



## **APPROACHES TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COVID-19**

Members of the Mining Association of Canada (MAC) recognize that it is their collective role to meet society's needs for minerals, metals and energy products in the most socially, economically and environmentally responsible way. MAC members continue to demonstrate their strong commitments to responsible resource development through the COVID-19 health crisis and employee and community health, safety and well-being remain top priorities for the industry.

Through Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM), MAC members have comprehensive systems in place to protect employees and to work closely and respectfully with local and Indigenous communities. Over the past several weeks MAC members have been coming together to share their pandemic response plans, including how they are working with Indigenous partners during this unprecedented health crisis. This document provides a summary of evolving good practices being implemented by MAC members in Canada. There is no "one size fits all" approach to this crisis and a company's approach to Indigenous and community engagement should be adaptable to the interests, needs and concerns of Indigenous and local communities.

### Communication with Communities

There has been a pause in formal regulatory consultations as a result of COVID-19. However, maintaining regular contact with Indigenous partners and local leadership remains critical. The COVID-19 crisis presents some challenges with respect to how companies engage with communities. MAC members were quick to implement innovative approaches and embrace the use of technology to stay connected. While face-to-face meetings are no longer taking place, companies are staying engaged through phone calls, email and virtual meetings. As required in TSM, companies are tailoring their engagement practices to how the community would like to engage and adjusting accordingly.

Examples from MAC members include:

- Suspending or postponing in-person meetings.
- Seeking alternative ways to remain in regular contact and share information with Indigenous partners and local leadership (email, phone, text, virtual meetings).
- Seeking to ensure that pertinent information about the facility reaches the broader community (email communications, local radio, social media)
- Reaching out to communities to understand what is important to the community and how the community would like to engage with the company during the pandemic.
- Working directly with Indigenous communities to identify opportunities for collaboration during the pandemic.
- Providing communications in plain language and local language (where requested).
- Ensuring that there is a clear process to receive, manage and respond to community of interest (COI) grievances, comments and requests.
- Responding to COI grievances, comments and requests in a timely manner.

### Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 to Indigenous Communities

Companies have acted to respond to the threat of COVID-19 and implement measures to prevent the spread of the virus to employees and through communities. Some companies in northern and remote areas have placed their Indigenous employees on paid leave to prevent community exposure to the virus. For varying reasons, some members have voluntarily placed facilities on care and maintenance to prevent the spread of the virus.

Examples from MAC members include:

- Health screening measures to ensure that employees are not entering the facility with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Adjusting operating procedures to enable social distancing (e.g. reducing the number of people in mine cage, staggering seating on shuttles, etc.)
- Increased cleaning and sanitation.
- Increased handwashing stations.
- Suspending Indigenous participation in environmental monitoring work.
- Instructing employees and suppliers to avoid visiting Indigenous communities (e.g. stopping to refuel).
- Establishing dedicated isolation areas in case an employee becomes ill while at site.
- Making isolation areas in camps available to community members who need a safe place to isolate.
- Supporting community self-isolation and security efforts.

### Working with Communities During COVID-19

Some companies are directly responding to the needs of communities through different types of support. This could be in the way of financial assistance, a donation of personal protective equipment or through in-kind support. A company and a community should work together to identify needs and opportunities for support.

Examples from MAC members include:

- Donating and critical supplies (e.g. food, personal protective equipment, medical supplies).
- Donating educational tools (e.g. computers, tablets, etc.).
- Assisting communities in applying for government funding.
- Providing logistical support for a community to access critical supplies.
- Assisting communities (financially and in-kind support) in developing COVID-19 response plans, assessing community risks, etc.
- Sharing technical guidance with communities to help them continue with development projects and keep workers safe.
- Accelerating payments or pre-paying Indigenous owned businesses.

## Partnering for Recovery

MAC members remain committed to maintaining their partnerships with Indigenous communities and businesses. These partnerships will be especially critical through the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, when businesses begin to ramp-up again and community lockdowns are lifted. Companies are working with communities and government to prepare for this critical phase.

Examples from MAC members include:

- Implementing measures to ensure that Indigenous suppliers are able to recover.
- Developing recovery or re-start funds to support Indigenous businesses as they ramp up.
- Sharing of good practice guidance and lessons learned between companies and communities.
- Working with governments to make sure that training programs will be available to jobseekers.
- Supporting food security initiatives, and small production of supplies (e.g. PPE).

## MAC's Recent Activities

MAC's Board of Directors has formed a COVID-19 Coordination Group, which is meeting weekly by teleconference. Through this group, MAC is facilitating the sharing of best practices among members, including best practices related to engagement and consultation during COVID-19.

Members of MAC's Indigenous Relations Committee are providing MAC with updates on how their respective companies are approaching Indigenous relationships during this time and sharing lessons learned. MAC has also been in contact with Indigenous members of the TSM Community of Interest Advisory Panel to better understand what communities are facing and whether/how MAC can support/complement the national Indigenous organizations' work to advocate on behalf of Indigenous peoples to ensure that they are provided with resources during this time.

MAC has launched a new webpage in both English (<https://mining.ca/covid-19/>) and French (<https://mining.ca/fr/covid-19/>) solely focused on COVID-19 that includes the following information:

1. MAC's official statement on how the association and its members are addressing the COVID-19 pandemic
2. MAC's COVID-19 daily update which provides detailed information on member announcements pertaining to the pandemic
3. Links to relevant MAC press releases focused on COVID-19 and its impacts on the mining industry
4. Links to COVID-19 specific websites that have been put together by MAC's members