SUCCESES AND CHALLENGES: ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN ENGAGEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION PROJECTS

JOHNSON SHOYAMA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

January 30, 2017

Dr. Joseph MULDOON, Saskatchewan Research Council
Vice-Chief Joseph TSANNIE, Prince Albert Grand Council
Brief introduction to SRC’s remediation program and associated engagement activities

What is engagement and why is it important

What it entails – barriers and aids

Experiences with communities

Questions and discussion
SRC is a Provincial Treasury Board Crown Corporation

SRC Environmental Remediation Business Unit has scientific, technical and management expertise in environmental remediation, as well as experience working with regulators, communities, Aboriginal groups and industry.
Overview of Project CLEANS

SRC is managing Project CLEANS under contract to the Province of Sask.

Multi-year, multi-million dollar project to assess and remediate the following:

– Gunnar Uranium Mine and Mill Site
– Lorado Uranium Mill Site
– 35 legacy uranium mine sites

Funded by the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada
Overview of Project Cleans

Abandoned Uranium Mines
Uranium City Area, Saskatchewan

- Location of abandoned uranium mine
- Pink: Gunnar Mine
- Orange: Lorado Mill

Lake Athabasca
Lorado Mill Remediation Project
Gunnar Mine and mill prior to building demolition in 2011

Photo provided courtesy of Woodland Aerial Photography
Gunnar Mine and Mill Remediation
Engagement

- We firstly and continually need to ask ourselves what do we want from the community engagement process?
- We need to define project objectives and communities objectives; and common areas of intersection
- Building trust is critical; must have and maintain social licence
What is Engagement?
Community’s Perspective

- Trust
- Two-way street
- Joint program planning
- Long-term relationship
- Level of decision making – magnitude dependent
What is Community Engagement from a Project Perspective

Something we have to do or want to do?

What does the Policy say?

The question we ask ourselves: “Are we willing to do what it REALLY takes to make community engagement real?”

In other words change our plans based on results – Give communities a level of control

Requires cultural change within workplace
Most Appropriate Forums

- Open Forums and Presentations
- Workshops
- One on One’s
- Continual Feedback
- Language Translation
- Media
- Elders and Traditional Protocol
Meetings and Tours/Consultations
Barriers to Community Engagement

- Timing & Isolation
- Priorities
- Capacity
- History
- Preparation and Awareness
Four Important Aids to Community Engagement

CAPACITY AND TRANSPARENCY

- Human and monetary – dedicated resources, cultural change and commitment
- Say to all - what you need or want; listen and adjust; and do what you say; always be open

PATIENCE AND DETERMINATION

- If you are genuinely interested in community engagement, let it show, you may be surprised at the positive response you receive and the trust that can be built
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

If employees and community members feel that they are part of doing something of benefit to the community and take ownership, IT CAN BE A VERY POWERFUL FORCE.
Community Engagement

Truly worth every effort by all involved!
SRC organized:
- Start early; use local knowledge
- Capacity building before work began (e.g., construction safety and asbestos abatement)
- Hire local personnel
- Use local ideas to solve tech. and comm. challenges

We learned:
- Regional economic benefit takes foresight and commitment
- Consult local businesses and residents for cost-effective logistics planning
- Facilitate employment readiness
- Manage expectations on all sides
Summary

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
SRC’s Aboriginal Mentorship Program

Community Leaders visit the Gunnar mine and mill site
Questions and Discussion