

Rethinking Mine Remediation: Community Engagement in Mine Closure

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Lessons learned from the Giant Mine Monster

- Creating the Monster
- Containing the Monster
- Confronting and Caring for the Monster

*“There’s 237 000 tones of arsenic. We don’t want that being touched or disturbed. **There’s a big monster underground.**”*

-William Lines, YKDF



Toxic Legacies Project, Communicating
with Future Generations Workshop
Sept. 2017

A Research/Remediation
Problem: Defining remediation
is not apolitical or ahistorical.

- **Containing pollution vs. living with and caring for ‘Monsters’**
- **Defining values and objectives of remediation beyond the technical – environment justice?**
- **Assessment of remediation projects**



“I think [remediation] incorporates principles of risk management that... if we take a risk based approach it's about making sure that the harmful substance isn't available to a potential receptor, so essentially removing that pathway.”

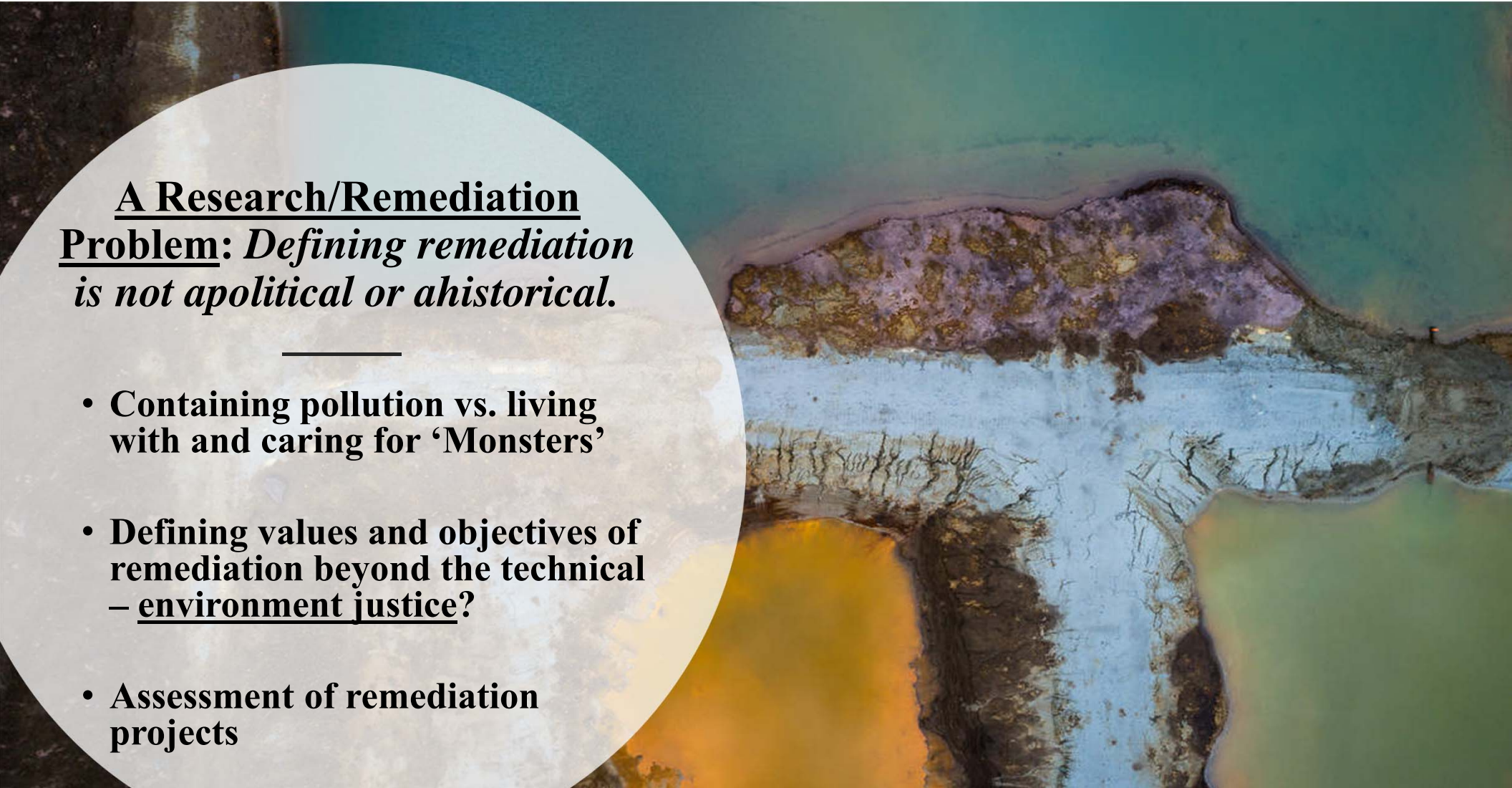
(Interview with Craig Wells, INAC, May 20, 2016)

