

# Building Relationships with Industry and Government for Improved Environmental Outcomes in Qukin ?amak?is (Raven's Land)



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PRESENTER: BRETT CHERNOFF P.ENG

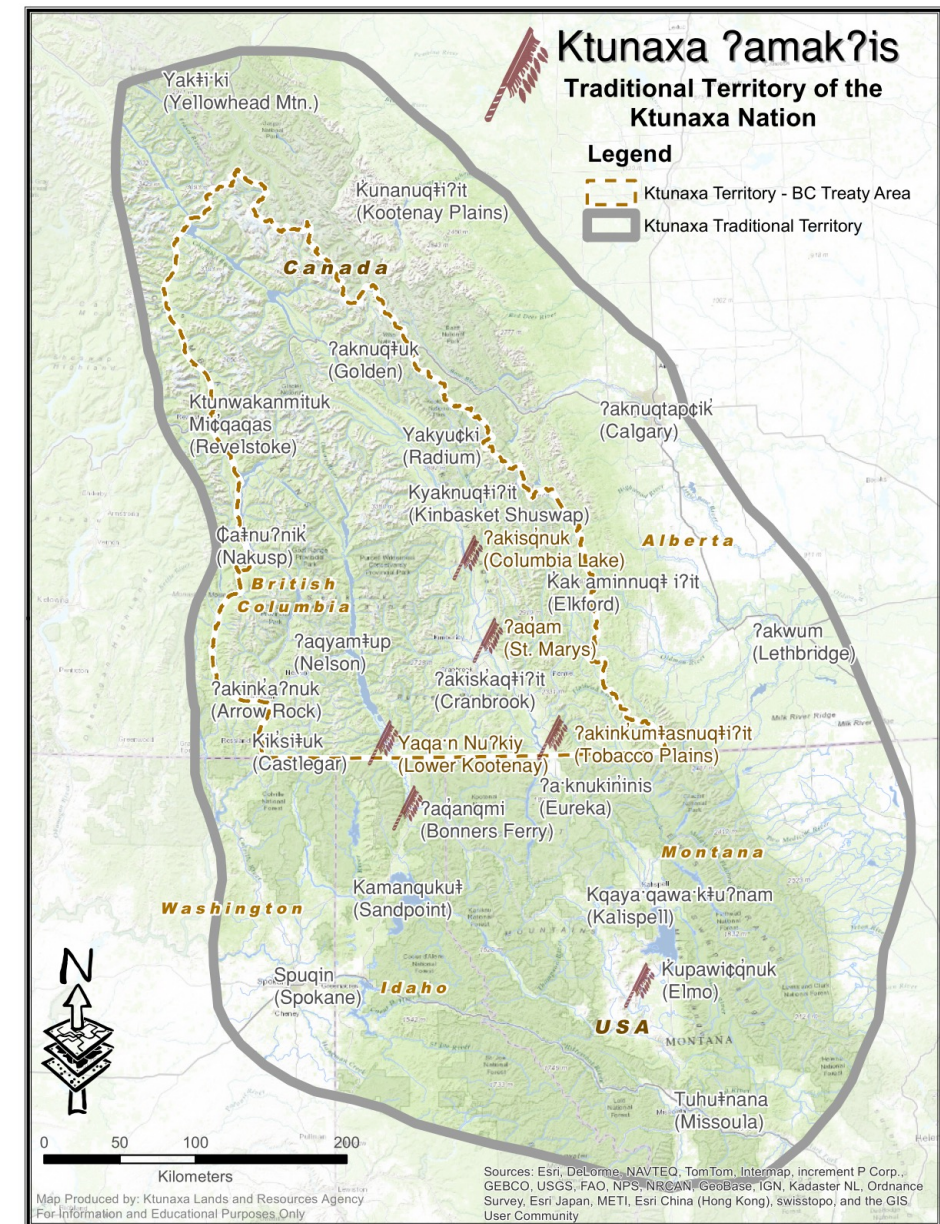


*Yaqit Pa'knaqti'it*

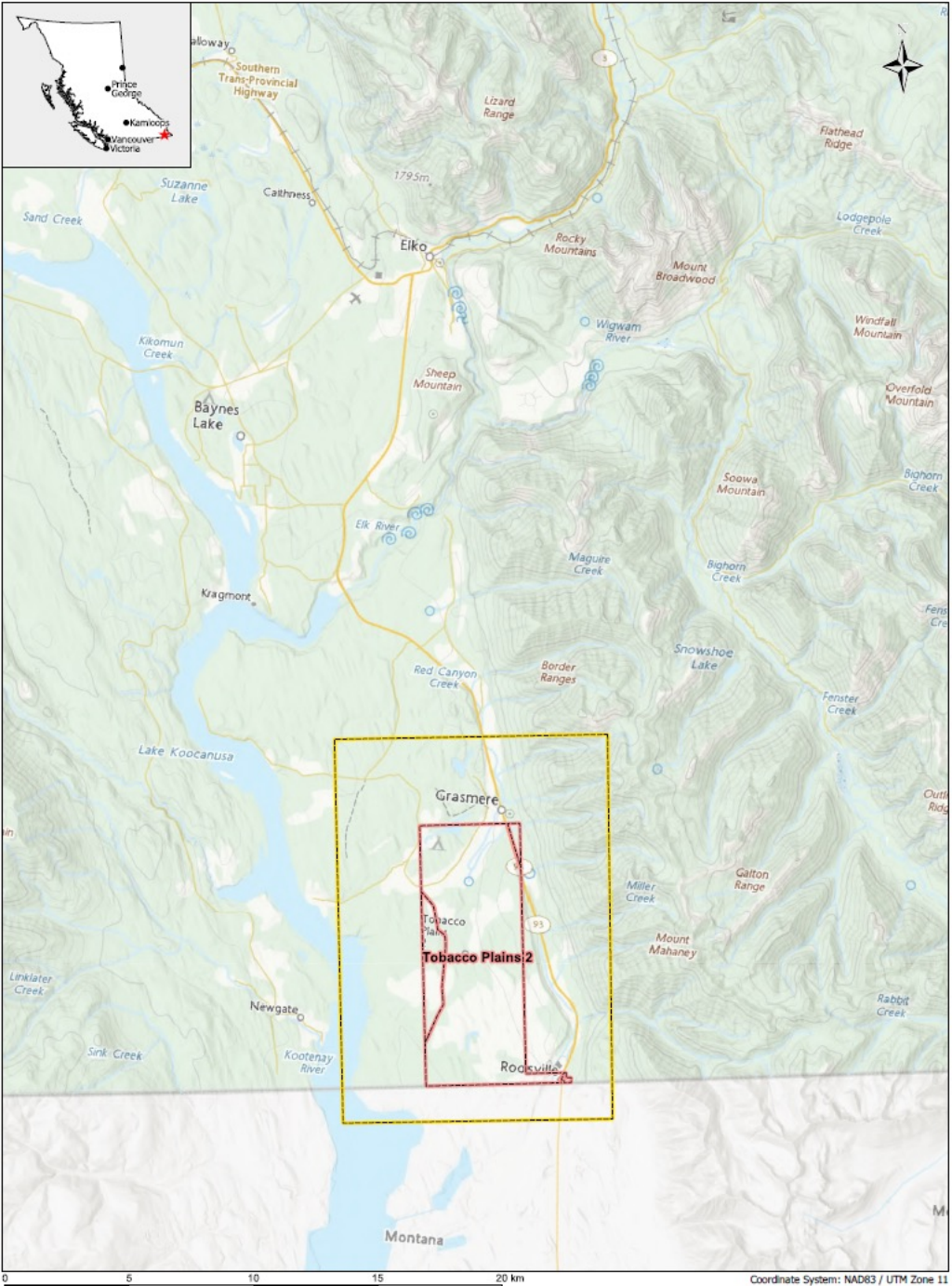


# Ktunaxa First Nations and Tribes in North America

- Four First Nations in British Columbia
  - ʔaq'am (St Mary's)
  - ʔakisq'nuk (Columbia Lake)
  - yaqan nuʔkiy (Lower Kootenay)
  - Yaqit ʔa·knuqti'it (Tobacco Plains)
- Two Tribes in the United States
  - Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
  - Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Ksanka Band)







