

# Abandoned Mines in Northern Canada

Issue 3

Summer 2011

## Special points of interest:

- Summary of our second year
- Summer Research Highlights
- Our new website
- Research Plans for 2011-12

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## Two Years of Progress

The Abandoned Mines Project has now completed the second year of its four year funding cycle. Although the time is flying by, we have already started to produce results from our research. Inside you will find highlights of many of our research projects and activities.

## Come Talk With Us: Our New Web Home!!

Our website has moved to

<http://www.abandonedminesnc.com/>

We are very excited to have created a website that offers enhanced opportunities for interactive discussion. The site contains information on the project and our case study sites, but also contains a blog where researchers, students, or community partners may post their thoughts. If you are interested in posting material, you can either reply to an existing blog posting on your own computer, or send text and images to John Sandlos [jsandlos@mun.ca](mailto:jsandlos@mun.ca) to related to a particular site or theme. Please check out the new website when you get a chance!!!!



**Abandoned Pit, Pine Point Mine (Arn Keeling, 2009)**

## 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. We are funded through research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Social Economy Research Network of Canada (SERN), and ArcticNet.

## Project Updates

### Déłıne

Youth from Déłıne have produced a series of radio documentaries in Slavey on the history of uranium mining in the Great Bear Lake region. The documentary discusses important places on the Somba K'e Trail from Port Radium to Tulita, along which ore was shipped during the life of the mines. The documentaries are the result of a month long workshop with youth, elders, and facilitators on the historical experience of uranium mining in the community. You can find the documentaries on the Déłıne Youth Radio website at

[http://delineradio.ca/Abandoned\\_Mines/Abandoned\\_Mines.html](http://delineradio.ca/Abandoned_Mines/Abandoned_Mines.html).

Thanks to Deb Simmons, Orlena Modeste, and everyone else in Déłıne who made this project such a success!!!

Currently, our graduate student Carmella Gray-Cosgrove is working in Déłıne on the issue of historical representations of the Port Radium mines in art and literature.



Pine Point Waste Rock (J. Sandlos 2010)



Pine Point Pit (J. Sandlos, 2010)

### Keno Hill Silver Mine

Our graduate student Allie Winton has been in the Yukon much of this summer, where she is launching her research on the history of the Keno Hill Silver Mine along with the issues surrounding the remediation and redevelopment of the site.

### South Slave Region

John Sandlos and Arn Keeling continued their work in the Great Slave Lake region. In spring 2011 they reported research results on Pine Point at community workshops in Fort Resolution and Katlodeeche First Nation. They also continued archival and oral history research on Giant Mine in partnership with the Goyatiko Language Society and Yellowknives Dene First Nation. John and Arn will also be having an article published in early 2012 on the history of Pine Point in the journal *Environment and History*. Thanks to everyone who helped us with the workshops and the research!!

If you are interested in John and Arn's earlier article on northern mining in the journal *Environmental Justice*, it is an open access publication available [here](#).



Pine Point (J. Sandlos 2010)

## Project Updates

### Giant Mine Oral History and Environmental Assessment

Patricia Fitzpatrick has travelled extensively for research on the oversight of environmental assessment processes. She will be completing a report in EA oversight in July and submitting it to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board in advance of hearings on the Giant Mine Remediation Project EA hearings in the fall. Members of the Abandoned Mines Research team are also planning to support and participate in a fall workshop organized by Alternatives North dealing with the issue of perpetual care sites (i.e., radioactive wastes sites) as it applies to the proposed freezing of arsenic trioxide dust in perpetuity in fourteen chambers in the abandoned Giant Mine.

John Sandlos and Arn Keeling also continued work on the history of Giant Mine in Yellowknife with the Goyatiko Language Society. Goyatiko has completed many oral history interviews asking residents in Ndilo and Dettah to recall their experiences in the mine. We are hoping to start communicating the results of this research soon.



Rankin Inlet History Workshop, August 2011 (Photo by P. Boulter)

### Rankin Inlet/Arctic Mining

Work on the history and geography of Arctic mining is funded by ArcticNet. This summer, graduate student Scott Midgley visited abandoned mining communities and participated in a field school on Svalbard, Norway. In addition, we are launching oral history fieldwork at Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, home of Canada's first Arctic mine. The Rankin Inlet nickel mine (1957-1962) was an important part of the history of the Kivalliq Region, and one of the first mines in Canada to employ indigenous people underground. A team of researchers, including Arn Keeling, Peter Irniq, a cultural consultant and former Commissioner of Nunavut, Pallulaaq Friesen, a local Rankin Inlet student, Jordan Konek, a filmmaker and researcher with the Nanisiniq: Arviat History Project, and Memorial history MA student Patricia Boulter, are studying the mine's history and its legacies for the community. The research team conducted a very successful workshop and several oral history interviews in Rankin Inlet in August. For more, see <http://www.abandonedminesnc.com/> or Jordan's blog at <http://nanisiniq.tumblr.com/>. See also a news story online at [Nunatsiaq Online](#).



Rankin Inlet History Workshop, August 2011 (Photo by P. Boulter)

### Labrador West / Schefferville

The Memorial Geography MA student, Jean-Sebastien Boutet, is currently finishing his thesis on the history of iron mining at Schefferville Quebec. Using oral history and archival evidence, his work traces the history of iron mining in the region, and the various ways that the Naskapi and Innu responded to the introduction of mining to the region. Special thanks to the municipal government of Schefferville (particularly Marcella Beaudoin), the Naskapi Nation of Kawawchikamach, and the Innu Matimekush-Lac John Nation of Schefferville

Masters student Jane Hammond conducted oral history interviews in the experience of women living and working in Labrador West during the Spring of 2011. Her major paper on the history of women in Labrador City was completed in August.