“If they're going to earn people's trust I think they're going to have to go further. Like they've gone far and that's great... but there's more, and the more people find out about it.. the more people are going to be aware of this arbitrary lease boundary and how crazy that is... Or some responsibility taken right... something visible that makes people feel like, okay somebody's taking care of us.”

(Interview with Erica Jane, Representative for Alternatives North, May 16th 2016)

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*“On the one side you have the engineering/physical work of the project. We think they’ve done most of that reasonably well... **But on the human and social side, apology and compensation, we don’t have that.** Local political support for the project, not there. Ongoing research and development, not there. Independent oversight, not there. Long-term funding arrangements, not in place. Full disclosure of information and records, not there. No thoughts about site designation, land use controls. No comprehensive perpetual care plan. No environmental agreement. **And finally, no social license or contract for this project to proceed.**”*

-Kevin O’Reilly,

The background is a landscape photograph of a mining site. In the foreground, there is a large, circular, semi-transparent white overlay containing text. The landscape shows a river with reddish-brown water, surrounded by hills with exposed mineral deposits in shades of red, orange, and yellow. There are some green trees and a concrete dam or wall in the middle ground.

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The Cyprus Anvil Mine (Faro Mine): Context

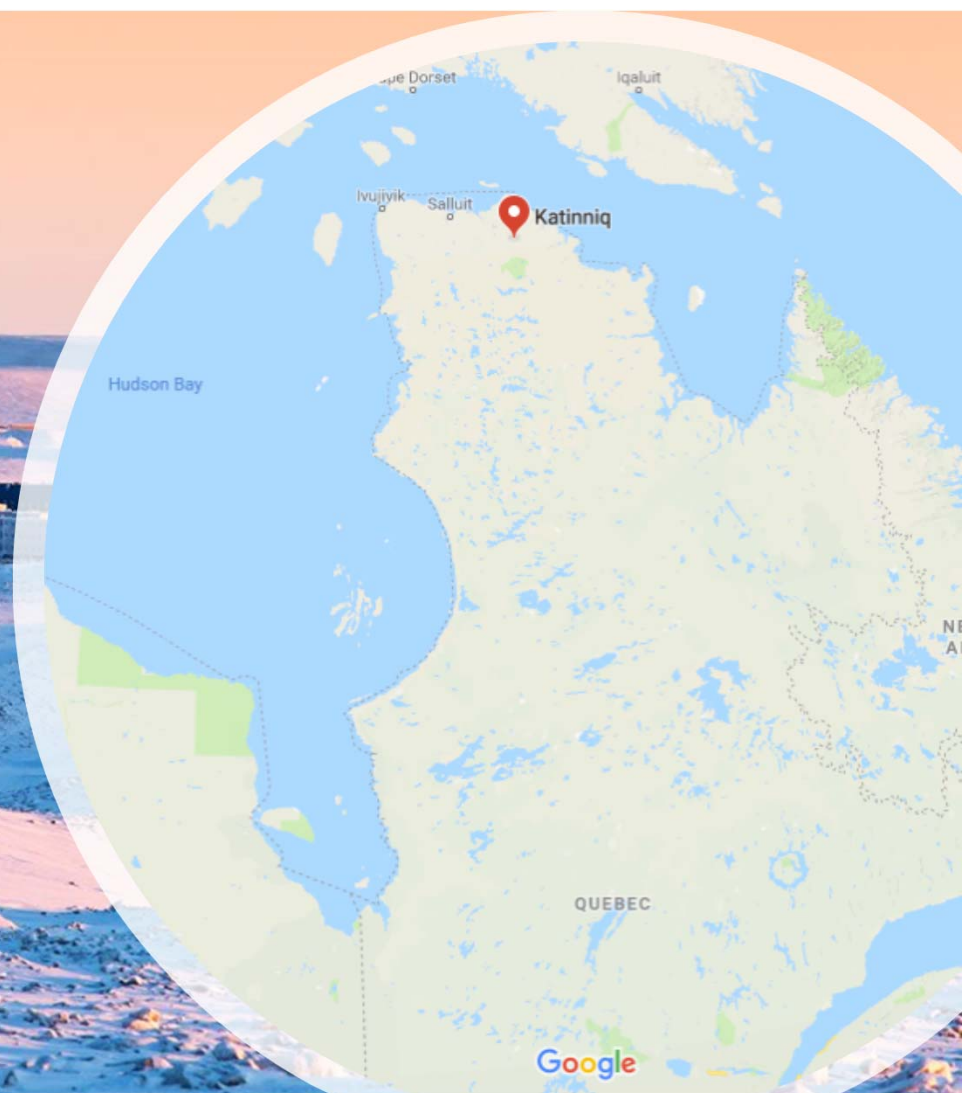
- Cyprus Anvil Mine operated from 1969-1998
- 70 million tones of acidic tailings
- Destruction of the K'asba zela' region of Ross River Dena's traditional territory
- After almost two decades, an environmental and socio-economic assessment is about to start