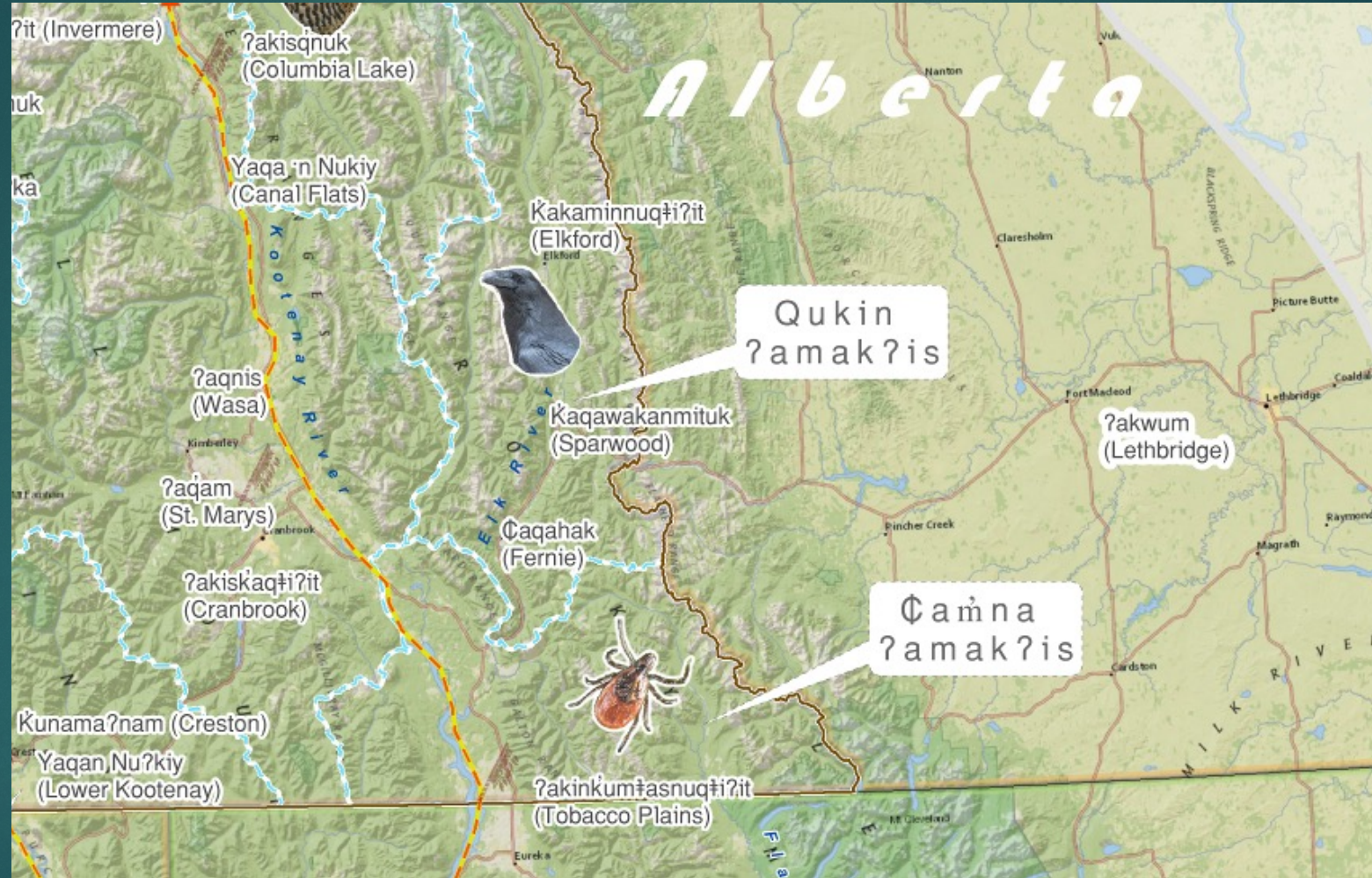
# Yaq'it ʔa·knuq'it First Nation

- ▶ The ʔakanuxunik' members of Yaq'it ʔa·knuq'it (YQT) First Nation are the distinct group of Indigenous people who have occupied, controlled and been exclusive stewards over their unceded lands that surround Yaq'it ʔa·knuq'it – all inclusive since time immemorial. In English, the word ʔakanuxunik' translates to “the people that are from where the water comes out of the mountain.” ʔakanuxunik' people are members of the Ktunaxa (Kootenai) speaking peoples of British Columbia, Idaho and Montana.



