

# Midnite Mine Superfund Site, Wellpinit, WA

## TOSNAC/TOSC Collaborative Outreach to Spokane Tribal Community: An Overview of Activities and Strategies

**Initial request for assistance:** February 2004 by EPA Region X Midnite Mine (MM) RPM, Elli Hale.

**Outreach Initiated:** March 2004, TOSNAC site visit and meeting with Spokane Tribal community and EPA.

### Groundwork (February-August 2004)

Meetings, site visits, and conference calls with the Saving our Health, Air, Water, Land (S.H.A.W.L.) Society and EPA to plan Spokane Tribal community outreach efforts. Initial TOSNAC/TOSC coordination included learning about EPA Midnite Mine activities, as well as gaining an understanding of Spokane Tribal history and relationships to land, which included emphasis on subsistence lifestyle considerations. To draw on the best available expertise, the TOSNAC Coordinator led the collaborative effort through continuous communication with Western Region, Midwest Center and Rocky Mountain HSRCs. Two phases of Superfund outreach, based on community-driven goals, were collaboratively achieved.

### Outreach Phase I

TOSNAC/TOSC outreach and training primarily focused on review of two EPA MM documents, supporting technical documents and references from Spokane Tribe's expert consultant.

- Draft Midnite Mine Human Health Risk Assessment Report, Jan. 2004.
- Final Report Midnite Mine Site Ecological Risk Assessment, Wellpinit, WA, April 2004.
- Harper, B.L., Flett, B., Harris, S., Abeyta, C. & Kirschner, F. 2002. The Spokane Tribe Multipathway Subsistence Exposure Scenario and Screening Level RME. *Risk Analysis*, 22, 513-26.

### First Training

*Uranium, Radiation and Heavy Metals: What Are the Risks to Spokane Tribal Community?*  
*Spokane Tribe Community Uranium, Radiation Education (C.U.R.E.) Project Training*, Aug. 24, 2004.

### Collaborative Training Approach and Content

S.H.A.W.L. Society - cultural integrity components and grassroots facilitation

*Spokane Tribal EJ and Cultural Risk Concerns*

EPA CIO, Deb Sherbina - informative presentation and evaluation components

*Superfund Process and Community Involvement*

TOSNAC, Brenda Brandon - Tribal community empowerment and risk components

*Tribal Environmental Justice Law; Risk Analysis; Tribal Cultural Risk Communication*

Oregon State TOSC, Michael Fernandez - technical components

*Heavy Metals Contaminants*

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Kansas State TOSC, Sabine Martin - technical components

*Heavy Metal Contaminants in the Environment; Groundwater Modeling Activity*

Utah State University, Dr. Jeffery Hall, Toxicology Professor - technical (Tribal exposure)

*Heavy Metal Contaminants and Ecological Systems; Tribal Exposure to Heavy Metal Contaminants*

### Interim Phase (September 2004-November 2005)

To assure outreach needs were met TOSNAC/TOSC built upon trust relations through continued interaction with the community. TOSNAC facilitation of EPA and S.H.A.W.L. Society conference calls continued. Mutual capacity building for S.H.A.W.L. Society, EPA and TOSNAC/TOSC was developed through attendance and participation at EPA Superfund meetings and mining-oriented conferences. Key meetings included the following;

EPA Midnite Mine Outreach Visit, Wellpinit, WA, July 20-21, 2005.

*Brenda Brandon helped facilitate introduction of 2<sup>nd</sup> CIO, Debby Neal to community during S.H.A.W.L. Society, Wellpinit schoolteachers, and C.U.R.E. meetings and assisted with EPA community interviews to assess outreach needs.*

Thirteenth Annual Mine Design, Operations, and Closure Conference, Polson, MT, April 17- 21, 2005, sponsored by Montana Tech University.

