

Government of Canada signs apology and compensation agreements for Giant Mine with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation

From: [Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada](#)

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Righting historical wrongs and working collaboratively to renew our relationship is key to advancing reconciliation with First Nations people in Canada. The Government of Canada and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation are working together to investigate the legacy of Giant Mine and determine a path forward to advance reconciliation.

Today, the parties signed three agreements aimed at renewing our relationship and moving forward to address the legacy of the mine and to provide socio-economic benefits as a result of the Giant Mine Remediation Project.

Negotiations first began in January and February of 2021 with a community gathering and meetings between the Yellowknives Dene First Nation chiefs and Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett and Minister of Northern Affairs Daniel Vandal.

The three agreements, called the Collaborative Process Protocol Agreement, Memorandum of Cooperation, and Community Benefits Agreement, were co-developed by Canada and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

The Collaborative Process Protocol Agreement guides how Canada and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation will work collaboratively to address the request for apology and compensation regarding the historical operation of the Giant Mine site.

The Memorandum of Cooperation describes how Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, along with other federal partners, will work together to address the environmental, economic and social priorities stemming from the legacy impacts of mining.

The Community Benefits Agreement outlines how the project team and the Yellowknives Dene are working together to help the First Nation achieve socio-economic benefits from the remediation project. This agreement includes funding of up to \$20 million over 10 years to support capacity building during the Active Remediation and Adaptive Management phase of the Giant Mine Remediation Project. The goal of the Agreement is to provide more certainty to the First Nation with respect to long-term project commitments.

An additional agreement, called the Procurement Framework Agreement, will be finalized in the coming months and will ensure a common understanding of how Canada and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation will work together on procurement matters.

Quotes

"When we met with Members of Parliament and Ministers in Ottawa and told them the history of Giant Mine on the Yellowknives Dene and Canada's broken promises, many were hearing this for the first time. After more than 70 years, we are finally starting to get our message through to Canada and see some Reconciliation in action. This is the start, and not the end. We will continue the work needed for an apology and compensation, and for our elders and our people to finally get back to land and water that has been healed."

Chief Edward Sangris, Dettah Chief of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation

"We cannot change the history of the impact of Giant Mine on our people, but these agreements are an important step on the path to healing and prosperity for the future. The funding in the Community Benefits Agreement will ensure more training and job opportunities for the Yellowknives Dene people, in addition to ensuring the long-term monitoring of the site, which after all will still have 237,000 tonnes of deadly arsenic frozen in it forever."

Lena Black, Chief Executive Officer, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, on behalf of the Ndilo Chief of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation

"Canada recognizes the tremendous work undertaken by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation on this important matter and appreciates the opportunity to continue to work together on the path toward reconciliation and healing. We are committed to moving forward in collaboration with the First Nation."

The Honourable Daniel Vandal, P.C., M.P., Minister of Northern Affairs

"We are renewing the relationship between the Crown and Yellowknives Dene First Nation based on the affirmation of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. By signing these important agreements, we are addressing the impacts that Giant Mine has had on their community and are committing to advancing these issues together."

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, M.D., P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations

"Through these agreements, the Government of Canada and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation are solidifying their commitment to working together on issues surrounding Giant Mine. I commend the parties on this historic achievement."

Michael McLeod, Member of Parliament for Northwest Territories

Quick facts

- Between 1948 and 2004, Giant Mine was a major economic driver for Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories. When the mine stopped operating and Canada became the site custodian, attention focused on the environmental issues left behind. The most notable is the 237,000 tonnes of arsenic trioxide stored in underground chambers.
- On September 18, 2020, the Minister of Northern Affairs approved the Type A Water Licence and Land Use Permit for the Giant Mine Remediation Project. The achievement of the Type A Water Licence and the Land Use Permit represents years of tremendous work by the Project team, community partners, rights-holders and stakeholders, technical experts, and members of the public.
- Remediation of the Giant Mine site started in July 2021.
- The Project's primary goal is to protect human health and safety and the environment. This requires long-term containment and management of the arsenic trioxide waste and water treatment, as well as cleaning up the surface of the site.