# Yaqit ʔa·knuqti'it First Nation

- ▶ Traditional Ktunaxa place names for area in SE BC.



Source [https://www.ktunaxa.org/wp-content/uploads/Traditional\\_Districts\\_D\\_v4.png](https://www.ktunaxa.org/wp-content/uploads/Traditional_Districts_D_v4.png)



# Ktunaxa Natural Law (?Aknumuætitił)

- ▶ The law of the land, ?Aknumuætitił (Natural Law), is the law for survival. The law protects the values inherent in our land. The land gives us resources to survive, and in return, we uphold our covenant with the Creator to protect and not overuse the land.
  - ▶ It is through this lens that we hope to achieve better environmental and social outcomes for ?akanuxunik'





# Strategies to Incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into Projects

- ▶ Workshops and site tours with community members and staff
- ▶ Regular Meetings with Elk Valley Resources (EVR) and YQT staff to discuss mine expansions, water treatment, reclamation, R&D, and other topics that could help improve mining in the Elk Valley.
- ▶ Engagement with new proponents NWP and North Coal
- ▶ Agreements and discussions with the Provincial and Federal Governments





# RECLAMATION PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

- ▶ Bighorn Sheep (kwiᑭqᑭi) Habitat Enhancement Trial
- ▶ Reclamation workshops for EVO – NP2MR and FRX → Seek to get Ktunaxa and ʔakanuxunik' input prior to designing reclamation landforms
- ▶ Expediting scientific research to create anthroposols which could account for the deficit of soils in the Elk Valley due to poor mining practices from the past.
- ▶ Direct placement of soil onto reclamation sites – allows for more microbes to create symbiotic relationships with plants and for revegetation to occur more rapidly than using stockpiled soil



# Bighorn Sheep(kwiᑭᑭᑭi) Habitat Enhancement Trial

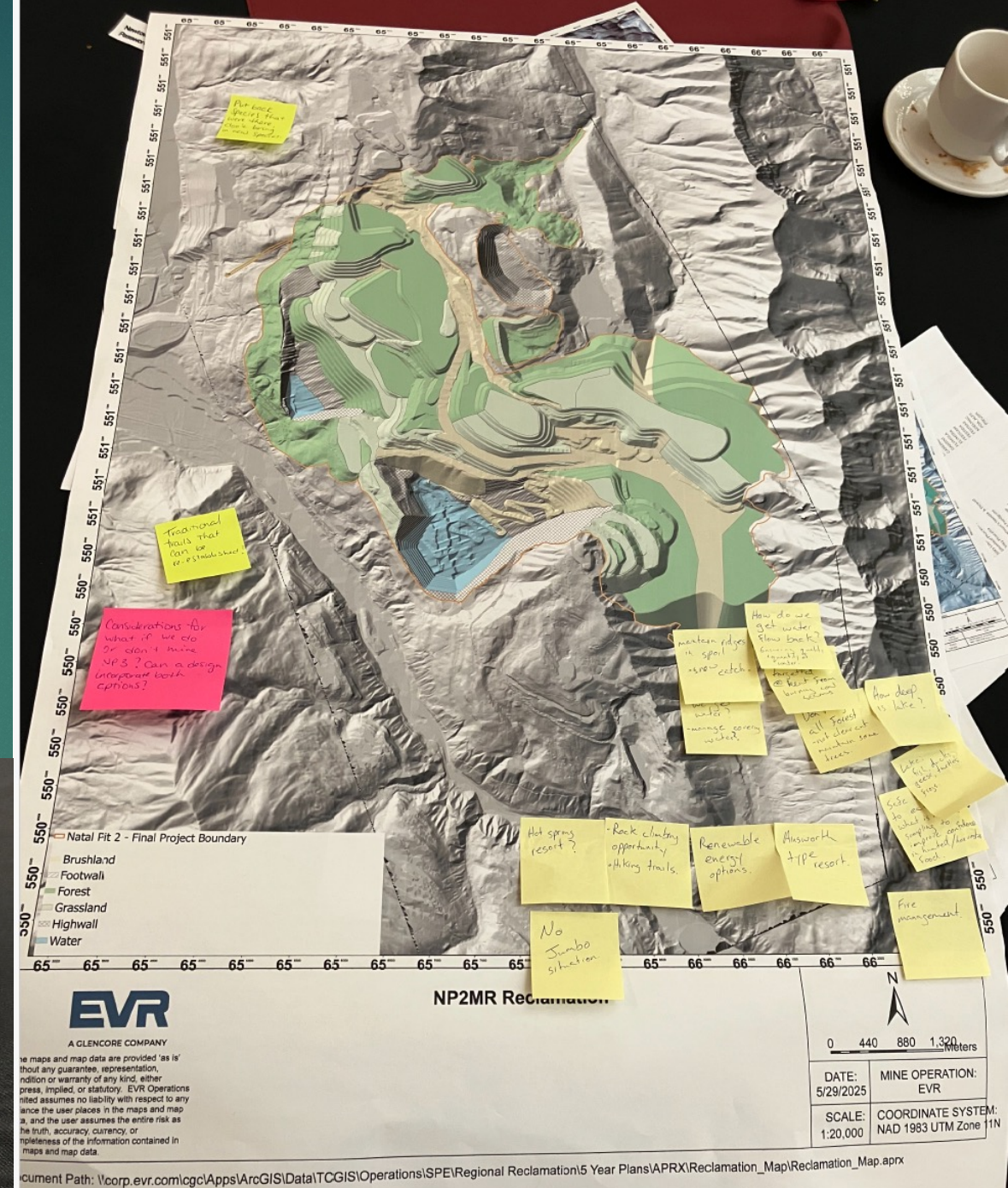
- YQT staff were retained by EVR to selectively thin forests in the alpine, this was also done in an area adjacent to a natural burn.
- The idea was to promote habitat (High Elevation Grassland) that is being threatened by climate change and mining in the Elk Valley





