

# Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia's Aboriginal Engagement Guidebook

## Context

Mineral exploration and development has occurred for thousands of years in what is now the Province of British Columbia. Obsidian, chert and slate were some of the first rocks and minerals gathered, used and traded by Indigenous peoples before large-scale production began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Indigenous peoples and mineral explorers and developers have conducted activities in the region for a long time, and an important part of more recent history is an increased understanding of the value of building mutually beneficial relationships.

In 2014, the Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia (AME BC) developed the *Aboriginal Engagement Guidebook: A Practical and Principled Approach for Mineral Explorers* to deliver practical advice and principled guidance on how to work effectively within the context of differing viewpoints, expectations, and concerns of Indigenous communities, and how to meaningfully address them.

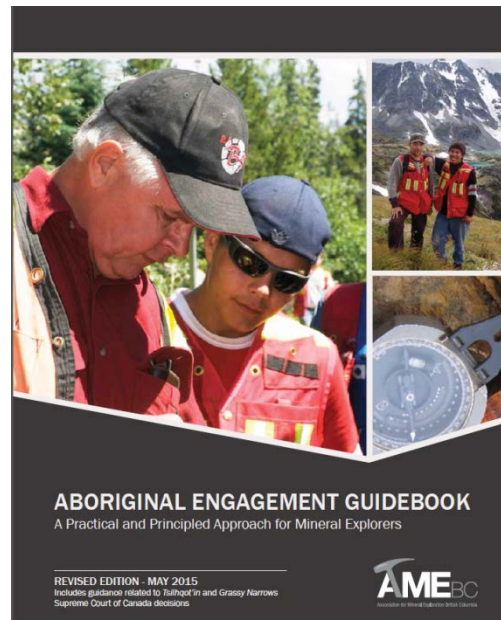
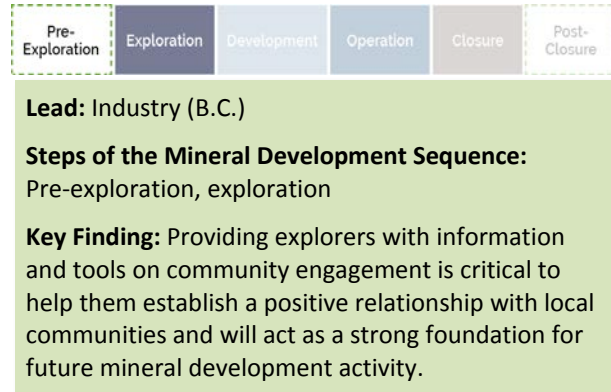
The Guidebook provides broad-based and pragmatic recommendations to explorers for working constructively with Indigenous communities in an evolving area of law, public policy, governance and business practice. It offers a realistic portrayal and understanding of how the interests of mineral explorers in British Columbia intersect with those of Indigenous peoples, both in the field and during the regulatory process. It is meant to be used as a practical tool for mineral explorers working in British Columbia to provide guidance on how to create a pathway for the shared prosperity associated with mineral exploration and development.

## Description of Measures Implemented

The Guidebook was produced with input from numerous external experts and practitioners. It offers clear and detailed information necessary for mineral exploration, including, but not limited to the following:

- The history of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia;
- Indigenous law in Canada;
- Regulation of mineral exploration activities in British Columbia;
- Indigenous engagement during the exploration process;
- Recommended practices and suggestions for carrying out effective Indigenous engagement; and
- Exploration-stage agreements.

In May 2015, the Guidebook was re-released with information on the *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* and the *Grassy Narrows First Nation v. Ontario (Natural Resources)* Supreme Court of Canada decisions.



## Results

Through its combination of background and context information and pragmatic recommendations, the Guidebook has met its objectives of increasing understanding of how the interests of mineral explorers intersect with those of Indigenous peoples and providing advice on Indigenous engagement. The Guidebook is now widely recognized both in British Columbia and throughout Canada as a useful tool for mineral explorers in engaging and reaching agreements with Indigenous peoples. Although it is guided by the existing case law and examples of agreements at the time of its release, its practical and principled content is flexible and has helped explorers adapt with evolving case law and regulations.

## Lessons Learned

Successful mineral exploration requires more than favourable geology, technical expertise and financial resources; projects also need individuals and companies with a clear commitment to socially and environmentally responsible resource development that includes building positive relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. As such, providing information and tools on community engagement to explorers is critical to help them establish a positive relationship with local communities, which will act as a strong foundation for future mineral development activity.

### For more information:

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The Aboriginal Engagement Guidebook can be downloaded at [www.amebc.ca](http://www.amebc.ca)