

OGS Virtual Showcase 2022: Land Acknowledgements Day 2 – Steven Beneteau

Welcome. My name is Steven Beneteau, currently Director of the Ontario Geological Survey.

I'd like to give a land acknowledgment now and will start by sharing with you critical minerals use throughout the history of North America.

The Plano people lived in what we now know as Ontario between 11,000 and 8000 years ago and were also some of Ontario's first known miners. The Plano peoples were hunter gatherers that employed numerous techniques to hunt bison, elk, deer and other animals of the woodlands and plains, and archeological evidence indicates the Plano peoples used quartzite mined in the Sheguiandah area to fashion tools and weapon heads.

The Plano peoples were followed by Indigenous populations called paleo Indians, some of these peoples lived in the Northern Shield and evidence shows they used copper and silver to make tools, weapons and jewelry for use and trade. The minerals that were extracted by these early cultures also provided opportunity for trade relations between other Indigenous cultures thus establishing trade routes throughout Ontario. Silver coming from deposits around Cobalt and Gowganda have been found in archeological digs in New York state, Ohio, Georgia, Michigan and Mississippi that date back thousands of years.

Those early established trade routes were essential for the success of settlers and explorers who first came to what we now know as Canada, as they became the basis of the trade routes which carried resources such as furs, food, and supplies that were essential to settler livelihood and success.

These historical Indigenous populations in North America understood the value of some of these critical minerals and the value of having balance in what we take, give and use. As we look towards greening industry, greening mining, greening our lives, we should consider how balance, harmony and minimal impact was the way of the Indigenous peoples that lived on this land far before any settlers. We have the ability now to learn from one another, and walk together, listening, sharing, and recognizing the mistakes of the past so that they aren't repeated in the present or future.

With that, I would like to recognize that we are here today on the land of over 130 different Indigenous communities across Ontario. We would like to acknowledge their support for our many projects, their contribution in numerous ways, in the past and present, and to each talk you will hear today. We would like to acknowledge the mistakes of the past and vow to do better in the present and the future, by listening, respecting and valuing Indigenous Peoples and perspectives across Ontario and Canada. The two-row wampum, one of the original treaties, is never far from our minds, we are on the same river together, respecting one another and working together.

OGS Virtual Showcase 2022: Land Acknowledgements Day 3 – John Hechler

Hi, I'm John Hechler, Senior Manager of the Earth Resources and Geoscience Mapping Section.

I'd like to give a land acknowledgment now and will start by sharing with you a tale about the sleeping giant from the Ojibway culture.

Many lands across Northern Ontario are rich in mineral resources and stunning visual landscapes. Indigenous Peoples across Northern Ontario were aware that some of these resources existed and their value: when settlers tried to overcharge for bullets, many Indigenous Peoples went into the bush and forged their own bullets, made of pure silver, instead. When the question is asked—if they know, why did they not tell? The answer appears to be the belief that great misfortune would befall their nation if the white man knew of these resources. The laws many Indigenous groups lived by was to live WITH the land, the lakes, the waters, and the resources, supporting all that is, and to be in turn supported. Let us consider the tale of Silver Islet and Nanabijou from the Ojibway culture.

“The Ojibway story of Nanabijou serves as a cautionary tale against sharing the secrets of mineral wealth. Nanabijou was a giant who protected the Indigenous people of the northern boreal forest. Nanabijou revealed the secrets of a rich silver mine to the Ojibway, but warned that they must never share this information. Despite their best efforts, the white men learned of the location of the mine at Silver Islet on Lake Superior. They came with dynamite and shaft-sinking machines, and Nanabijou was turned to stone, becoming the famous Sleeping Giant in the harbour of Thunder Bay. The Ojibway lost their guardian and were left exposed to the destructive influx of white men.”
(*COBALT: Cradle of the Demon Metals, Birth of a Mining Superpower* copyright © 2022 by Charlie Angus. Text reproduced with permission from House of Anansi Press, Toronto, www.houseofanansi.com.)

Most of us are aware of some of the environmental destruction that took place across northern Ontario as a result of historical resource extraction. For many years there was also cultural destruction that was, in many ways, tied into natural resources and resource extraction.

Although, there is no way to turn back the clocks and do it over differently, we can continually strive to do right moving forward. As we look towards greening industry, mining, and our lives, we should consider how this was the way of the Indigenous Peoples that lived on this land before any settlers. We have the ability now to learn from one another, and walk together, listening, sharing, and recognizing the mistakes of the past so that they aren't repeated in the present or future.

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