

Mining Niobium responsibly to protect the environment and ensure economic growth for Indigenous communities



At the recently held 5th annual First Nations Major Projects Coalition (FNMPC) conference, Indigenous leaders from across North America had the opportunity to discuss with major mining and energy companies with the aim of finding common goals. The FNMPC is a non-profit organization that aims to help its member communities “obtain ownership stakes in major projects that run through their territories”.

According to Chief Sharleen Gale of the Fort Nelson First Nation in British Columbia and the chair of the FNMPC, most of the critical minerals needed in Canada to build parts for electric vehicles along with windmills and other clean energy solutions are primarily in or close to traditional territories and Indigenous communities. Chief Gale added that “the growing demand for these critical minerals was the ‘greatest opportunity in a generation’ to ensure economic growth for Indigenous communities, as long as their lands, rights and interests are protected”.



Citing a 2020 World Bank Report, Canada’s Natural Resources Minister stated in his keynote speech that the production of minerals such as graphite, lithium, and cobalt could increase nearly five times by 2050 to meet the growing demand for clean energy technologies. The report also estimated that keeping overall warming below two degrees Celsius would require more than three billion tonnes of minerals and metals for energy storage and for wind, solar, and geothermal power. Niobium is also a critical mineral.

As many know, the Moose Creek First Nation (MCFN) and Niobay have a Protection Agreement (PA) in place that provides for transparent communication and reflects the shared commitment to environmental protection. Niobay is committed to continuing discussions to reassure the MCFN membership that their interests will be protected as the James Bay project proceeds. Niobay has been clear that it will seek the community’s consent before proceeding with the project. As well, Niobay plans to work with communities who have acknowledged indigenous rights within the area of the project to mitigate potential impacts and provide a share of the potential benefits the project will create while ensuring that your lands, rights, and interests are protected as mentioned by Chief Gale at the conference.

Niobium mined right here in Ontario can play an important role in helping Ontario and Canada reach its environment goals along with invigorating several economic sectors important to Ontario’s economy such as the steel industry, the auto industry, namely electric vehicles, and parts.
