

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in the 1950s, mining companies had a growing interest in the Nunavik region. At this time, very few regulations existed to monitor and guide the social and environmental impacts of the activities of these companies. With the signing of the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* in 1975, mining companies became subject to more strict rules that oblige the companies to declare their activities to the *ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune* (natural resources and wildlife, MRNF) and to rehabilitate closed mineral exploration sites. Unfortunately, past mining-company activities have had an impact on vegetation, wildlife habitat and water quality, as well as a visual impact on the landscape of the region.

The present clean-up project stemmed from community initiatives in the 1990s, followed by a joint project undertaken in 1999 by the Kativik Regional Government (KRG), the Makivik Corporation and the *Groupe d'études inuit et circumpolaires (Université Laval)* to identify and locate abandoned mineral exploration sites in Nunavik. In 2000, the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach joined the project. A review of existing oral and written information on all mining-related sites identified some 595 potential abandoned mineral exploration sites in Nunavik.

In 2001–2002, an inventory of a sample of 193 potential sites was conducted to validate the information previously gathered. As a result, 90 sites were confirmed as abandoned mineral exploration sites and, of these, 18 sites were classified as requiring major clean-up work, 27 as requiring intermediate clean-up work, and 45 as requiring minor clean-up work. Classification of the sites was based on a list of criteria adapted from the National Classification System for Contaminated Sites, including an assessment of the quantity of material and equipment present at the sites, as well as soil and surface water contamination.

Considering Inuit concerns and the threat that these sites posed to the environment, the KRG and Makivik joined forces to identify the funding needed to undertake their clean-up.

In December 2004, the KRG signed a four-year contribution agreement (2004–2008) with Environment Canada under the Northern Ecosystem Initiative. As a first phase, the KRG undertook pilot rehabilitation projects in 2005 and 2006 on two of the sites requiring major clean-up work (KAW-35 near Kawawachikamach and PJ-1 near Tasiujaq).

In October 2007, a formal contribution agreement was signed by the KRG, Makivik, the MRNF and a consortium of mining exploration companies known as *Fonds Restor-Action Nunavik*. The agreement focused on providing the KRG with the funding and technical support needed to undertake clean-up work on all of the 18 sites requiring major clean-up. Since the signing of these agreements, the KRG has completed work at 13 sites and initiated work at two other sites in cooperation with Inuit communities, the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach and a few mining companies. This work involves numerous partners and continuous collaboration between governments, regional and municipal entities, as well as mining companies and several northern organizations.

In 2011, inspections were carried out at sites classified as requiring intermediate clean-up work. The waste at these 27 sites is similar to the waste found at the sites requiring major clean-up, but the extent of the work to be performed is smaller. From 2006 to 2011, nine sites requiring intermediate work were cleaned up by various mining companies. An amendment to the 2007 contribution agreement was moreover signed to provide funding for work at the sites requiring intermediate clean-up as well as to complete work at the five remaining sites requiring major clean-up.

This report presents the work carried out between 2005 and 2011 at the sites requiring major clean-up and some sites requiring intermediate clean-up. To date, more than 50 pieces of heavy equipment (including large machinery), 4,300 barrels, 250 propane tanks, 14 large reservoirs, 23,100 L of residue hydrocarbons (diesel or other), 2,000 L of motor oil, 70 batteries and a large amount of debris have been removed from the sites. As well, hydrocarbons and hazardous material, such as paint, grease, batteries, fire extinguishers and transformers, have been shipped to specialized facilities in the south for proper recycling or proper disposal.