



# **Ontario Mining Association Procurement Roundtable Sessions:**

## ***Summary Report and Recommendations***

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# 1. Introduction

As part of the Ontario Mining Association’s (“OMA”) 2025 priorities and based on input from the Indigenous Relations Committee (“IRC”), in September 2025, the OMA hosted two-days of roundtable discussions in Thunder Bay, Ontario, with both Industry and First Nations about procurement-related opportunities and challenges in the mining and mineral development sector. The sessions were facilitated by Michael Fox, President of Indigenous Community Engagement (ICE) and led to meaningful conversations highlighting overlapping barriers across the industry.

The roundtable discussion was the first in a planned series across Ontario to capture diverse perspectives from various parts of the province. While this report identifies opportunities and challenges in the mining sector, it also reflects the distinct experiences of Ontario’s diverse mining jurisdictions. This Summary Report & Recommendations provides an overview of the important discussions, key themes, and recommendations for addressing challenges. Each section explores a key theme and presents both industry and community perspectives. To protect privacy, this Report does not include names or other identifying information associated with specific quotes or statements.

## 2. Key Themes

### 2.1. Procurement Process, Timelines & Transparency

#### 2.1.1. Industry Perspectives

The procurement process was noted as lacking transparency, making it difficult for proponents to establish a common standard and implement aligned practices. Proponents are the entities responsible for proposing, developing, and advancing mining projects, and engaging with governments, Indigenous communities, and stakeholders.

A common challenge among proponents was that bid timelines are often too short to result in meaningful community input. Communities lack sufficient time to prepare and participate in the process effectively. This often leads to a restricted bidding process that falls short of the community bids proponents expect, or that are required by signed Impact Benefit Agreements (IBA).

Additionally, industry participants noted that challenges in sharing the evaluation criteria and scoring process with communities may lead to a perceived lack of transparency.

Without benchmarks for a procurement process or guidance that can be widely accessed and adopted by proponents, and due to capacity issues within communities themselves, many proponents feel a lack of alignment between procurement in practice and procurement-related commitments within IBAs.

Proponents advocated for a clear, defined procurement process and saw value in greater transparency, with guidance to manage expectations. Transparency could also result in greater consistency and alignment across procurement sections of IBAs, helping to manage community expectations. Proponents were clear that transparent guidance around a procurement process would increase understanding and better align with the spirit and intent of IBAs.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “We’re lacking a clear, defined Indigenous procurement process. We need a standard process that survives [internal] leadership changes and makes sure IBA commitments are built right into procurement.”
- “Bid timelines are often too short. Communities need enough time to respond or to find partners; two weeks isn’t enough for complex scopes.”
- “We should be transparent about how bids are scored — share the evaluation matrix, weightings, and how Indigenous content is assessed. Many of our international teams don’t do this, and it undermines trust.”
- “Our processes are set up with winners and losers in mind; consultation and engagement processes can be vague and feel like box-checking.”
- “We need a clear Indigenous and local procurement policy, plus an Indigenous procurement strategy that includes success stories, business registries, weighting, and set-asides, for both IBA and non-IBA commitments.”
- “We should standardize processes (e.g., through treaty negotiations) so that contractors know what to expect. Be told what the process is and have it be a standard.”
- “RFP timelines and First Nation partnership expectations must match. You can’t expect a meaningful partnership if you give them two weeks to set one up.”
- “We need to give more time on bids so communities and First Nations vendors can actually respond or form joint ventures (JVs). Our expectations are often too rushed.”

### 2.1.2. First Nation Community Perspectives

First Nation representatives noted challenges with procurement opportunities not reaching the right people and not supporting established community partnerships because of short timelines and competitiveness within communities. For example, an Indigenous-led business within a community’s economic development corporation may be competing with another local, but independent, Indigenous-led business.

Although many IBAs include commitments to prioritize First Nation businesses or partnerships, barriers remain in awarding contracts to these businesses. These include not giving First Nation communities enough time to contact partners and prepare bids before the information is released to the general public, not delivering RFPs and RFQs to the right community representatives, lacking a streamlined process to prevent multiple bids from the same company, as a partner to the Nation and independently. Proponents are increasingly encountering situations where the same company submits multiple bids, once under a joint-venture partnership and again under their own corporate name. In addition, many proponents lack the right personnel managing day-to-day relationships and procurement policies. This prevents the implementation of changes and improvements within desired timelines and often causes requests for accommodations to be overlooked.

First Nation representatives are calling for a standardized procurement strategy and policy that ensures transparency, consistency, and longer timelines for responding to bids. Communities are eager to participate, but opportunities must align with existing community capacity and prioritize First Nation businesses and partnerships.