We have also been fortunate to have John Thistle, a Postdoctoral Fellow with Memorial University's Labrador Institute, working with the mining group for the past year. **Please see his feature article for more details on his work!!!**



Rankin Inlet History Workshop, August 2011 (Photo by P. Boulter)

## Mineral Development and the Remaking of Western Labrador, 1934-49

John Thistle

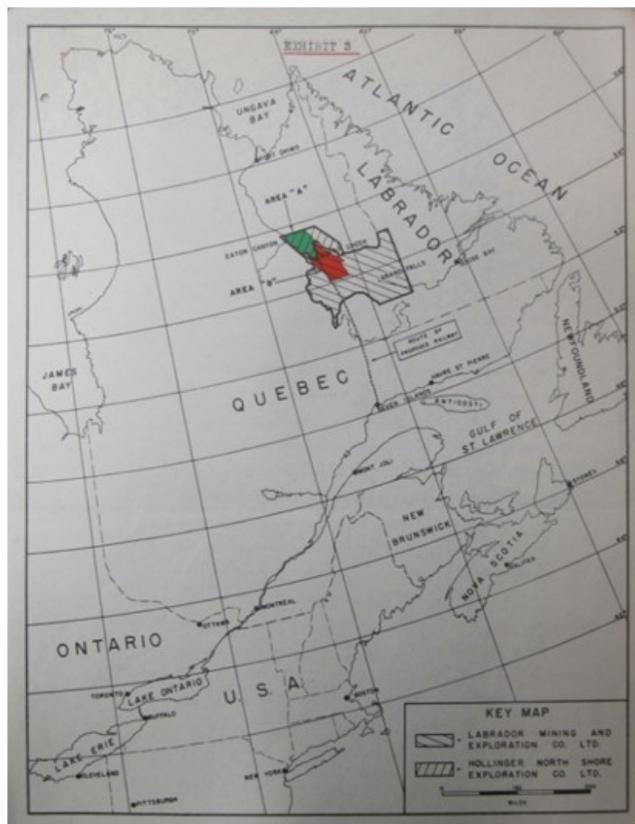
Hi everyone! My name is John Thistle and I am a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Labrador Institute and a member of the mining group led by Arn Keeling and John Sandlos at Memorial University. Since last September I have been working on the 'prehistory' of iron-ore mining in western Labrador, or the period when plans for mining projects in this region were still being developed. In particular I am interested in the Commission of Government period in Newfoundland history that lasted from 1934 to 1949, and how plans for large-scale mineral development in western Labrador at this time, including the granting of massive mining concessions to the Labrador Mining and Exploration Company (forerunner to the Iron Ore Company of Canada), folded into wider political discussions about the fate of Newfoundland society and economy that began many decades earlier when the first ores were discovered. At the moment, and with support from Memorial University and the Nunatsiavut Inuit Government, I am living in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, and teaching an introductory geography course that examines resource development issues in the Canadian North. In late July our class is being flown up to Voisey's Bay for a tour of the nickel mines – now that's a field trip!!



Voisey's Bay Field Trip (Photo: J. Thistle)



Voisey's Bay Field Trip (Photo: J. Thistle)



Map of Mining Concessions Granted by the Commission of Government to the Labrador (Source: GN3-2 Natural Resources, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland, Box 104 File 546-1 Labrador Mining and Exploration Co. Vol 1 and 2 1947).



Pine Point Sidewalk,  
Summer 2009

## Looking Ahead

We have many exciting activities planned for the next year. We are beginning oral history research on the former nickel mine at Rankin Inlet in August 2011, while in Yellowknife our community partner, the Goyatiko Language Society, will continue oral history research on Giant Mine at Yellowknives Dene First Nation. We will also continue to analyze results from the oral history research on Pine Point and report to communities on the results either in person or through our new website. At Délı̄në our research team members will continue to work with youth and elders on the history of uranium mining, possibly including the mapping of historical mining impacts.

Several of our graduate students are close to completing major papers or theses on mining history on northern Canada. In addition to **Jean-Sebastien Boutet's** previously mentioned thesis on Schefferville, these include **Patricia Boulter** on the history of the Rankin Inlet Nickel Mine, **Jane Hammond** on women in the iron mining town of Labrador City, and **Heather Leard** on Native employment in northern mining. **Scott Midgley** is beginning on a thesis that compares the impact of the Nanisivik Mine on Baffin Island with that of the mining complex on the Svalbard Archipelago in Norway.

We will also have new graduate students starting new research in September 2011. **Emma LeClerc**, will be conducting a historical mapping project highlighting the long term environmental impacts of the Pine Point Mine. **Heather Green** will be looking at the issue of deindustrialization in mining sites in the Arctic, while **Hereward Longley** will examine the historical impacts of bitumen mining in the oil sands developments of northern Alberta. Finally, **Tara Cater** plans to use her own experience doing fieldwork in Nunavut to study the social and cultural dimensions of mining exploration and development in the Arctic.

In addition to workshops in communities, we are planning to present research results at a various conferences or smaller symposia, including the American Society for Environmental History, the ArcticNet and International Polar Year Conference, the American Association of Geographers, **etc...**

**We're on the web!**

[www.abandonedminesnc.com/](http://www.abandonedminesnc.com/)



Giant Mine Small  
Head Frame, Summer  
2009

## 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.