*Two Spokane Tribal community members and TOSNAC Coordinator attended the conference to discuss mine waste remediation outreach strategies with Kevin Mellott.*

Western Mining Action Network (WMAN) Conference, Worley, Idaho, September 30- October 2, 2005. Brenda Brandon provided conference presentation, *Addressing Tribal Risk Concerns at Mine Sites: Application of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.*

*Kevin Mellott and Brenda Brandon attended the conference and participated in S.H.A.W.L. Society sponsored MM site tour, discussions with Spokane Tribe Superfund Director, and attended speaker session with MM miners at Spokane Tribal Community College.*

EPA Midnite Mine Superfund Site Meeting October 19-20, 2005.

*Blase Leven (K-State) attended three Superfund meetings in Wellpinit and Spokane, WA. Blase met with S.H.A.W.L. Society and conducted a MM site visit with EPA.*

### Outreach Phase II

Technical outreach revolved around summary and review of four Midnite Mine documents and proposed cleanup plan, released September 2005. Training focused on describing alternative remedies and discussion of proposed clean-up plan. Written summary and review comments were provided to S.H.A.W.L. Society and released by the community to EPA at the January 18, 2006 public meeting in Wellpinit, WA.

- Midnite Mine Superfund Site Proposed Cleanup Plan, September 2005.
- Midnite Mine Superfund Site Remedial Investigation, September 2005.
- Midnite Mine Superfund Site Feasibility Study, September 2005.
- Midnite Mine Human Health Risk Assessment Report, September 2005.
- Final Report Midnite Mine Site Ecological Risk Assessment, September 2005

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### Second Training

*Midnite Mine Superfund Cleanup Plans: Addressing Community Concerns Training*, Wellpinit, WA, Nov. 17, 2005.

### Collaborative Training Approach and Content

S.H.A.W.L. Society - cultural integrity components and grassroots facilitation

*Survey of Community Concerns and Evaluation of Outreach Needs*

TOSNAC, Brenda Brandon - Tribal community empowerment and risk components

*Relating Traditional Ecological Knowledge to Western Science (explains RI process);*

*Human Health and Ecological Risk Summary*

Oregon State TOSC, Michael Fernandez - technical components

*Air Considerations and Control Processes*

Kansas State TOSC, Sabine Marti n- technical components

*Water and Groundwater Considerations and Control Processes*

Montana Tech TOSC, Kevin Mellot and Dr. Willis Weight - technical components

*Soil, Sediments and Ore Considerations and Control Processes; Mine Waste*

*Remediation Overview; Groundwater Modeling Activity; Midnite Mine Cleanup*

*Alternatives and Overview Charts*

Southwest Research Institute and Information Center, Director, Paul Robinson - uranium and uranium mine expertise

*Uranium, Radiation and Heavy Metal Risk Considerations; Uranium Mine Cleanup Considerations*

### Follow-up Phase (January 2005 - Present and Future)

January 18, 2005 - Brenda Brandon attended EPA Midnite Mine RI/FS and Proposed Cleanup Plan final public commenting session in Wellpinit, WA. She distributed TOSNAC/TOSC comments to Spokane Tribal reporter, Superfund Officer, Spokane Tribal Community College library and meeting participants.

TOSNAC/TOSC is seeking collaborative outreach opportunities to assist Spokane Tribal community in addressing long-term risk management concerns related to uranium, heavy metals and subsistence lifestyle concerns (builds capacity at community level).

TOSNAC contribution of Spokane Tribal outreach case study contributes toward development of Tribal community outreach evaluation and empowerment models (builds EPA capacity to address Tribal Superfund community concerns).

S.H.A.W.L. Society is building Indigenous community capacity to address mine waste cleanup concerns through international presentation of Spokane Tribal community Superfund efforts (builds Tribal capacity to address mine waste exposure risks at the national and global scale).

### TOSNAC/TOSC Strategies Used in Outreach Process

#### 1. Building Trust Relations

- Site Visits, face-to-face meetings, email, phone calls and conference attendance between TOSNAC/TOSC and Spokane Tribal community representatives.
- Remaining sensitive to Spokane Tribal Environmental Justice (EJ) concerns and addressing subsistence lifestyle and cultural exposure risk concerns in trainings, document reviews and commenting communications.

