

Abandoned Mines in Northern Canada

Volume 1, Issue 2

Summer 2010

Special points of interest:

- Summary of our first year
- Our new students
- Summer Research Highlights
- Research Plans for 2010-11

Inside this issue:

Schefferville Arctic Expansion	2
Déline Report	3
Giant Mine	4
Pine Point Report	5
Labrador City Looking Ahead	6
Our Students	7
Who Are We?	8

One Year of Progress

It is hard to believe that the project is already one year old!! Since we first received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada SSHRC), we have been extremely busy.

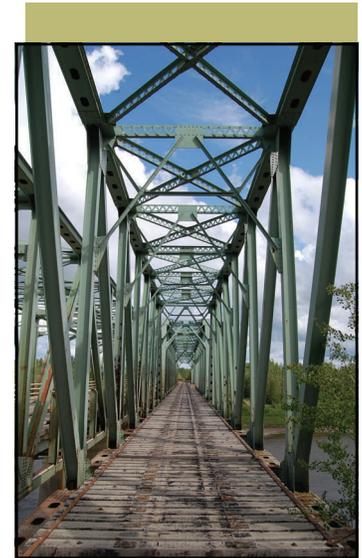
In this issue, we want to tell you a bit about some of the exciting research and collaborative work that is taking place in First Nations Communities across northern Canada. More specifically, you will find news on what has been happening in Déline, Fort Resolution, Hay River, Yellowknife, Labrador but if the awe at the City, and Schefferville. You will also hear about some of the work our amazing graduate students are doing.

We also want to highlight our plans for the upcoming year, including our new funding to expand our work to several Arctic case studies, and the seven new graduate students who are coming on board starting in the spring and fall of 2010.

Most of all, we want to give out a huge thanks to all the people in our partner communities who have helped us get the project off the ground. Without you, there would be no abandoned mines project, so thanks!!!

What is the Abandoned Mines Project?

The Abandoned Mines Project is researching the impacts of abandoned mines on First Nations communities in northern Canada. We are working with several partner communities throughout northern Canada, in the Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, northern Quebec, and Labrador. We have six researchers working on the project from Memorial University, the University of Winnipeg, and the University of Manitoba. We also have recruited eight graduate students to work on the project. We hope our work will lead to a greater understanding of the successes, failures and ongoing legacies associated with the history of mining in northern Canada.



Abandoned Bridge, Old Pine Point Railway (Arn Keeling, 2009)

Findings from Schefferville

Jean-Sébastien Boutet

In the summer and fall of 2009, I visited the cities of Ottawa, Québec and Sept-Îles and the communities of Matimekoshe–Lac John and Kawawachikamich in order to gather archival material and oral histories necessary for my research on the history of mining development in the Schefferville region, which is situated in the central Québec-Labrador peninsula.

I have now begun to translate this material into a historical geography narrative that will attempt to express Innu and Naskapi perspectives regarding the arrival of large-scale mining activities on their terri-

tory in the mid-1950s and the transition toward a mixed economy where land-based activities co-existed with wage labour opportunities at the mine.

It is crucial that this Indigenous encounter with the industrial world, the first of its kind in this northern region of Québec, be remembered according to local perspectives, particularly in the context of the several new mining exploration activities and development projects taking place across the ancestral Innu and Naskapi landscape today.

Arctic Expansion

Arn Keeling

Thanks to a recent grant from ArcticNet, the Abandoned Mines in Northern Canada project is expanding to include new sites, new researchers and new questions. Abandoned Mines researchers Arn Keeling and John Sandlos are investigators on a new project examining “Adaptation, Industrial Development and Arctic Communities: Experiences of environmental and social change.” Also working with them on the project are Dr. Emilie Cameron, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia, and Dr. Frank Tester of the School of Social Work at UBC and the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba.

The project, initially funded for one year, will examine the local impacts of and responses to mineral-driven industrial development and resettlement in the Arctic through community-based



Giant Mine Headframe, 2010 (Arn Keeling)

“It seems crucial that this Indigenous encounter with the industrial world, the first of its kind in this northern region of Canada, be also remembered according to local perspectives”

research and historical-geographical analysis. Researchers will undertake fieldwork in three Nunavut communities, Kugluktuk (Coppermine) in the Kitikmeot region, Qamani’ tuaq (Baker Lake) and Kangiqiniq (Rankin Inlet) in the Kivalliq region. All three communities have a history of engagement with industrial mining operations, and are currently encountering large-scale mineral exploration activities and development proposals in their regions, which present both opportunities and uncertainties related to work, economic development, social and cultural change, and environmental impacts.

