require the owner of the mine, along with all prime and sub-contractors, to comply with environmental standards, which can be higher than those required by regulations. This would also create space for First Nations to work with the mine and its contractors to set environmental protection standards collaboratively.

Chris Anderson of Teck stated in the morning that they encourage their “operating companies to adopt ISO 14001” as a best practice. Part of the ISO 14001 process is continued improvement.

In their presentation, New Gold explained that they use the Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) program which they feel is more transparent than the ISO certification⁵. The TSM program was developed by the Mining Association of Canada; it requires third party verification every three years.

“The morning of the Mount Polley spill there was heavy equipment being moved at the same time. Was this part of the problem? Something very small could have happened.”

– Industry Representative

“I don’t see any reference to improved measurement. That is up to the new designers.”

– Industry Representative

One concern mentioned by a participant was potential impacts to structures, such as tailings dams, caused by blasting and the operation of heavy equipment. The participant felt that these impacts were not measured or monitored as they were not considered to be a risk.

Better monitoring will help address key issues identified as leading to tailings spills or dam failures.

The independent report on the *Mount Polley Tailings Storage Facility Breach* noted that the appointment of Independent Tailings Boards (ITRBs) to provide third-party advice on the design, construction, operation and closure has become increasingly common and is recognized to provide value.

Water Quality

The topic of water was a key theme in both the breakout session and open discussion between industry speakers and aboriginal representatives.

Aboriginal participants were not just concerned about the possible impacts of mining activities on their drinking water, but also any pollution entering waters they rely on for food sources from salmon to bottom feeders, such as prawns and halibut. First Nations from Soda Creek to ?Esdilagh to Heiltsuk expressed concern of how the overall eco-systems in their territories are affected through the pollution of their water. Protecting waterways was referred to as a key challenge in ensuring eco-systems remained healthy.

“What happens to our people when our main resource (water) gets contaminated? How are we protecting it? We do not want to sacrifice our legacy for money and break down our land, air and waters.” – FN Delegate

⁵ Although not mentioned by Tim Bekhuys, New Gold’s only British Columbia mine is ISO14001 (2013) and ISO15001 (2014) certified.

With specific reference to the Mount Polley tailings spill, government representatives described the monitoring programs in place to measure the downstream impacts on water. These have involved the two local First Nations.



“There are ecosystems that are affected greatly by this. Look at what the government has done not protecting waterways anymore. We drink the water being polluted and so do the fish and bottom feeders we catch and feed to our families. This is not just localized, we need more action for cleanup. It’s a known fact there will be more spills. Our ecosystems join us all together and we need to focus collectively on the clean-up and preservation of the lands.

– Travis Hall, Counsellor, Heiltsuk First Nation

Capacity Development

A reoccurring topic of conversation, input and feedback from both the morning and afternoon sessions was the need for First Nations to build capacity to deal with these key themes. According to participants capacity development is required in both education and in human resources.

“We need capacity development so when I get a 1000 page report I can work with my people to help them understand and respond or participate.”

– FN Representative

The First Nations people require the proper training to understand reports and technical data presented to them by companies and government. Additionally, Aboriginal participants stated that First Nations do not have the human resource capacity to hire a team specifically to work with a mining operation. Investment needs to be made into hiring and educating teams to work on behalf of First Nations in all aspects of environmental protection and remediation for mine

tailings and mines on traditional territories.

The language used in the technical reports from the mines is not only difficult to interpret but is missing much of the inherent knowledge from local First Nations’ members. First Nations would like to be engaged prior to studies being conducted and to have helped create a collaborative plan towards measuring impacts and mitigating environmental risks on their territories.

First Nations need capacity to engage community members regarding these processes so that decision making can be made collectively. More training and education is required so community

members can understand opportunities and risks during mine operation, which includes becoming engaged through employment, training or business with industry.

First Nations stated that greater capacity is also required by industry and government. First Nations speak a very different language than industry and this language and relationship with the land needs to be incorporated into regulatory processes, monitoring, measurement and design related to mines.

Relationship Building

A good part of the miscommunication between industry and First Nations results from their different backgrounds and objectives. Aboriginal representatives stated throughout the day that they needed to communicate as peoples to peoples while industry is often communicating about new developments and profits.

Technology, profits and resources are used by and created by people. Aboriginal representatives wish to be involved in a mutually respected relationship where there is room for industry to think differently and more responsibly about the future. Through this relationship trust can be established and many of the key themes outlined on this day could be dealt through an iterative process of creative and innovative development and sharing.



“We are talking about life and that is precious. We held out our hands to your people when you came here. If we only think about money, what will we have left when it’s gone? It’s not about money. It’s about people, our people and your people. Our grandchildren deserve a chance at life and what the land offers.”

– Milly Pauls, Tahltan Elder

First Nations expressed interest in working with the federal and provincial governments to collectively find ways to protect the environment. Again the topic of how to reconcile two drastically different world views could be accomplished was discussed. First Nations felt they had more at stake in protecting their territories than the government and they want to be incorporated as an equal in creating regulatory environments and best practices for mine tailings.

“We need to start using First Nations language, respecting the land. Industry needs to understand our relationship with the land and its importance to all living things. We hold responsibility to think of the next 7 generations.”