First Nation Communities noted the existence of significant competition within the procurement process, often pitting communities against each other. They also face challenges with response and submission timelines that hinder meaningful participation. Ultimately, communities want to be included but call for a structure or guidelines that create a consistent procurement process.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “Our corporation was created because of an IBA with procurement set-asides, but it still took 1.5 years to win our first bid. The initial barrier to actually getting on site is huge.”
- “Older IBAs had no procurement language; RFPs went to the Nations and then straight to the general public. By the time we reached our supposed ‘partners’, they were already bidding.”
- “Procurement opportunities often go to the partnerships on paper (i.e., paper joint-ventures), not to the actual communities and Indigenous businesses. We need to make sure the community is truly part of the opportunity.”
- “Mining companies sometimes keep information siloed. Decision-making committees exist, but no real decision makers are at the table, making the process rigid and slow.”
- “Some procurement is outsourced overseas by head offices that don’t understand duty to consult or reconciliation.”
- “RFQs and RFPs often get sent to councillors who don’t have time to circulate them, so opportunities get missed before businesses even hear about them.”

- “We want procurement processes that are clear, concise, competitive, and strategic — with rules of engagement that we understand.”
- “We need timely information about upcoming RFPs, not last-minute notices like ‘we need 20 trucks Monday’. Without proper lead time, we can’t mobilize or partner effectively.”

## 2.2. Evaluation and Scoring

### 2.2.1. Industry Perspectives

Proponents recognized that First Nation participation and content criteria, such as impact plans, employment and training plans, economic participation and others, should be scored and weighted appropriately in the procurement process, not just a box to check. They also noted that joint ventures and partnerships must add value for the community. Otherwise, they do not support the common goals of the IBA or enhance the community’s economic participation. Paper joint ventures simply add cost-plus, namely, a fee that is a certain additional percentage to the total project costs, but do not enhance community human resource or economic development capacity.

There was also acknowledgment that in some cases the RFP package may be too large or overwhelming for communities that can only bid on specific portions. Smaller or segmented packages may be easier to manage.

Developing evaluation matrices in collaboration with Indigenous communities could offer a fairer approach to scoring. Proponents might explore more ways to increase transparency around the benefits of a JV or what a partnership provides to a Nation through testimonials, references or meetings with community representatives.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “Indigenous content and participation need to be weighted meaningfully, not just added as an afterthought next to price.”
- “In some of our models, up to 25% of the score is tied to Indigenous content. That percentage should actually change outcomes, not just sit on a scorecard.”
- “If we require a JV as a mandatory criterion in the matrix, that JV must genuinely add value, not just be an admin fee.”
- “Mining is a for-profit business. If the joint venture does not add value to community capacity, then it is just a cost-plus paper JV exercise that makes us less competitive.”
- “We should break large scopes into smaller packages so true First Nation businesses can bid directly, even if unbundling slightly increases overall cost.”

- “We should match contractors to longer-term opportunities (e.g., 3-year contracts) so the opportunity is worth bidding on, especially for smaller Indigenous businesses.”

### 2.2.2. First Nation Community Perspectives

First Nation Communities wanted to be involved in understanding the development of the evaluation and scoring process and advocated for significant weighting to prioritize Indigenous participation and content as part of the procurement process. A lack of consistency with percentages creates ambiguity and a perception of uneven opportunities. Transparent tracking, or the lack thereof, is also increasingly becoming an issue, especially regarding accountability and action.

Consistent scoring mechanisms, weighting, and the tracking of procurement commitments, targets and progress requires meaningful collaboration between both parties to remove these barriers. Creating high-value opportunities for Indigenous communities and businesses is also important.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “We’ve negotiated scoring matrices where Indigenous participation is worth around 33%, and the community actually evaluates that portion. This has led to better relationships and outcomes.”
- “Developers and governments should adopt procurement targets — for example, 10–15% of all mining-related contracts going to First Nations businesses in the territory, including high-value scopes, not just snow clearing and janitorial work.”
- “What gets measured gets done. We want transparent tracking of Indigenous procurement so people can be held accountable.”
- “Companies should police double-dipping — the same vendor bidding under a generic banner and again as an ‘Indigenous’ partner to capture extra points.”
- “Mining and energy companies use procurement strategies that push prices down and put communities in competition with one another. It’s very challenging to ‘play the game’ when you’re still learning it.”
- “We want rules of engagement that ensure First Nations receive RFQs early and consistently, not sporadically via personal networks.”
- “Developers should prevent the same company from bidding twice — once under a ‘Indigenous partnership umbrella’ and once under their own name. That’s gaming the system.”
- “We need to stop communities competing with one another for the same work. When we partner across communities, we derisk projects and increase our leverage.”