# EVO - NP2MR Reclamation Workshop

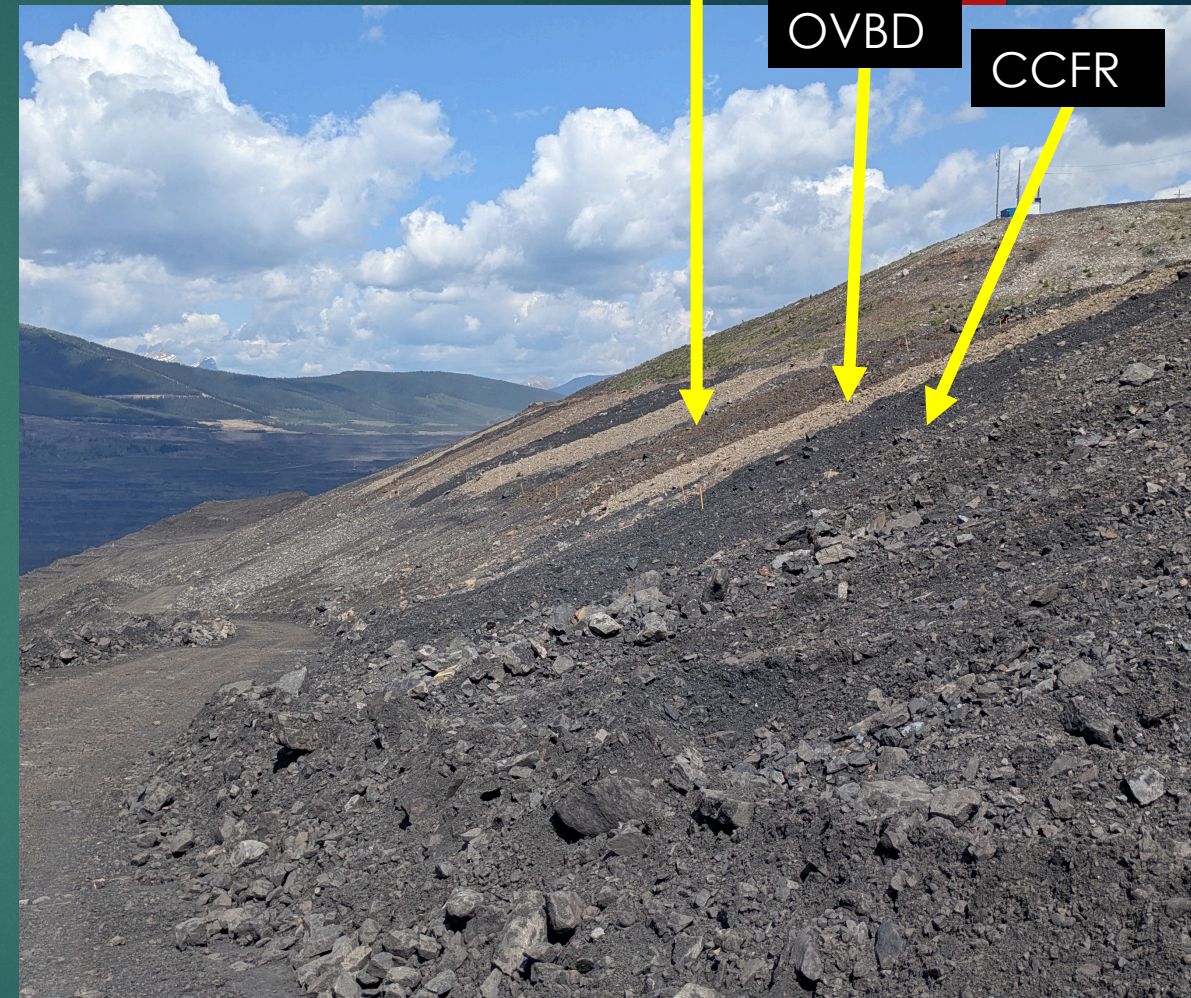
- ▶ 2-day event with field visits at EVR's EVO Mine and a workshop to discuss how reclamation could be improved in the Elk Valley
- ▶ Gave mine planners and engineers a chance to engage directly with Ktunaxa community members and learn about which values are important to them for reclamation





