

3.5 Addressing discrimination and historical disadvantage

There are limits to which the underlying causes of the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples can be fully addressed through localized community development programs. In many cases, there will be structural barriers within society that hinder Indigenous Peoples from integrating and enjoying the rights of the majority of the population and which perpetuate socioeconomic disadvantage. These may include discriminatory laws, social stigmatization and poor, or non-existent, service delivery arrangements. The regional, social, economic and cultural transformations brought on by mining projects may well reinforce this sense of discrimination and, if not addressed, can exacerbate the negative impacts of mining on vulnerable groups.

Well-designed company programs can help break down the marginalization experienced by Indigenous Peoples. While the primary responsibility of a company is to the communities where its mines are located, there are opportunities for companies acting individually and collectively to have an influence on a broader scale. Examples of initiatives that companies have taken include:

- providing training for employees on diversity and cultural awareness
- putting in place zero tolerance policies concerning racism and addressing any discriminatory actions
- supporting research and training programs at the local level focused on delivering better health and education outcomes (including intercultural education) for Indigenous Peoples, as well as lobbying all levels of government to fulfil their own responsibilities in these areas
- partnering with government to target the development of infrastructure and service delivery initiatives to assist geographically marginalized indigenous communities
- advocating for, and supporting policy change, at the national and/or provincial level where there are laws that directly or indirectly discriminate against Indigenous Peoples

- providing financial and in-kind assistance to local and national community organizations to strengthen their resource base and build or enhance capacity so that they can advocate and represent themselves more effectively
- providing scholarships, training and mentoring support at the national and provincial level to assist young Indigenous Peoples develop leadership and advocacy skills
- building awareness among national or sub-national government officials in relation to Indigenous Peoples' identity and rights (eg by sponsoring seminars and study tours)
- partnering with national representative bodies to increase investments, procurement and employment opportunities for Indigenous Peoples.

RELEVANT CASE STUDY

**Preparing for mine closure In Indonesia.
(Freeport-McMoRan), see page 106.**

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WHICH WE PUT INTO
THE GROUND SHE
RETURNS TO US.”

Big Thunder (Bedagi), Wabanaki Algonquin