Faro Mine Remediation Project public presentation in Ross River. Photo: Nancy Thompson/CBC, July 2017



Raglan Mine

- **Planning for closure in 20 years**
- **New closure plan required every 5 years**
- **Raglan (Sivumut) Impact Benefit Agreement**
- **Creation of the Mine Closure Committee**



Research Objectives

- Analyze remediation science and policy across Northern Canada
- Living with and caring for contaminated sites
- Going beyond remediation as technical

“Effective reclamation demands more than a particular technological fix or planning strategy; it involves a candid discussion of the goals and limitations of reclamation projects, both past and present.”
(Dance, 2015)

Research Questions

- *How is mine closure and remediation defined, regulated, and practiced across Northern Canada?*
- *How does remediation unfold within environmental/socio-economic assessments and permitting processes?*
- *How are communities confronting perpetual care of contaminated sites?*
- *What would an “ethics of remediation” look like in Northern Canada?*

A wide-angle landscape photograph of a dry, cracked lake bed or salt flat. The ground is dark grey and black with intricate, polygonal patterns of dried mud. In the distance, there are dark, forested mountains under a heavy, overcast sky with grey clouds. The foreground shows some sparse, dry vegetation.

Methods for community-based remediation research

- **Traditional knowledge and remediation**
- **Avoiding narratives of harm**
- **‘Studying up’ rather than ‘studying down’**
- **Mixed-methods approach**

What would an ‘ethics of remediation’ look like?

- Remediation as relational:
 - Apology, compensation and land tenure
 - Responsibility to future generations
 - Creative opportunities for community healing

“For many people, Giant Mine is an engineering problem. For me, Giant Mine is a story of relationships failed: relationships towards people, the land, and especially future generations. Trust has been eroded, and it will take many years for it to be restored, if ever.”

-Frances Benoit,

“The Project Team has not effectively and meaningfully responded to the YKDFN’s continuing demand for a formal apology and compensation for past harm from Giant Mine operations... despite the Government of Canada’s current commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.... Failure to address the issues of a formal apology and a commitment to compensation are likely to affect the success of community engagement and the future of the remediation Project.”

-Giant Mine Oversight Board, *Establishment Report*, April 2017, p. 17

Living with Mine Wastes: Research Significance

- Environmental and Socio-economic assessment of the Faro Remediation
- Best practices for remediation
- Confront the challenges of living with mine waste for generations to come

It sounds to me like a good thing, the perpetual care of the Giant site. I would suggest that that title, that topic, needs to be accompanied by another one, which is: perpetual caring, perpetual caring for people. And I think it leads you to go beyond some of the very physical, technical stuff that we have seen here.

Dr. Ian Gilchrist



Thank-you! Questions?

Background photos:

Hartmut Dege, Development of the Faro pit circa 1967.

Jimmy Thompson, Jun 9, 2018, "This is Giant Mine,"
The Narwhal, <https://thenarwhal.ca/this-is-giant-mine/>

**Matt Jaques, Aug 8, 2017, "After the Mining Rush: A
Visit to Faro Mine..."** *The Narwhal*,
<https://thenarwhal.ca/photos-view-sky-over-faro-mine-one-canada-s-costliest-most-contaminated-sites>

Giant Mine site tour with Natalie Plato
(Remediation Project Director), May 2016