# Biodiversity Technical Advisory Group Initiatives

- ▶ Reclamation research for creating soils at FRO-Kilmarnock Spoil and EVO – Cedar North
  - ▶ Research trials from University of Alberta on development of anthroposols using different materials (Combined Coarse and Fine Rejects (CCFR), overburden, and stockpiled soil) to determine how well they grow vegetation
  - ▶ Effluent from these areas is already collected and treated anyways – which makes it a great place to conduct this research.





# BioTAG Initiatives- Reclamation research for creating soils at FRO-Kilmarnock Spoil

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- ▶ Our hope is that using CCFR could prove to be a more effective way to retain moisture in soil than creating mesic landforms (mainly moguls that trap snow)



# Engagement on the Fording River Extension Project

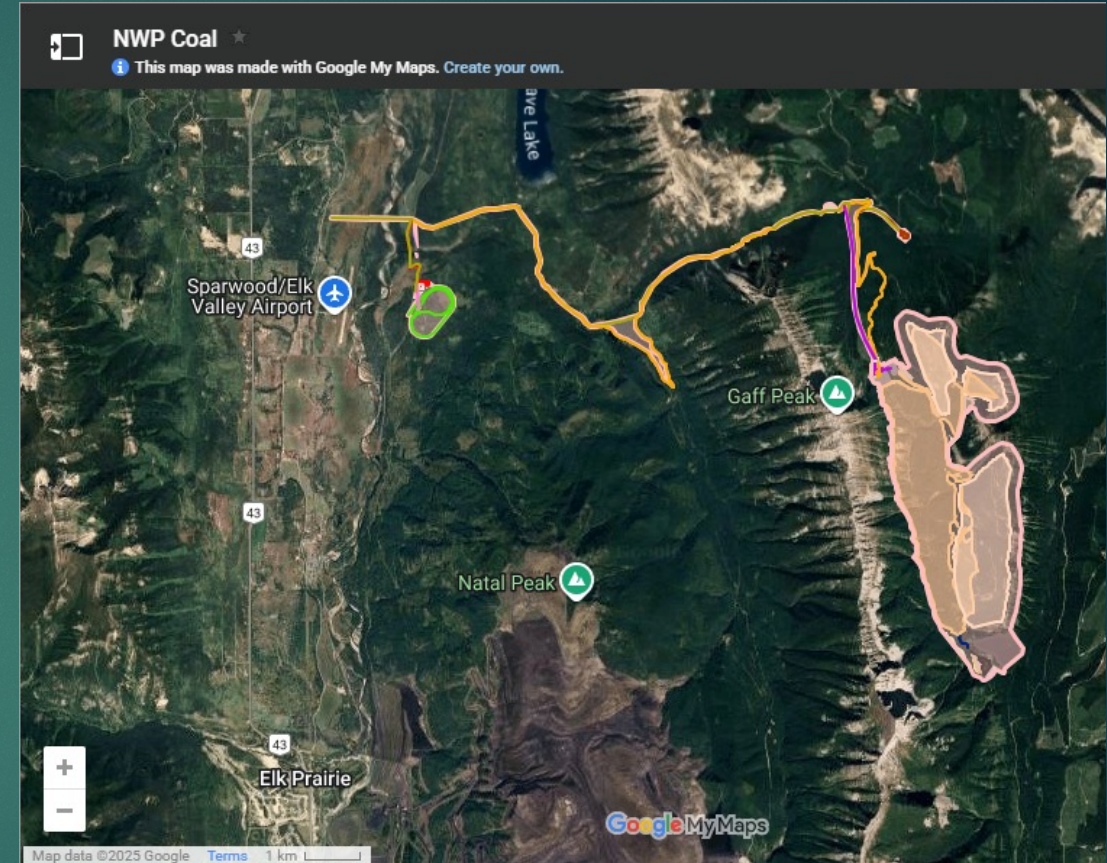


- ▶ The initial project had too many Extraordinarily Adverse Effects (EAE)
- ▶ The Environmental Assessment Office ordered a series of workshops and engagements between Teck (now EVR), KNC and YQT to discuss and implement solutions that would mitigate these effects.
