

MAC Community of Interest Panel Annual Statement 2025

At the Inflection Point: Mining's Chance to Contribute to a Stronger, More Sovereign Canada

Canada's mining sector stands at an inflection point. Global demand for critical minerals is surging, clean-energy transitions are accelerating, Indigenous governments are asserting stronger partnership roles, and communities expect lasting benefits. This is a nation-building and sovereignty challenge: Canada's ability to build strategic value chains and resilient regional economies can be assisted by a trusted, Canadian-anchored mining ecosystem. The MAC Community of Interest (COI) Panel remains the unique, respected space where diverse perspectives tackle hard issues together so responsible mining can deliver on both community and national objectives.

1. The Panel's Work This Year

- Supported development of the **Consolidated Mining Standard Initiative (CMSI)** as a consolidated, globally aligned standard. Reviewed the Canadian guidance pilot and the analysis of potential unintended consequences of transitioning from TSM. These challenges appear manageable in Canada, and early multi-stakeholder engagement is already strengthening the framework.
- Reaffirmed that the **Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) initiative remains the externally verified accountability system** during the CMSI transition period.
- Reviewed proposed updates to the **Water Stewardship Protocol** and conducted **Post-Verification Reviews** for IAMGOLD and Cameco.
- Continued to review proposed changes to the **Tailings Management Guide, Operations, Maintenance and Surveillance (OMS) Manual**, and **Table of Conformance**.
- Visited the Northwest Territories and toured **Rio Tinto's Diavik Mine** — a leading example of proactive, partnership-based closure planning that is mitigating labour and economic transition impacts — and discussed legacy remediation challenges at **Giant Mine in Yellowknife**.
- Explored the changing regulatory landscape (Building Canada Act, Major Projects Office) and emerging issues, including the potential impacts or **Indigenous identity fraud on mining operations**.
- Held a listening session on **Red River Métis history** to deepen understanding of Metis identity.

2. Anticipating the year ahead: Responsible Mining, Nature Protection, and Canadian Sovereignty Are Intertwined

Local Communities and Indigenous people benefit most when resource development builds long-term regional prosperity while safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity. That requires a strong Canadian mining ecosystem capable of delivering TSM/CMSI performance, retaining, and creating value inside Canada.

Essential Watch Points:

- **Refining and processing capacity:** Canada's limited mid-stream infrastructure forces reliance on imported refined inputs, even with new battery plants. Closing this gap is

essential for domestic value creation, Indigenous equity, resilient supply chains, and strategic autonomy.

- **Scaling Canadian-headquartered “champion” companies:** Long-term community and Indigenous partnerships require stable, Canadian-based operators with governance depth and staying power. This includes staff, management, and board understanding of indigenous history and reconciliation opportunities. The federal policy limiting foreign takeovers of major critical-mineral assets to exceptional circumstances supports this goal and ensures accountability for biodiversity commitments.
- **Balanced foreign investment:** Early-stage projects often need non-controlling foreign capital because domestic pools are insufficient. A risk-based, transaction-specific approach can protect sovereignty without blocking viable projects and the benefits they bring to communities, provided these projects meet standards for ecosystem protection.
- **Indigenous benefit participation:** Meaningful and transparent employment, procurement, contracting, **and** revenue sharing agreements are used to facilitate the participation and support of Indigenous communities. Federal and provincial loan-guarantee expansions are welcome steps, yet critical-minerals projects require larger, earlier-stage guarantees and complementary tools to enable Indigenous nations to more fully achieve their interests, which may include equity ownership.
- **Standards as trust infrastructure:** TSM today — and CMSI tomorrow — provide the transparency and accountability that give Canada credibility in global markets and social licence at home. Integrating nature and biodiversity metrics into these standards will strengthen trust and global leadership.

3. Looking Ahead

The Panel will focus on:

- Policy and process gaps related to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, especially in light of Major Projects Office developments;
- Ensuring that mining approvals and nature protection, including ecosystem services and biodiversity safeguards, advance together;
- Labour-force development, to meet the growing demand from industry;
- Reviewing and refining the implications, and implementation, of CMSI in Canada;
- The structural conditions needed to secure community, Indigenous, and national benefits, including energy and transportation infrastructure, processing capacity, Canadian champions, balanced investment rules, and meaningful Indigenous equity or benefits.

Canada faces a defining moment. Projects are planned to move faster. The choices made now — about standards, partnerships, value retention, and ecological stewardship — will determine whether we look back on this era as the time we got it right or the opportunity we missed. By continuing to work collaboratively across perspectives, the mining sector can lead the way: delivering reconciliation, prosperity for communities and Indigenous nations, protection of nature and biodiversity, and a stronger, more sovereign Canada.