## 2.3. Business Knowledge & Community Capacity

### 2.3.1. Industry Perspectives

Many proponents identified knowledge and education as significant barriers to establishing stronger procurement processes and policies. The knowledge gap exists for both parties: many internal company procurement teams lack the education and training to meaningfully work with First Nation communities, and First Nations often lack a thorough understanding of the procurement process and the business opportunities and requirements associated with constructing and operating a mine. Proponents recognize that, in many cases, a lack of capacity within the community and significant social and economic challenges mean opportunities for mentorship, training, additional education aren't prioritized by communities.

Proponents at early development stages should consider starting procurement-related training and education sessions as soon as possible to support communities long-term and provide maximum learning opportunities.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “There’s limited understanding of procurement processes in many First Nations businesses. Training on how procurement works — including evaluation and paperwork — would help them compete more fairly.”
- “You can’t compare early-stage First Nations businesses to large contractors with decades of experience. Our evaluation approaches need to reflect that.”
- “We’ve offered entrepreneurship 101 and capacity-building opportunities, but sometimes there’s low uptake because communities have more urgent priorities.”
- “We see real value in business incubators/accelerators, mentorship, and helping identify local champions to pitch to leadership and decision-makers.”
- “Capacity issues exist on our side too, especially in supply chain and contract management, which impacts how well we engage with communities.”
- “Communities often don’t know where to start what business models are possible, what the pros/cons of JVs are, or how to structure companies. There’s a gap for workshops, panels, and toolkits.”
- “A joint procurement workshop that brings site people, business leaders, and communities together could be very powerful.”
- “We should develop and share Indigenous procurement toolkits and case studies of what has worked at other mines.”

### 2.3.2. First Nation Community Perspectives

Capacity remains one of the greatest barriers for Indigenous communities across many areas, not just mining. Capacity challenges take many different forms – in mining,

communities spoke about struggling to find enough people with the knowledge and skills to operate businesses and pursue procurement activities. In other cases, Nations don't have enough people to meet demand for opportunities, indicating human and technical capacity constraints where there is a desire for projects. It was also stated that the mine often competes directly with the Nation for human resource capacity by offering higher benefits and reducing the workforce available. Communities often try to staff and resource many opportunities and sectors at the same time, which further exacerbates the capacity issue.

First Nation Communities recognize that there are greater opportunities for procurement and for businesses to grow, but struggle to access them due to a lack of community capacity, knowledge, education, or restrictions in existing agreements. Greater access to education and support during the IBA negotiation phase can better position a Nation to establish and grow procurement opportunities throughout the project life cycle. First Nation communities are eager to supply goods and services beyond those needed to support the mining sector and should be supported in doing so.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “Our biggest issue is capacity — we simply don't have enough people. We train operators and managers, but then the mine hires them away with higher wages and benefits. It makes it hard to retain talent in community-owned businesses.”
- “We have around 45 JVs in different areas. We've had to accept what we realistically can and can't do. That's a hard pill to swallow in business development.”
- “Living on reserve, with limited infrastructure and access to capital, makes it almost impossible to secure bonding and scale up.”
- “Our agreements often don't actually build capacity. We need true partnerships that include skills, management, operations, and ownership, not just revenue.”
- “Our kids need to see us in real business roles. We're tired of being treated like a charity case; we want to show we have capacity and excellence.”
- “We've learned a great deal over 6–8 years of building and operating projects — that knowledge needs to be shared with other communities, so they don't repeat our mistakes.”
- “We see value in business development workshops, mentorship, and networking (including online platforms like LinkedIn) to build business skills and partnerships.”
- “We'd like to see procurement information and opportunities consolidated — multiple portals and conference costs create barriers.”
- “If I knew then what I know now, I'd have negotiated our first IBA and contracts very differently. There was a steep learning curve, and mining companies took advantage of our inexperience.”

## 2.4. Partnership Selection, Finance & Bonding

### 2.4.1. Industry Perspectives

Proponents recognize that strong JV partnerships bringing long-term value to First Nation communities are lacking in some areas of Ontario. Many companies enter JVs with Nations without showing a proven track record of providing value and benefits. Industry participants advocated for greater education and transparency for First Nation communities interested in entering into a JV. By definition, a Joint Venture is an arrangement where a First Nation community or company partners with a resource development company, (ie. a drilling company) to ensure communities are not passive actors but rather active commercially in the project. The joint venture is also an opportunity for the First Nation community members to seek employment and training within the company with culturally appropriate management practices.