- ▶ Current iteration of the project has drastically reduced untreated mine-affected water by funneling it to existing treatment facilities, reduced the total volume of waste rock, and aims to mine the project in phases – which will allow for environmental milestones that will reduce the project's impact.



# Engagements with NWP Coal

- ▶ YQT Staff have been meeting with NWP Coal to discuss development of their Crown Mountain Steelmaking Coal Project in the Elk Valley
- ▶ YQT's interests in this project are twofold:
  - ▶ Creating a project that minimizes environmental harm to an already stressed ecosystem
  - ▶ Shared prosperity → Maximizing economic benefit by preparing YQT members for direct and indirect employment opportunities that arise with the development of a mine.







# Policy Initiatives with BC, Canada, and the US

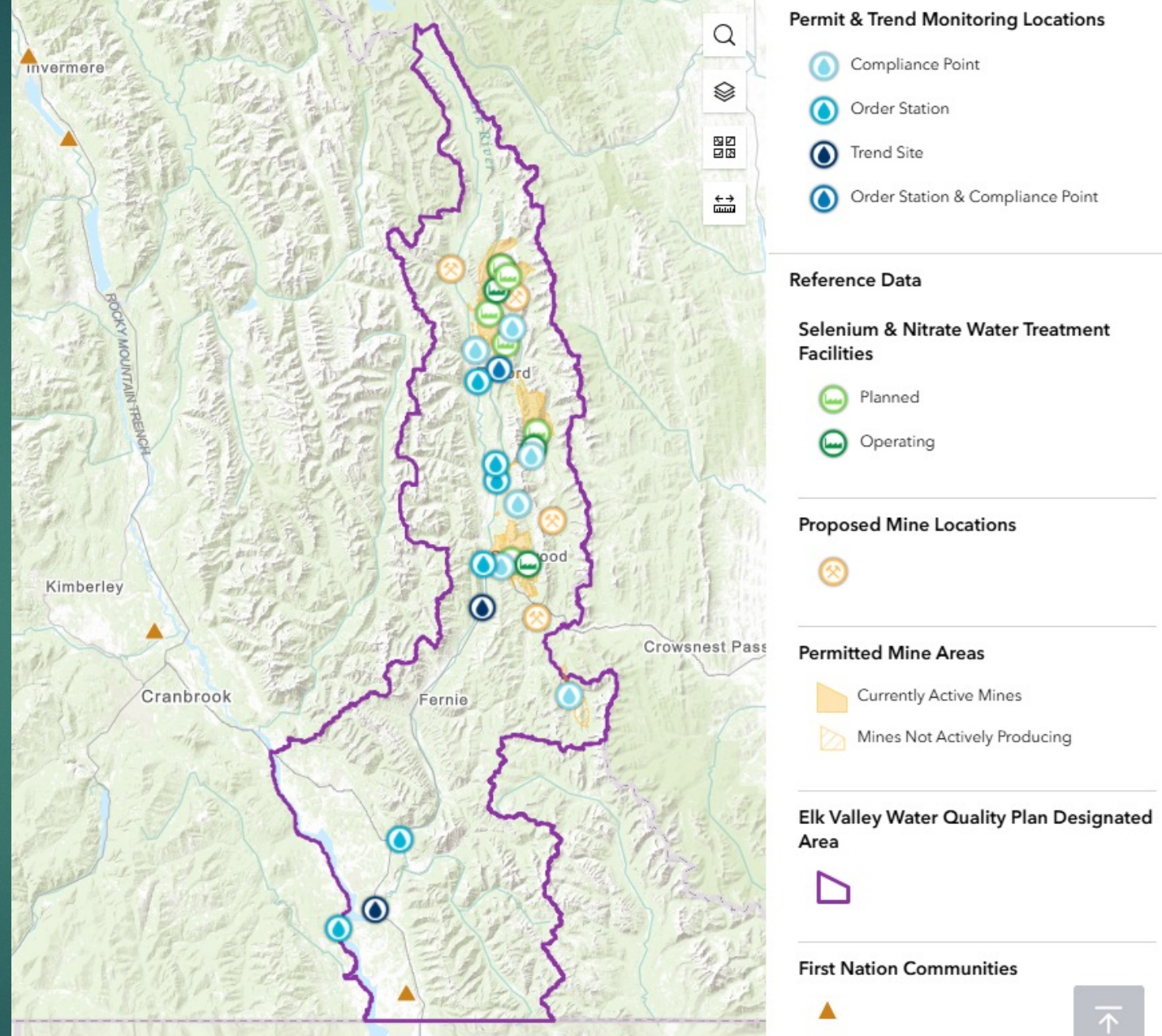
- ▶ Update to the Area Based Management Plan (ABMP)
- ▶ Engagement on the proposed Coal Mining Effluent Regulations (CMER)
- ▶ Participation in IJC Process to study water pollution in the Kootenay Watershed
- ▶ Reviewing and responding to general mining, forestry, and industry referrals.



