

Location – Black Lake

Attendees

- SRC: Mark Calette (Aboriginal Senior Advisor), Elizaveta Petelina (Remediation Specialist), Vanessa Crawford (Administrative Officer)
- Elders: Simon Robillard and Ermeline Robillard
- Dene Translator: Ted Robillard
- 7 community members

Agenda

1. Revegetation Elder Workshop
 - Overview of SRC Revegetation Approach
 - Plants, seed samples and pictures shown
 - Discussion regarding plants to be used for site revegetation

Discussion:

Q. Will you start revegetating this summer?

A. Yes, we will start some planting this coming summer.

Q. Are you planning on revegetating with seeds of foreign plants?

A. The plants will not be foreign/exotic, they will be plants native to the Athabasca region. We want to prevent invasion of the area, so we are using native plants.

Q. What happens if the plants have been burned by a forest fire?

A. Grass and flowers take only 1 to 2 years to grow back. It takes approximately 100 years for trees. Forests have their own way to heal themselves. It is a natural cycle.

Q. Do you also research the plants underwater?

A. No, we work mostly with plants above surface.

Q. Are you going to harvest the plants you are growing?

A. No, we are only growing them to hold the soil in place. We also want new vegetation for the wildlife.

Q. You have chosen 9 plants - which grow naturally in this area?

A. All 9 are native plants to the area. We do not want to introduce anything that isn't native to this area.

General Comments

- An Elder spoke on behalf of their community. He is very pleased we are here speaking about revegetation and thanks us for coming to include them. SRC is the only business coming into the community helping with regrowth. They are very happy and very impressed that SRC is looking out for the future of their children and animals.
- Community's hands are tied – they don't have tractors to complete any of the work. They encourage SRC to keep doing the work.

- Community says it is nice to see everyone working as a team (communities and SRC).
- Common Yarrow is found in this area, it means “Mean Grass” in the Dene language. It has been traditionally used for burns.
- Healing plants are found along the shoreline locally and at Cree Lake. They are harvested for use on rashes. One of the students said this healing plant salve can be bought at a northern store in Prince Albert, but couldn’t remember the name of the plant or the salve.
- Fungus is a very important plant, it grows on birch trees. When you take it off, you grind it between 2 rocks to start a fire. The fungus is brown.
- Community loves birch trees. They are amazing trees that are very much respected. They were used to make canoes. The veins from the tree are used to stitch everything together. The veins were kept in water, so they didn’t dry out. Once the canoe was complete, they would paint them with paint they made.
- Birch trees are also used to make maple syrup and tea.
- Moose also eat birch trees.
- Beaver have been spotted coming out of the water to eat a plant that looks like a dill pickle. Elders say these beaver taste the best.

Location – Wollaston Lake

Attendees

- SRC: Mark Calette (Aboriginal Senior Advisor), Elizaveta Petelina (Remediation Specialist), Vanessa Crawford (Administrative Officer)
- Elders: George St. Pierre, Melanie St. Pierre, Angus Tsannie, Philip Josie, Alex Dzeylion, Charlotte Josie
- Dene Translator: Ted Robillard
- 4 students

Agenda

1. Revegetation Elder Workshop

- Overview of SRC Revegetation Approach
- Plants and seed samples and pictures shown
- Discussion regarding plants to be used for site revegetation

Discussion

Q. The land will never be the same. All the garbage will just be covered up. Why was it not cleaned up sooner?

A. We are trying to heal the land and revegetate as best we can. As with any healing, it will take time. If we complete it correctly, we will be able to get it close to how it was before. The government did not give us permission to clean up the site until recently.

Q. When did you grow your test plots?

A. The test plots were started in 2011 and we continue to monitor them.

Q. Will animals get sick from eating at the abandoned mine sites?

A. We will collect plant tissues from each area and test them to see if they are contaminated. We will test for a few years to ensure nothing is contaminated.

Q. How big of an area are you revegetating?

A. For Lorado, we have 20 hectares of tailings cover and about 20 hectares of borrow area. At Gunnar, 80 hectares of tailings and borrow area. We can provide details if requested. (Did not have the information available at time of the meeting.)

General Comments

- After a forest fire goes through the area, willows tend to grow back fast, also blueberries. Forest fires are great for revegetation.
- Moose usually eat from willows and birch. In springtime, they start eating aquatic plants underneath the water's surface.
- When any kind of plant from the area is picked, people pay an offering of tobacco – this is believed to help make the medication work better.
- We use spruce trees to make gum. Gum from the spruce is also boiled to make tea.
- Spruce are also used for making medicine.



- Muskeg tea is also made.
- Birch and willow were both highly recommended as a tree to grow in the area.
- Elders did not recognize the “bearberry” samples provided. They recognized the fruit, but not the flower. Elders thought bearberry flowers were not found in the Wollaston area.