Proponents noted that bonding, insurance, and financial risk are standard, non-negotiable requirements for business operation; these should not be compromised. Bonding in this case refers to a financial guarantee that ensures that a business can fulfill its contraction obligation, providing protection to the proponent if it is unable to do so. Proponents also recognized room for improvement in finding creative ways to make bonding more accessible to communities and less of a barrier.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “First Nation communities are not always choosing the right JV partners. They can partner with firms that have no history, no track record, and they score low in evaluation. We need to do more homework and have more discussions with communities and suppliers up front.”
- “There’s a lot of competition among communities and councils for contracts. We try to balance the playing field and not upset anyone, but it’s challenging.”
- “In some regions, like Quebec, we see strong, fully Indigenous companies created under IBAs. Elsewhere, we see mostly JVs with limited long-term value for communities.”
- “From our side, bonding, insurance, and financial risk requirements are non-negotiable, but we could be more creative in how they’re met — for example, through early partnership, staged scopes, or sharing risk.”

### 2.4.2. First Nation Community Perspectives

Nations are increasingly seeking roles as true partners, with equity stakes in projects and economic investments. Indigenous communities want to broaden their involvement and responsibility and be seen as a strategic partner, not just a box to check for the social license to operate.

First Nation Community representatives know bonding is a major challenge for Nations and limits their ability to rely on partners for bonding. The limitations and inaccessibility of bonding keep First Nations businesses stuck at a certain level and hinder long-term growth or delay the transition into leading contractor positions. First Nation communities are calling on proponents and government to rethink the rules and requirements around bonding and financial risk.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “Bonding is one of our biggest barriers. We rely on partners to bring bonding capacity, which limits our ability to be truly independent. Bonding requirements of tens or hundreds of millions lock us out unless we have established partners.”
- “If revenue is structured as a stream but doesn’t help us build bonding capacity, we’re stuck at a certain level forever.”
- “We often rely on non-Indigenous partners for bonding, workforce, and expertise. The goal is to evolve from JVs to fully Indigenous-owned companies that qualify on their own merit.”
- “IBAs and set-asides can create businesses, but as those businesses grow, they become handcuffed to those same set-asides. We want access to broader opportunities beyond the IBA bubble.”
- “We’ve set up community-owned entities and LPs [Limited Partnerships] and strategically chosen partners who complement each other — then use that platform to support smaller Indigenous companies.”
- “We need governments and companies to rethink bonding and financial rules so Indigenous businesses can realistically grow into prime contractors, not perpetual subs.”

## 2.5. Data, Reporting & Accountability

### 2.5.1. Industry Perspectives

Industry representatives noted that auditing systems and comprehensive tracking mechanisms have increased trust and improved the data-sharing between proponents and communities. Proponents discussed the value in sharing the wins and success stories with community partners instead of focusing only on challenges and areas for improvement.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “We’ve begun using auditing systems with contractors to follow up on commitments and procurement audits (e.g., using templates and gap analyses).”
- “We’ve shared scorecards and procurement results with partner communities and asked for their feedback. It’s helped build trust and improve the process.”

- “We need more visibility on wins and success stories, and we should celebrate them with communities.”

### 2.5.2. First Nation Community Perspectives

First Nation Community representatives noted the importance of having technical systems for tracking and reporting and said sharing amongst Nations that have successfully implemented processes would be beneficial. Nations again called for standardization and consistency across procurement reporting.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “We’ve created business directories tied to sourcing policies so our partners can’t simply bypass local Indigenous businesses.”
- “We want developers, companies, and governments to adopt standardized reporting on Indigenous procurement — if no one measures it, nothing changes.”
- “We’re interested in how many First Nations themselves have Indigenous procurement policies and reporting — we should also hold ourselves accountable.”

## 2.6. Relationships, Trust & Cultural Context

### 2.6.1. Industry Perspectives

Proponents noted that while building relationships with First Nations is essential, relationship management is critical to long-term success and trust. Learning how to work with one another, listen to, and respond to each other’s interests and concerns must be practiced throughout the relationship, not just at certain stages or when addressing challenges. Ensuring the appropriate people are at the table creates deeper respect and promotes actionable outcomes and commitments. Communities must be informed and contribute regularly as true partners. Collaboration is a two-way street, which both parties must prioritize to achieve long-term success.

