

Selkirk Metals Releases Results from Catface Mountain Drilling

From mid-July to early September, 2008, Selkirk Metals Corp. of Vancouver ran its first exploratory drilling camp on Catface Mountain in Clayoquot Sound. A dozen crew drilled eight core sample holes. Drilling is assessing the economic feasibility of developing the low-grade copper-molybdenum Catface deposit into an open-pit mine that would remove the top third or more of the mountain, including its ancient forest.

Some of the drill crew were from Ahousaht First Nation because Selkirk signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Band Council to allow for exploration on Catface, which is in Ahousaht traditional territory.

BC's Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources issued the drilling permit without obtaining required approval from the Clayoquot Sound Central Region Board, a resource-use board with representatives from First Nations and local communities. Friends of Clayoquot Sound therefore demanded that Selkirk's permit be rescinded, but the Minister of Mines refused.

In September and October, Selkirk released results from its first 2 drill holes, which encountered copper mineralization over their entire depth of 355 metres and 285 metres, respectively. Weighted averages for the first hole include 0.37 per cent copper, 49ppm [parts per million] molybdenum, 51ppb [parts per billion] gold and 2.7g/tonne silver. The results from both holes merely confirm what is already known from Falconbridge's 1960-1989 exploration.

Obviously, there are many questions and concerns about the environmental impacts of a potential copper mine on Catface Mountain. If an earthquake were to break the containment dam for a tailings pond, hundreds of millions of tons of toxic sludge would spill into adjacent streams and the ocean.

Friends of Clayoquot Sound, other environmental groups, the Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce, the District of Tofino, and the residents of Tofino are opposed to exploratory drilling or a mine. The Ahousaht community is split on the issue.

More exploration would be required before an actual mine plan could be proposed. It remains to be seen what the results of Selkirk's other drill holes will show, and whether the company will apply for another season of exploration next summer.

A disastrous mine must be stopped and eco-friendly economic development must be found for First Nations.

—Friends of Clayoquot Sound, fall 2008/winter 2009 newsletter