

7.12 First Nations and Traditional Knowledge

7.12.1 Ross River Dena Council

The traditional territory of the Ross River Dena Council (RRDC), part of the Kaska Nation, encompasses YZC's mineral claims within the Finlayson District. Section 4.4: Social and Cultural Environment provides an overview of the Kaska Nation.

The RRDC, on its behalf and on behalf of the Kaska Nation, have recently completed a Socio-Economic Participation Agreement (SEPA) with YZC. The SEPA is applicable to YZC's exploration and development of the Wolverine deposit and exploration of lands in the Finlayson District. The SEPA provides a basis for participation by all Kaska in: 1) project exploration and development activities; 2) the review of environmental, social and economic matters related to these activities; and, 3) the environmental assessment and permitting of the project.

The SEPA provides the Kaska with the following during exploration and development activities:

- employment and service contract opportunities
- establishment of a management committee to deal with all matters related to the project
- funding for education, training and local economic development initiatives

YZC will benefit from access to the local Kaska work force and from their support for responsible exploration and development in the Finlayson District. In support of this agreement, YZC has employed an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to assist in communication between the Kaska and YZC and to assist in the implementation of the SEPA.

In recognition of the achievement of reaching the mutually beneficial SEPA, YZC has also welcomed the RRDC as a shareholder of the company.

7.12.2 Traditional Knowledge

The EA Report Guidelines stated that traditional knowledge (TK) "includes an understanding of the functioning of ecosystems (resource abundance, distribution and cycles); land and resources management; social, economic and cultural conditions; and the relationships between these factors". The guidelines directed that YZC "must make all reasonable efforts to collect and facilitate the collection of traditional knowledge for integration into the EA Report in collaboration with First Nations communities and organizations".

YZC is required to consider traditional knowledge in various stages of the project assessment including the scoping of VECCs, the description of existing environmental conditions, predictions of environmental effects, development of mitigation measures, evaluation of significance, and monitoring and follow-up as required.

7.12.2.1 Actions to Solicit Traditional Knowledge

YZC consulted with the Traditional Knowledge Oversight Committee (TKOC) from Ross River Dena Council and has recently entered into a Traditional Knowledge Protocol Agreement (TKPA). The TKPA sets out that the RRDC and YZC agree to initiate the

process to gather, document and preserve traditional knowledge by working in a genuine partnership.

In order to collect traditional knowledge for use in the EAR, YZC is currently funding the Wolverine Traditional Knowledge Project. This traditional knowledge project is being executed by the TKOC in association with members and elders from the Ross River Dena Council, and interviews with elders have been completed. Existing information on Kaska land use, water use, fish and terrestrial wildlife use is being reviewed and compiled to assist in the identification and mitigation of the potential impacts from the project.

Information provided during consultation meetings with government and community members, including elders, were initially used in the mid 1990's to guide the development of baseline studies (Section 5: Project Consultation). In addition to the RRDC's early input to baseline studies, information provided in subsequent meetings to YZC by members of the community and Chief and Council were used to guide project development. It must be noted that YZC has not assumed that comments provided during meetings or during visits to the mine site, while perhaps useful to the proponent, are traditional knowledge.

7.12.2.2 Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge

The TKOC and YZC have agreed that a separate companion report to the EA Report will be completed by December 2005 to fulfill the EA Report Guidelines requirement to incorporate traditional knowledge in the EA Report and to ensure that YZC will not compromise aspects of traditional knowledge during subsequent project phases. Submission of a separate document has also allowed for additional time to review existing documentation and for interviews to be conducted after the hunting and harvesting season. In recognition of the principles of confidentiality set out in the TKPA, document distribution will be at the discretion of the RRDC.

YZC will incorporate traditional knowledge into the final project design work, the development of site-specific protection and management plans, and the development of monitoring programs.