The grant will support student research and training, as well as the employment and training of community researchers.

Learning About the Mines

An Indigenous Youth-Elder Program on Great Bear Lake

Deborah Simmons, Orlena Modeste and Anna Stanley

The Déliné First Nation is unique in having accomplished a major oral history and scientific research program related to the history of uranium mining in their traditional territory at Port Radium on the shores of Sahtú (Great Bear Lake). The community is now playing a key role in mine remediation. At the same time, mining companies have been engaging in exploration and there is a possibility that new mines might be established in the future. The vision of the elders is that younger generations can learn from stories of the past in order to make wise decisions for the future. The community is moving toward self-government, so this kind of learning is more important than ever.

In the late 1920s, the father of former Sahtúot'İnë Chief Victor Beyonnie noticed an unusual looking rock, which he showed to a prospector. Mining and milling for radium, uranium and silver took place at Port Radium almost continuously during 1932 to 1982. In 1998, with the publication of a series of articles about Port Radium by Andrew Nikiforuk in the *Calgary Herald*, Canadians learned that the Sahtúot'İnë, the Dene people of Sahtú, were placed at risk living and working at the mine site and along the transportation route during 1932 to 1960, when radium and uranium ore were the main products of the mine.

The Déliné Uranium Committee was formed in 1998 as a result of community concerns. By 1999, the community had come to an agreement with the federal government to form the Canada-Déliné Uranium Table (CDUT). This joint body developed an Action Plan to investigate the impacts of the mine. The work took place over five years, and led to development of

26 recommendations in the areas of community involvement, health, and the environment. The book entitled *If Only We Had Known: The History of Port Radium as told by the Sahtúot'İnë* was published by the Déliné First Nation, based on oral histories recorded by community researchers.

The Déliné Knowledge Project in partnership with the Déliné Remediation office invited Dr. Anna Stanley (University of Ireland at Galway) to work with us in understanding the broader



Elder Alfred Taneton tells a story at the Déliné Learning about the Mines focus group, December 2009

national and international context of mining, and scoping out what kind of research the community would like to see happen following from the CDUT process. We held a two day focus group with elders in December 2009, followed by a one day workshop at Ehtséó Ayha School with high school students in the science class. The result was a plan for a program in

which youth could work with elders to develop their own story about mine history on Great Bear Lake.

Dr. Stanley joined us again in June-July to follow up on this plan. At the time of writing, we are preparing to launch a summer youth research program. Our community advisors are Self-Government Implementation Director Walter Bayha and Déliné First Nation Councillors Morris Neyelle and Alfred Taneton (elder). Orlena Modeste of the Déliné Remediation Program and Doris Taneton of the Déliné Knowledge Project are the community research coordinators. Dawn Ostrem of Dawn Ostrem Communications will be working with our team to develop a radio documentary based on our research. This and other materials from the project will be posted on the Déliné Youth website – stay tuned for a link to this at the Abandoned Mines site!

Giant Mine Oversight

Patricia Fitzpatrick

Giant Mine, located just outside Yellowknife, has an illustrious past. The controversy surrounding this development, however, did not end when the mine went into receivership in 1999. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), as the land owner and manager, was left with the responsibility for cleaning up the site, which includes approximately 237,000 tonnes of arsenic trioxide dust located in the mined out areas in specially built chambers. INAC proposes to freeze (and maintain in perpetuity) the chambers to stop arsenic from leaching into the groundwater (and ultimately Great Slave Lake). However, the community of interest expressed concerns about several aspects of the remediation plan, and thus the project is currently undergoing an environmental review under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. As part of this review, the City of Yellowknife, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, and Kevin O'Reilly (acting as a private citizen) sent out a request for research surrounding the role of independent oversight bodies in projects.

