

Comment on the Independent Panel's Draft Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations

G. Williams, January 2021

“Reconciliation” was mentioned several times throughout the Independent Panel's Draft Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations, and “Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission” was referred to on a few occasions.

You may recall that The Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015, p. 13-14 and p. 15) states: “In order for Reconciliation to happen, there has to be awareness of the past and acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted”, and specifically, “reconciliation must acknowledge the destructive legacies of colonization” (my underlining).

Although colonialism was also mentioned in several written submissions to the Panel (particularly with regards to the free-entry claim staking system in the submission by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation), the Independent Panel's Draft Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations appears to have **sanitized** the role that colonialism played in the mining sector in the North.

In particular, in the Introduction to the Draft Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations, reference is made to a vague “hinterland-to-core”, “homeland-to-core”, and the “globalized homeland” resource extraction legacy, with no acknowledgement of Indigenous marginalization, dispossession and relocation, as well as no accounting by any group, sector, or government that participated in colonization.

Furthermore, several recommendations under Strategic Priority No. 6 of the Draft Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations advocate “Public awareness initiatives” of Yukon’s mining industry, including “mineral literacy”, “importance of the mining sector”, and an expanded role in “Yukon’s school curriculum”, but if the aspiration of the Independent Panel in the Draft Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations is to embrace reconciliation, then the role of colonialism (both settler colonialism and extractive colonialism) must be included in any proposed public and school awareness initiative, including the Final Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations.

There are numerous theses and published papers on the role of colonialism in the North; two recent documents are: *The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in and the Great Upheaval: Mining, Colonialism, and Environmental Change in the Klondike, 1890-1940* by H. Green, 2018, Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta; and *Settler Colonialism and Beyond* by A. Greer, 2019, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, v. 30, p. 61–86. When I went to school, I did not learn about residential schools or the so-called Indian Act—please do not let history repeat itself.