

Community Well-being Self-monitoring in the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamac

Context

The Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach (NNK) is a small, isolated Aboriginal community located in northern Quebec, near the border with Newfoundland and Labrador. Given the region’s rich iron deposits, the NNK has considerable experience with major mineral development, first from the 1950s to the 1980s and again in the past decade as companies have begun to implement plans for further mineral development. Given the industry’s legacy in the area, new developments have raised local concerns regarding a range of environmental and socio-economic impacts. These concerns have led to an interest among the NNK to develop the means to track their well-being over time using indicators of their own design.

Description of Measures Implemented

A well-being study began with the NNK’s partnership with the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph and the Canadian Business Ethics Research Network (CBERN). The NNK approached its partners with a request for assistance to comprehend the best ways to address the impending impacts associated with mining. The well-being study was proposed to identify the values that define the priorities of the community and track how these might change over time.

The development of a well-being baseline for which change can be monitored involved a number of steps, all of which required active leadership and contribution by members of the NNK. These measures included:

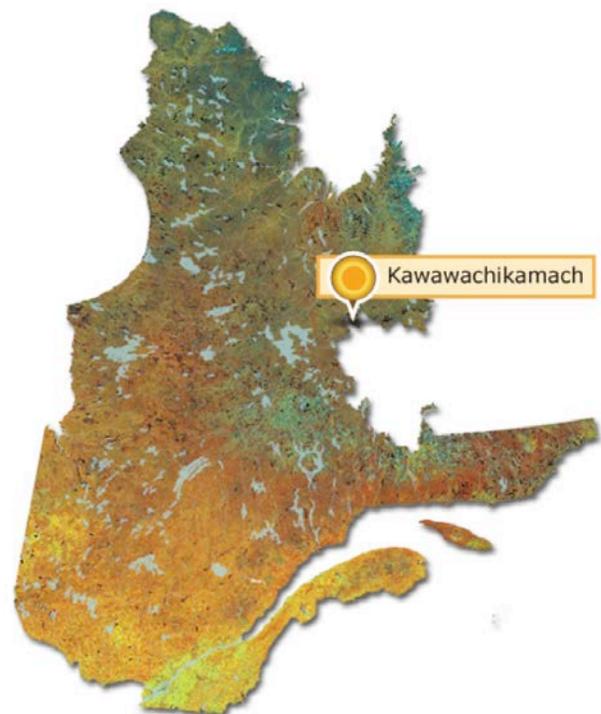
- Engagement with the NNK leadership and community members to gain project support and construct a research/steering committee.

Pre-exploration	Exploration	Development	Operation	Closure	Post-closure
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Lead: Community (Que.)

Steps of the Mineral Development Sequence: Pre-exploration, exploration, development, operation, closure, post-closure

Key Finding: The community well-being work can be considered a good practice in community engagement and readiness as it allows the Naskapi Nation to be better positioned to see changes in their well-being and to communicate them to their partners in the industry.



Source: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

- Identification and documentation of community values and mine-related hopes and concerns.
- Conversion of expressed community values and mine-related hopes and concerns into a set of 60 community-relevant indicators that represents NNK well-being and could be tracked over time.
- Surveying the NNK based on the developed indicators.

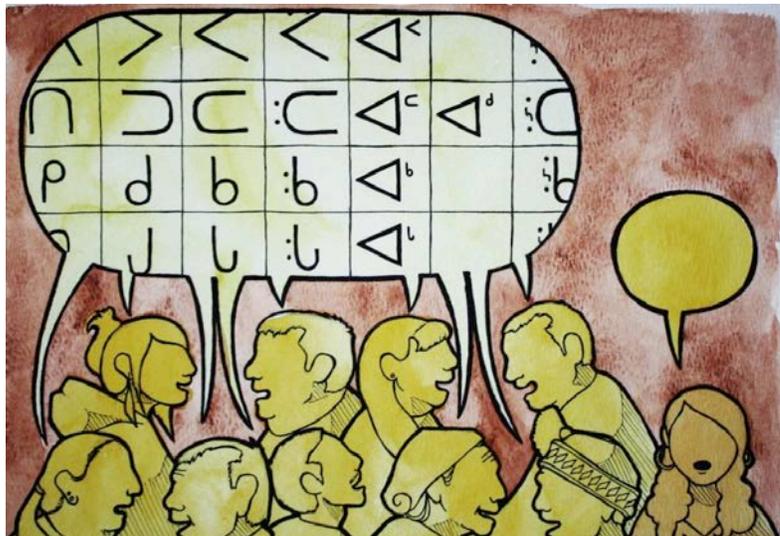
The 60 indicators were transformed into questions that could be answered by a knowledgeable individual from each household. The study team was able to solicit responses from 147 of the 161 total households, which translated to a 91% participation rate. The survey produced valuable data, explicitly identifying community values, hopes and concerns in light of mineral development.

The steering committee suggested that the results should be portrayed in a manner that allows all members of the Naskapi Nation, including children and elders, to comprehend. For that reason, as a complement to conventional graphic representations of the results, a local artist was commissioned to produce artistic interpretations of key results.

Results

The wellness of Canada's Aboriginal peoples is often measured with biomedical terms that give limited concern to how wellness is conceptualized within Aboriginal communities. The well-being study has offered a way to address this gap by creating a baseline in collaboration with the local community.

On-going monitoring based on chosen indicators allows the Naskapi Nation to be better positioned to see changes in their well-being and to communicate them to their partners in the industry. Moreover, long-term monitoring allows the Naskapi the opportunity to contribute to a broader understanding of the impacts of mining for Canadian Aboriginal peoples.



Indicator - Regular use of Naskapi at home: Ninety percent of the community always or often speaks Naskapi at home.

Lessons Learned

The completion of the study offers several insights and lessons learned:

- Understanding community change in the context of mineral development is essential, as it offers a platform for the Chief and Council as well as the community as a whole to assess mineral development decisions and make changes if necessary.

- The baseline of well-being provides evidence that a community-generated process is well-suited to showcase community hopes and concerns for development proposals. The process facilitated multiple opportunities for community members to engage in internal dialogue, promoting community consultation and engagement.
- The project proposes a potential model for creating socio-economic baselines that could be used for environmental impact statements and allows for ongoing monitoring crucial for adaptive management.
- Time-series evidence of community experiences with mineral extraction aids in understanding the resilience of a community and the comprehension of socio-economic impacts.

For more information:

Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach: www.naskapi.ca/

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