An independent oversight body is usually comprised of representatives of the community of interest, and charged with ensuring that a program, or institution, is accountable for completing a particular mandate. In North America, there are many independent oversight bodies, including ones set up for the Sydney Tar Ponds clean-up in Nova Scotia, the Exxon Oil Spill remediation in Alaska, and low-level military flying operation in Newfoundland and Labrador. Each body has different structures, mandates, powers, and funding. The

purpose of this project, then, is to understand why and how independent oversight bodies are put in place for different projects, and to compare the logistics of different types of oversight bodies in order to recommend if, and how, an independent oversight body should be created for the Giant Mine Project.

Work on this project has been underway since January, when information was collected about ten different oversight bodies across North America. This summer, I am traveling to different locations to talk with different stakeholders involved in several oversight bodies. The purpose of this part of the study is to gain a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of three different models of independent oversight; how does each operate on the ground?

In addition my work, Natasha Afolder, Centre for Global Environmental and Natural Resources Law at the University of British Columbia, is preparing a comparative analysis of the legal and institutional aspects of environmental oversight agencies. In addition to adding the important consideration of legal form and drafting issues, Natasha will bring an international flavor to the study.

Our findings will be submitted to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board in September, for consideration in its on-going assessment of the project.



Giant Mine Headframe (Brittany Shu-wera)

“Our findings will be submitted to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board in September.”



Giant Mine Tailings (John Sandlos)

Summer Research at Pine Point

Memorial researchers Arn Keeling and John Sandlos spent the last two weeks of May 2010 researching the history of Pine Point.

Having mostly completed archival research on this case study, our focus was talking to people in Hay River and Fort Resolution about their own historical experience of the mine.

We conducted over fifty interviews in Fort Resolution and Hay River, and the stories we heard were rich in detail about the history of the mine, the townsite, and the Pine Point people. We are positive that this information will produce a rich



Pine Point Pit (Arn Keeling)

history of the mine, and provide a critical community resource to anyone who wants to find out more about this history.

Special thanks must go out to the people who helped us get our research off the ground: Rosy Bjornson at DKFN, Victoria St. Jean at Katloodeeche First Nation, and Paul Harrington at the North Slave Métis Alliance. A big thanks also to our amazing community researchers: Catherine Boucher and Frances Mandeville in Fort Resolution and Rosalie Martel at Katloodeeche. Thanks also to all interviewees who shared their knowledge!!

Near the end of our trip, we conducted extensive archival research on the arsenic issue at Giant Mine, attended a community meeting of the Giant Mine Remediation Project in Ndilo, and held preliminary research planning meetings with our community partners.

“Our focus was talking to people in Hay River and Fort Resolution about their own history of the mine.”



Community Workshop, Fort Resolution, 2009 (Arn Keeling)



Pine Point Haul Road (Arn Keeling)

Oral History in Labrador City

Jane Hammond



Carol Lake Mine, Labrador West (Jane Hammond)

“We are very excited to have seven graduate students joining us in the Geography and History Departments at Memorial”



Carol Lake Mine, Labrador West (Jane Hammond)

In March 2010, as part of my honours dissertation, I traveled to Labrador City to conduct interviews, gathering an oral history of the iron ore mine. During the four-day trip, I interviewed twelve current and retired workers and attended the SOAR meeting (Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees). I am using these interviews in combination with more traditional historical research to write a history of the employees’ changing perception of environmental and social issues in the area. The mine’s longevity developed a unique connection between

residents and the environment.

While in Labrador City, I toured the IOC mine and mill. I was able to take some pictures of such things as the refinery’s wet process, the tailings, and the new sustainable development that began in 2000.

Thus far, the majority of studies of Labrador West have been limited to political and economic issues. The ability to travel to Labrador City to have firsthand experiences in the town and mine site, while also obtaining the views of long-term residents of Labrador City, was quite beneficial to my studies.

Looking Ahead

In the year ahead, we will be reporting on the results of our research to community members in Hay River, Fort Resolution, and Schefferville.

We will also be continuing with the collaborative research program in Déliné (see pg. 3), and Patricia Fitzpatrick will be working on models of independent oversight for the Giant Mine remediation project (see pg. 4).

We are planning to further develop our research on Giant Mine and the Keno Hill Silver Mines, and our new Arctic case studies. Not only will we be conducting intensive archival research on these case

studies, we will also be working closely with with community groups, educations societies, and First Nations/Métis councils to develop plans for oral history research.

