

# Orphaned/Abandoned Mines in Canada NOAMI Reaches Out

For a number of years, MAC has been working with others to find solutions to the legacy of orphaned and abandoned mines in Canada, including the associated liabilities, human health concerns and clean-up costs.

MAC members participate in the multi-stakeholder National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative (NOAMI), launched in 2002 at the request of Canada's mines ministers. NOAMI is jointly funded by MAC, PDAC (Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada) and several federal, provincial and territorial government departments. It is administered by a small secretariat at CANMET, part of Natural Resources Canada.

NOAMI's work is guided by an advisory committee representing industry, government, and Aboriginal and environmental groups. The advisory committee has produced reports on barriers to collaboration, funding models, a system of classifying abandoned sites, a pamphlet on community participation in site rehabilitation, an action framework to guide future remediation and a website ([www.abandoned-mines.org](http://www.abandoned-mines.org)).

## Funding and Legislative Approaches

In past years NOAMI has worked to establish a framework for managing orphaned and abandoned sites. One task has been to identify funding options. NOAMI's 2003 report, *Potential Funding Approaches for Orphaned/Abandoned Mines in Canada*, concluded that while no single approach is likely to resolve the issue of cleaning up orphaned and abandoned mines, governments can take immediate steps to address remediation at key sites. The report led to a workshop in 2005 and another report in 2006, *Rehabilitating Abandoned Mines in Canada: A Toolkit of Funding Options*.

Another important task has been to review legislation across Canada to ensure that the approaches taken to orphaned and abandoned mines are consistent, certain, transparent, coordinated and efficient. In 2007 NOAMI released the *Report on the Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Framework Respecting Collaboration, Liability, and Funding Measures in Relation to Orphaned/Abandoned, Contaminated, and Operating Mines in Canada*. The report, available on CD-ROM, assesses gaps, limitations, barriers

and opportunities concerning remediation across Canadian jurisdictions. It also presents a summary of observations. The report's legislative, policy and program matrices make it possible to compare mining and environmental regulations and policies by jurisdiction.

Work has now begun on a toolkit of policy and legislative approaches to assist jurisdictions that are contemplating changes to their policy and legislation for orphaned and abandoned mines.

## Inventory of Orphaned/Abandoned Mines

One of NOAMI's early tasks was to begin gathering information for a national inventory of active, closed and orphaned/abandoned mines. The inventory would be based on compatible inventories in each province and territory and would include a system for categorization and priority ranking. It would cover all inactive mineral sites and include agreed-upon definitions and terminology for orphaned and abandoned sites. The inventory would be a web-based portal to existing inventories, with an easy-to-use map interface.

The Minerals and Mining Statistics Division of Natural Resources Canada has been developing a working model of the portal ([www.abandoned-mines-inventory.org](http://www.abandoned-mines-inventory.org)), which is designed as a stand-alone website that links to the NOAMI site. So far the database is populated with information on orphaned and abandoned mines from several jurisdictions. The inventory's official launch has been delayed to allow for testing by various jurisdictions. However, the system was demonstrated at recent conferences of PDAC and the mines ministers. The beta version should be available soon to the NOAMI advisory committee.

## Information Sharing

NOAMI had a number of priorities in 2008, not the least of which involved technology transfer. Sharing information efficiently and promptly with the mining community and the public is an important function of NOAMI. The secretariat distributes documents, including the NOAMI newsletter and other bulletins, to a huge mailing list. As well, the NOAMI website has been redesigned for better visibility and access to the program's activities and publications. The site is regularly

updated with information including NOAMI reports, workshop proceedings, pamphlets, announcements and newsletters.

The priority issues that NOAMI has identified, its activities to address those issues and its multi-year action plan have all generated interest, both domestically and internationally. NOAMI has worked with other initiatives to share information and has presented its findings at many international forums. For example, in March 2008 members of the NOAMI advisory committee were invited to discuss the challenges of orphaned sites and to present Canada's work at the International Roundtable on the Restoration of Mining Legacy Sites, jointly run by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), ICMM (International Council on Mining and Metals) and the Post-Mining Alliance. More on the round-table discussions is available at [www.postmining.org](http://www.postmining.org).

Workshops are the preferred vehicle for sharing information and getting feedback from the mining community, and NOAMI has hosted several over the years. November 2008 saw a workshop in Vancouver that explored different perspectives on the risk assessment process at orphaned and abandoned mines. Presentations and discussions clustered around the themes of risk assessment planning, human health risk assessment, ecological risk assessment and geotechnical risk assessment. A case study session allowed for more focused discussion of specific risk assessment studies from the viewpoint of communities, government, industry and practitioners.

The proceedings and presentations from this and all NOAMI workshops are posted on the NOAMI website.

### Communication and Other Issues

The NOAMI advisory committee is at work on a communications strategy to heighten awareness of legacy issues, NOAMI's work and the initiatives undertaken by federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions. One part of the strategy is to produce a six-year (2002–2008) performance report for NOAMI. Currently in development, the report will outline the impacts and benefits of NOAMI, the accomplishments of jurisdictional partners and the challenges that remain. The report will be published in both official languages, as a brochure and on CD-ROM.

At a 2006 NOAMI workshop, a recommendation was made to support a community-based pilot project that would build communities' capacity to understand abandoned mines. Using a modular toolkit, the project aims to increase capacity in areas such as community engagement, environmental concerns, legal and corporate matters, funding and partnerships, decision making and Aboriginal issues. The contract to carry out the project was recently awarded to the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources in Winnipeg. Three very different communities are involved: Ymir, BC (near the Yankee Girl mine), Virginiatown, Ontario (near the Kerr-Addison mine) and Chibougamau, Quebec. All three will take part in workshops and focus groups to assess, build on and adapt the capacity-building toolkit.

### Into the Future

The NOAMI advisory committee met twice during the first half of 2009, in March and in May. The latter meeting had the distinction of being the committee's first annual general meeting, and members, new and old, enjoyed a day-long strategic planning meeting. After a session to review accomplishments to date, the committee identified gaps, as well as future challenges and opportunities for the prevention and remediation of orphaned and abandoned mines, in an effort to chart NOAMI's future path.



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