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- Joint conference attendance - S.H.A.W.L. Society members attend Mine Waste Conference in Polson (display of Montana. Tech capability to relay technical material in understandable format). Through MM site visits and TOSNAC presentation at WMAN conference, Brenda and Kevin acquire knowledge about Tribal cultural risk concerns and relay knowledge about importance of using Traditional Ecological Knowledge to inform appropriate risk management action.
- TOSNAC facilitation of conference calls with EPA and S.H.A.W.L. Society helped provide mutual understanding of both EPA Superfund objectives and Spokane Tribal community EJ and outreach needs.
- SHAWL/CURE meetings, trainings and distribution of TOSNAC/TOSC materials helped build understanding of Superfund process and cleanup plans and contributed to building trust between community and EPA.

### **2. Empowerment Processes and Tribal Capacity Building**

- S.H.A.W.L. Society organizational and collaborative efforts along with their contribution to training agendas expanded level of community-based education guidance and promoted participation and support from diverse group of people; including Spokane Tribal Community College and Natural Resource Department staff, school teachers, youth, Elders, cultural leaders, affected uranium miners, Indian Health Services, as well as interest groups from neighboring Tribes (Colville Reservation) and the City of Spokane.
- TOSNAC helps address Tribal EJ needs during outreach efforts by providing a holistic perspective of risk and cleanup concerns; includes validating incorporation of science with traditional knowledge to evaluate and address exposure risks associated with practicing subsistence and cultural lifestyle activities in potentially contaminated areas.
- Contribution of TOSNAC/TOSC outreach material to EJ Mining Library at Spokane Tribal Community College kindled relations between Indigenous scholars for purposes of identifying long-term collaborative outreach projects (builds community capacity to address cultural risk concerns and promote continuation of subsistence and cultural lifestyle practices).
- Utilizing collaborative approach and the right TOSC team members for trainings and document reviews (apply wide foundation of TOSC outreach experience, communication and sensitivity skills to provide effective Tribal outreach).
- TOSNAC empowerment techniques allow Tribal community to use critical thinking in voicing needs, addressing concerns, and directing outreach goals, programs and processes that are harmonious with cultural values and lifestyles.

### **3. Development of Culturally Competent Outreach and Training Material**

- Addressing community needs involved S.H.A.W.L. Society guidance in agenda development and community contribution to discussions, training sessions, and generation of TOSNAC/TOSC outreach material.
- Use of culturally competent communication techniques in explaining technical aspects, including face-to-face and roundtable discussions, use of graphics, non-technical/friendly language, handouts, and follow-up evaluation of outreach processes.
- Incorporation of culturally competent training material into outreach efforts, includes consideration of EJ (people's right to be informed and voice concerns), cultural risk and

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subsistence lifestyle issues (addressing long-term needs), and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (understanding and respecting Spokane Tribal community values and knowledge-based systems).

- Incorporation of Indigenously-informed empowerment tools, like talking circles, breakout groups and use of empowerment evaluation processes that incorporate culture into outreach processes (ex., Tribal Timeline Model and Influence by Design Framework) provides opportunity for community to develop long-term risk management goals and to direct/create culturally appropriate outreach programs and processes.
- Remaining flexible in development of outreach and delivery of training material to address immediate Tribal audience needs.

### **Principal HSRC Contacts**

#### **Brenda Brandon (Lead HSRC Contact)**

TOSNAC Coordinator  
Haskell Environmental Research Studies Center  
Haskell Indian Nations University  
155 Indian Ave Box 5001  
Lawrence, KS 66046  
1-866-880-2296  
[brendabrandon@msn.com](mailto:brendabrandon@msn.com)

#### **Michael Fernandez (WRHSRC Contact)**

TOSC/TAB  
1148 Kelley Engineering Center  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, Oregon 97331-5501  
(541) 737-4023 Phone  
[michael.fernandez@oregonstate.edu](mailto:michael.fernandez@oregonstate.edu)

#### **Kevin Mellott (Mine Waste Remediation Contact)**

Director of TOSC & TAB  
RMRHSRC  
Montana Tech  
1300 W. Park St  
Butte, MT 59701  
(406) 496-4220 Voice / - 4116 (Fax)  
(406) 490-6389 Cell  
[kmellott@mtech.edu](mailto:kmellott@mtech.edu)