We are very excited to have seven graduate students joining us in the Geography and History Departments at Memorial (see next page). With their help, research activity on the project will reach a peak this year.

In terms of publishing, we have submitted a case study article on Pine Point to an environmental history journal, and we are beginning to write up some of the other case study histories as publishable articles.



Pine Point Sidewalk,
Summer 2009

We're on the web!
<http://niche-canada.org/mining>



Giant Mine Small
Head Frame, Summer
2009

Our Students

We have several fantastic students working on this project:

Jean-Sébastien-Boutet is a Master of Arts candidate in the Memorial Geography Department who is working on a history of the iron mines at Schefferville.

Sarah Gordon, a PhD student at Indiana University, will be conducting research in Déline on storytelling traditions about caribou. She will also be working as a research assistant on the Abandoned Mines project, drawing connections between caribou stories and environmental changes related to mining.

Jane Hammond will be writing an Honours thesis on the history of iron mining in Labrador City as she finishes her undergraduate degree in the Memorial history department. She will begin the MA program in September 2010

Alexandra Winton, a Yukoner, will be joining the Memorial Geography Department to conduct research on the history of the Keno Hills Silver Mine. In Summer 2010, she will be visiting the communities

of Elsa, Mayo, and Na-cho Nyak Dun First Nation to discuss her project.

Carmella Gray-Cosgrove will be starting the MA program in Geography at MUN. She is interested in studying uranium mining issues in northern Canada.

Amber Klatt will be doing an MA in history at MUN. She will be studying the ways that mining activity changed food consumption patterns in mining communities.

Heather Leard will be joining the MUN history MA program, with an interest in gender issues and northern mining.

Patricia Boulter's MA work in history at MUN will focus on the history of the nickel mine at Rankin Inlet.

Scott Midgley is a human geographer with an interest in resource development and geopolitics in the circumpolar Arctic. He just graduated with a first-class degree in geography from Aberystwyth University in Wales. He will join the Memorial Geography Department in 2010.

Contact Us

If you have questions, comments, or ideas for the Abandoned Mines Project, we want to hear from you.

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Who Are We?

John Sandlos (Memorial University, History) is principal investigator on the project. He has broad interests in the field of environmental history. In addition to mining, his research focuses on Native exclusion from national parks, and the historical impacts of wildlife conservation on Native northerners. He is the author of *Hunters at the Margin: Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (UBC Press, 2007).



Patricia Fitzpatrick (U Winnipeg, Geography) is a resource management geographer, whose research focuses on community participation in northern-based mineral and energy development. She was employed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on the environmental assessments of the first two diamond mines in the Northwest Territories. Her doctoral research focused on organizational learning in environmental assessment, using the Snap Lake Diamonds Project as one case study.



Arn Keeling (Memorial University, Geography) is a historical-cultural geographer specializing in landscape and environmental history. He brings wide experience in archival fieldwork and landscape analysis to the project, as well as a strong knowledge of Canadian environmental and resource history.



Julia Laite (Memorial University, History) brings to the project extensive experience as a social historian. Her doctoral work at Cambridge examined the modern history of prostitution in Britain, and her current postdoctoral work investigates the historical connections between mining, gender, and sexual labour in Northern Canada.



Deborah Simmons (U Manitoba, Native Studies/Natural Resources Institute; SENES Consultants Ltd., Yellowknife, NWT) brings to the team a wealth of experience as a social scientist specializing in indigenous knowledge, cooperative resource management, political ecology, and participatory research methodologies. From 1999-2004, Dr. Simmons implemented the community research components of the Sahtu land use planning process and the Canada-Déline Uranium Table Action Plan. Dr. Simmons is currently Principal Investigator on two multi-year indigenous knowledge research programs in the NWT.



Yolanda Wiersma (Memorial University, Biology) is a landscape ecologist and conservation biologist with a NSERC-supported research program investigating the effects of anthropogenic change on the ecology of the boreal region at broad spatial scales. She brings to the team resources and expertise in GIS and spatial analytical techniques. Through her recent role as a PI on an interdisciplinary Sustainable Forest Management Network (one of the Networks of Centres of Excellence) funded project, she also brings experience collaborating with First Nations, industry, government and non-government agencies on issues around sustainable resource development.