Using resilience to offset cumulative impacts

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The challenge:

• how to proceed when there’s already stress beyond reason?
Our lesson from a recent case study

- Focus on understanding the drivers of stress; this will help open up pathways for responsible development
Jay Project – expansion of Ekati mine

- Expansion of area affected by diamond mining and increased duration of effects by 10 years
Review Board decision

- (placeholder background pdf of Reasons for Decision document)

- Several valued components already significantly adversely affected:
  - Habitat and health of boreal caribou
  - Health and well-being of affected communities
  - Well-being and traditional way of life of affected indigenous groups
Caribou hair collected on the shores of the Narrows
(Placeholder for community picture for brief spiel on community well-being – consider Lutsel K’e)
The Significance Spectrum

Zero Impact
(perfectly acceptable)

Catastrophic Impact
(totally unacceptable)

Where this line goes
• is based on values
• changes for each impact
Significance determination

• Cumulative impacts have led to a baseline condition that cannot tolerate additional stress
Cumulative impacts are significant

Acceptable

No Significant Impact

Significance

Mitigation

Unacceptable

Catastrophic Impact

Zero Impact

(perfectly acceptable)

Significant Impact

(totally unacceptable)
Challenge:
Can the Project go ahead without worsening the cumulative impacts?
...challenge assessment

- What mitigations are in place?
- Are they effective?
- What has already happened?
- In the nearly 20 years of diamond mining, how has this developed and what is the link?
Findings

• Much uncertainty around link and magnitude of impacts

• Past efforts questionable

• Feedback mechanisms to improve situation not there
Resolution: build resilience!

- Cumulative impacts dealt with by using the following resilience strategies:
  - addressing uncertainty
  - Strengthening (offsetting) external system components
  - Promoting adaptive management
1. Addressing uncertainty

• Incorporating Traditional Knowledge into project design

• Developing a TK management framework for consistency and confidence of TK use in decision-making

• Early identification of cultural impacts to inform management actions and mitigations
2. Strengthening system components by offsetting

- Enhance mitigation measures off-site
- Creation of a culture camp to actively bring land users back to area and maintain connection with and knowledge of the land
- Reduce vulnerabilities in communities by promoting opportunities for women
3. Improving on adaptive management

• Impose timelines on Government to develop caribou management plans

• Impose requirement on Government to investigate linkages between diamond mining and well-being and engage with communities and public on initiatives and problem-solving

• Establish objectives for monitoring and adaptive management

• Annual reporting by Government and Proponent on implementation of mitigation measures
Taking a resilience perspective enabled a reduction in overall significance & an acceptable Project

End result

Acceptable

Unacceptable

Significance

Mitigation

Catastrophic Impact

(totally unacceptable)

Zero Impact

(perfectly acceptable)
Conclusion

• Opportunities exist to manage significant baseline cumulative impacts

• Promoting an understanding the drivers of stress creates pathways to build resiliency into the stressed system and buffer against undesirable change
Mahsi cho!