What’s Next for the Former Cluff Lake Mine?

2018 has been a busy year for the Cluff Lake project team, particularly with decommissioned mine site tours and community visits.

The Cluff Lake site has been open to the public for about five years now with ongoing environmental monitoring through campaign visits confirming that the site remains safe and stable. With over a decade of post-decommissioning monitoring (2006 to present), Orano plans to apply to transfer the decommissioned site into provincial institutional control. However, before that happens, the Cluff Lake decommissioning license will be up for renewal by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission next spring. With these milestones in mind, the timing was perfect to visit and host numerous Cluff Lake neighbours.

We visited near-by cabin and business owners during the summer of 2018 and toured them and extended families around the Cluff Lake mine site sharing and learning information about past operations, decommissioning, current and future land use, and sometimes just discussing life, change, and future economic opportunities. We also provided site tours for members of the Northern Saskatchewan Environmental Quality Committee (NSEQC - photo at right) and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. When they weren’t touring the site with interested groups, the Cluff Lake team spent time inspecting the site and doing some additional remediation work. They also appreciated having some time to take advantage of berry picking season, doing some canoeing, and visiting with neighbours.

In November, after the snow was blowing, we took to the road to host some community open-house style meetings in La Loche, Clearwater River Dene Nation school, Ile-a-La-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows (top left photo) and Beauval. During these gatherings we offered some locally made hot chili or stew with fresh bannock to those who braved the cold and joined us for the evening. About 200 people signed in to the event to view the display boards and talk with our team to learn about Cluff Lake’s decommissioning progress and often to share their connection to the site, either as a former employee, spouse or family member of an employee, or contractor.

It has been a great year for connecting, through formal and informal events, with neighbours and people who worked on Cluff Lake during operations, decommissioning, and post-decommissioning. Orano is proud of the Cluff Lake Project and thanks everyone who contributed to its success over the last four decades.