– FN Representative

Liability and Accountability



Many attendees expressed discontent with the way the Mount Polley spill was handled and is still being dealt with in terms of response time and effectiveness of clean up. As there could be more tailings spills in the future, some participants wanted to know how government and industry would be held accountable for spill prevention and clean up.

“This could have multi-generational effects. What about future spills? What if people have to live with this thing for many generations?”

– Lauren Terbasket, councillor, Lower Similkameen Indian Band

First Nations participants asked a number of questions about liability, such as whether they could sue the government. Some participants felt that if the government was issuing licences they should be accountable for the consequences of environmental damage associated with those licenses.

Summary of Findings

#1: Consider the Formation of a Mine Tailings Working Group

There were many high level thoughts and ideas that have formed this summary of findings which is based on the many presentations, the open discussions and the afternoon group breakout sessions. These high level findings will require ongoing leadership with representation from First Nations, government, and the minerals and mining sector. The topics for future discussions would include such items as:

- development and refinement of Emergency Response Plans to ensure better response for any future disasters;
- determination of accountability measures for all stakeholders in any given mine;
- determination of liability associated with issuing permits and setting regulations;
- address historical damage from abandoned mine sites;
- discuss the opportunities to create an emergency response mega fund, trust or bond for future disasters; and
- recommendations for improving legislated environmental standards.

#2: Support Innovators and Green Technology

First Nations are interested in moving forward with development. Economic and socio-demographic recovery are challenges that must be overcome in order for First Nations to assume their position as equal partners in Canada. There is a strong desire from First Nations to explore more responsible, sustainable ways of development. Lack of expertise, people and capital prevents First Nations from engaging with innovations and leveraging new technologies to support and participate in developments.

The topic of green and innovative technology was a key theme throughout the day. It is a recommendation that investment be made into launching a working group of First Nations leaders from across British Columbia to oversee a study of mine tailing innovations of international scope.

#3: Desire to establish a Central Point for Mine Tailings Information

Throughout the day many delegates stated they had looked for a central point where they could get reliable, non-partisan information on the Mount Polley tailings spill. It is a strong recommendation that a web-site with a communications strategy be completed to ensure there is one place for people to find reports, upcoming initiatives and current events.

This site would be a tool for the Mine Tailings Working Group to share their discussions, progress and work. Should the study move forward for mine tailings innovation and green technology this online information centre would be the central point of communication for the project.

#4: Need to Build Capacity for All Parties

Consideration of an investment and long term commitment to support the capacity of First Nations to become involved as partners in British Columbia's economic development plans with a foundation of welcoming mines into First Nations' Traditional Territories.

Technical training is required for First Nations representatives to understand the various reports they receive from the minerals and mining sector and governments. On the flipside, governments and industry should engage First Nations early on and give consideration to their thoughts and ideas so that mineral exploration and mining plans reflect First Nations concerns and interests. In this way agreement and understanding are developed early on, thus increasing chances of responsible and cooperative development.

It is recommended a pilot project be developed to incorporate early engagement imbued with technical training for First Nations and cultural competency training for government and the minerals and mining sector. For this pilot project to succeed, there will need to be funds for the First Nation to hire a technical team for participation in the engagement process. This technical team will also be responsible for the creation of cultural education and sharing of inherent knowledge linked to reducing or mitigating any environmental impacts, ongoing monitoring and management.

While First Nations are the usual target when discussing capacity gaps, the reality is that governments and industry also can lack the capacity to understand development and sustainability planning from a First Nations perspective. As highlighted in the key themes section of this report, healthy relationships between all interested parties are vital for the province's economic future.

The Path Forward - Recommendation

Further Dialogue Sessions

Aboriginal representatives were able to come to Vancouver for this event in large part due to the generous travel subsidy, which was provided by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The group expressed that this one-day session was very positive and it was an important and vital first step. There was wide acceptance that more dialogue sessions are needed.

People and Tailings Dams Symposium

It is a recommendation from some participants that smaller regional dialogue sessions be implemented across British Columbia⁶. Others were more in favour of a smaller working group of representatives of First Nations, the minerals and mining sector and government to complete a working paper to present to the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines. Travel support will be needed to ensure Aboriginal representatives are able to attend.

More dialogue by a smaller working group would assist First Nations on further planning the key themes and recommendations for government. It could then inform the creation of the Mine Tailings Working Group.

Conclusions

Dialogue sessions, such as the People and Tailings Dams Symposium, where First Nations traditional knowledge and cultural information sharing happens between First Nations, the minerals and mining sector, and Government are crucial to strengthening working relationships between the groups. We all share this land and agree that it should be protected for future generations. With this in mind, working together on strategies to get there is the next step.

The Symposium provided information on current and new technologies used in the design, construction and operation of tailings impoundments in British Columbia and elsewhere in the world. While considerable progress was made during the day, many in the audience were left with concerns and questions. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the main recommendations is to continue the dialogue with a focused working group representing First Nations, government and the minerals and mining sector.



Following up on the recommendations in this report have the potential to significantly increase economic development and investment in British Columbia through establishing common goals, standards, processes and regulations supported by First Nations, government and the minerals and mining sector. The best way forward is for First Nations to work with the minerals and mining sector and government to address how to improve the building and monitoring of mine tailings facilities.

⁶ The British Columbia First Nations Energy and Mine Council has held one regional meeting on mine tailings in Williams Lake and are planning more.

Thank You



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