# ABMP Amendment 1

YQT participated in updating the ABMP (AKA 2025 EVWQP) which:

- ▶ Incorporated Ktunaxa perspectives into the policy document, forcing statutory decision makers to consider these perspectives
- ▶ Developed a plan how multiple proponents will be regulated in the Valley
- ▶ Outlines how the plan will be adaptive in the future.



Map taken from:  
<https://elkvalleywaterquality.gov.bc.ca/water-quality-data-dashboard/>





# ABMP Amendment 2

- ▶ Future amendment of the ABMP to re-evaluate Selenium levels in the Koocanusa reservoir.
  - ▶ “The purpose of Phase 2 of the Plan Amendments is to review the Plan’s existing selenium water quality target for the Canadian portion of Koocanusa Reservoir based on consideration of the best available information, and to recommend any amendments to the Plan’s existing target if indicated through the review. “
- ▶ It’s been more than 10 years since the initial water quality target was established here. This phase will review the following updated data:
  - ▶ Water quality sample results.
  - ▶ Biological data and related data
  - ▶ Compilation of current conditions data
  - ▶ Selenium bioaccumulation model developed by the United States Geological Survey (USGS)





# Coal Mining Effluent Regulations

- ▶ Engagement on the proposed Coal Mining Effluent Regulations (CMER), sought opinions from community members on these proposed regulations.
- ▶ Wrote a Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement that supported additional regulations that explained Yaq̓it Pa'knuq̓i'it First Nation's perspective on CMER:
  - ▶ The Nation is generally supportive of additional regulations that will clean up legacy issues in the watershed
  - ▶ The letter also expressed some concerns about feasibility, achievability, and alignment with existing provincial regulations. And subsequently, how ECCC allayed these concerns.



# International Joint Commission on Transboundary Water Pollution in the Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed

Governments of Canada, the US, and Ktunaxa Nation to carry out the following actions to address water pollution:

- ▶ Creation of a governance board that will develop and report on an action plan to reduce and mitigate the impacts of pollution
- ▶ Convening a study board of experts to conduct and synthesize transparent and coordinated transboundary knowledge sharing on contaminants of concern; areas, water, and ecological resources affected; and trends in the watershed.





# Questions?



*Yaqit Pa'knuqti'it*