



Mackenzie Valley
Environmental Impact
Review Board

Lessons Learned

Drybones Bay/ Wool Bay
Environmental Assessments



The projects

- There were 4 diamond exploration activities in same general area
 - Snowfield Development Corporation
 - Consolidated Goldwin Ventures
 - North American General Resources
 - New Shoshoni Ventures
- Work consisted of drill holes, some on land, some off land



What MVEIRB did...

- MVEIRB assumed because they were small projects, they would be small EAs
- Spent time in beginning, modifying the EIA process to make it more efficient
 - Tried to omit some steps or combine steps with all 4 EAs
- Basically, MVEIRB narrowly scoped the projects



What MVEIRB did...

- In an attempt to be less onerous on small developers, the Board left more options for the developers in the Terms of Reference
- The MVEIRB commissioned an independent Cumulative Effects Study for the area
 - Recognized capacity issues for both developer and community in addressing important issues related to cumulative effects





The Issues

- Main issues that came up were:
 - Developer efforts to consult
 - Resources for aboriginal groups to participate
 - Fish and fish habitat effects
 - Gravesite locations
 - **Spiritual and cultural significance of area**



What MVEIRB experienced

- Realized the reason for referral only “scratched the surface” of the EA issues
- The big EA issues were about magnitude and general area, not just about the specific spots where the developer would drill.
 - This sticking point only became clear to MVEIRB more than halfway through EA



What MVEIRB experienced

- MVEIRB ended up going back to regular EIA process. The abridged process didn't cut it.
- Developers submitted very general DARs.
 - Had to go back and ask for more information from developers.



What MVEIRB experienced

- Cumulative Effects Study became a “lightning rod” for criticism
 - Timeliness of reports
 - Quality
 - Board bringing in evidence
- The recommended measures for archeological studies alleviated much concern over the project.





What MVEIRB learned...

- Make the process fit the “scale of the issues” not the scale of the development – a small project does not necessarily mean a simple EA process.
- MVEIRB needs to conduct its own careful issue scoping.



What MVEIRB learned...

- Smaller companies need more prescriptive Terms of References, not less prescriptive
 - These companies have less experience and internal expertise, need more guidance for their DARs
- Good environmental impact assessment process can help facilitate communication between parties over sensitive cultural matters
 - Snowfield and YKDFN relationship



What MVEIRB learned...

- Traditional knowledge can be used effectively in EA.
- Community and Small Developer capacity issues remain a challenge for the EIA process

