

# **ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN INVOLVEMENT AND BENEFITS FROM GUNNAR URANIUM MINE ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDICATION – NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN**

**THIRD CANADIAN CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT  
DECOMMISSIONING AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION – SEPTEMBER 11-14,  
2016**

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**Abstract:** The Gunnar mine and mill site was the largest of the legacy uranium mine sites that were developed and operated in northern Saskatchewan, Canada during the Cold War years. The mine site was operated from 1955-1963 and produced over 5 million tonnes of uranium ore, nearly 4.4 million tonnes on mine tailings and 2,710,700 m<sup>3</sup> of waste rock. In addition to the mining and milling operations the general site also included an entire small town (approximately 700 people) including housing, school, hospital, shopping and recreation centre. The Saskatchewan Research Council (SRC) was contracted by the Province of Saskatchewan to manage the remediation of 37 abandoned uranium mine sites in northern Saskatchewan with the Gunnar mine and milling site being the largest and most complex. Decommissioning was limited to flooding the pit and capping the mine shaft. Currently many of the First Nations, Métis and northern residents either attended or were related to someone who attended the Gunnar mine school or were employed at the mine site. Traditional hunting, trapping and fishing activities are presently practiced in areas close to the Gunnar site. Consequently, there is a direct cultural and historical connection to the mine site for many people residing in the area. Their involvement in all aspects of the remediation process is, therefore critical for short and long term project success. A full-time position was established within the SRC remediation team to collaborate with both SRC employees and the northern communities. SRC employees have become fully invested in this process which has resulted in a bottom-up program development and continuous improvement.