Industry representatives also noted the many social and cultural challenges First Nations face and how these often take priority over mining projects. When capacity is limited and significant social crises occur within the community, there often are simply not enough resources and personnel to prioritize procurement opportunities or new bids. Industry also noted the importance of continued social baseline and socio-economic studies as a measure of accountability and change; these studies can demonstrate the real benefits received by the Nation.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “Relationship management is critical. We want to work together to solve issues, but we’re still trying to figure out how to make collaboration work in practice.”
- “Supply chain, community relations, and senior leadership all need to be at the table. Too often, procurement is disconnected from the relationship-holders.”
- “Quarterly meetings, tender trackers, and regular conversations about upcoming work help build trust and give communities visibility.”
- “There’s more to discuss than just the legal terms of the IBA — we need to talk about *how* we work together day-to-day.”
- “When dealing with Indigenous communities, money often isn’t the top priority. There are broader social, cultural, and governance priorities, and things can move more slowly because there aren’t enough resources.”
- “We need cross-cultural training not only for staff but also for contractors so they understand why ‘3% at all levels’ isn’t always feasible and how to build respectful relationships.”
- “Social baseline studies and socio-economic management plans are part of maintaining social licence.”

### 2.6.2. Indigenous Community Perspectives

Indigenous community representatives noted the importance of IBA terms that lead to action, jobs, and opportunities for the Nation, and the value of being treated as an equal partner. Nations are not looking for performative reconciliation or a box to be checked. They are pushing for real recognition and real partnerships. Indigenous communities also stressed the importance in early and consistent engagement. Relationships are not built overnight and require time and dedication. Nations are seeking to be part of the decision-making team, not just in advisory-level roles.

First Nation Community representatives noted the importance of mining projects, business and employment opportunities for future generations. They discussed the forward-looking approach many Nations must take when engaging on these projects and making decisions with the future in mind. Mining projects can increase and establish necessary infrastructure for communities, but must align with, and respect cultural and environmental interests.

Some relevant comments from participants include:

- “Agreements are our relationship — and some of the early IBAs were garbage. Over time we’ve pushed for stronger language, penalties, and sourcing commitments that actually mean something.”
- “We want companies to treat us as true business partners, not as a 3% ‘tax’. Our success should be seen as part of the project’s success.”
- “There’s real frustration with tokenism and performative reconciliation. We want accountability and action.”

- “We don’t want just revenue-sharing agreements; we want equity stakes in projects and assets — including NSRs [Net Smelter Return] — so we share real ownership, not just a percentage of profits.”
- “We need seats at the table where decisions are made — not just advisory roles where nothing changes.”
- “The ‘why’ matters — this work is about more than dollars and cents. It’s about culture, community well-being, and future generations.”
- “People leave communities and don’t always want to come back because of limited infrastructure and opportunities. Investing in infrastructure on reserve is critical.”
- “Some of our best progress came from early, consistent engagement — weekly or monthly meetings where we could understand what was coming down the pipeline.”

### 3. Industry and Community: Alignment vs. Differences

#### 3.1. Alignment

Areas where we heard Industry and First Nations align included:

- **Desire for clear, consistent processes**
  - Both sides want Indigenous procurement to be structured, transparent, and guided by clear principles.
- **Belief in early, ongoing engagement**
  - Both emphasize starting conversations early in the project lifecycle and maintaining regular touchpoints (weekly/monthly/quarterly) to build trust and plan together.
- **Recognition of capacity constraints**
  - Both acknowledge that First Nations businesses face capacity challenges (people, systems, bonding), and that industry also has gaps in supply chain information-sharing and cultural understanding.
- **Support for meaningful scoring and set-asides**
  - Both agree that Indigenous content should have real weight in procurement evaluation, not just be symbolic.
- **Need for training and knowledge sharing**
  - Both call for training in procurement 101, entrepreneurship, toolkits, case studies, and sharing of successful models across projects and communities.
- **Interest in long-term, sustainable businesses**

- Both sides talk about wanting First Nation businesses that last beyond the life of the mine and are not limited to low-value or short-term scopes.

## 3.2. Differences

Areas where we heard Industry and First Nations diverge in their opinions and experiences included:

- **Perception of fairness and power**
  - Industry often sees itself balancing between many communities and contractors.
  - First Nations describe being *deliberately* kept separate, played against each other, and taken advantage of in early IBAs.
- **Role of IBAs**
  - Industry tends to view IBAs as the main framework but wants to focus more on relationships beyond the agreement.
  - First Nations see early IBAs as weak and now push for strong language, penalties, and sourcing hooks.
- **Nature of partnership**
  - Industry sometimes treats Indigenous involvement as a cost item (e.g., “3% premium”) something to be minimized. Industry views “paper-JV’s” as not building community capacity and simply adding cost in a competitive industry.
  - First Nations want to be seen as true co-owners and strategic partners, not a “tax” or charity case.
- **Procurement gatekeeping**
  - Industry feels constrained by internal processes, global procurement hubs, and legal frameworks.
  - First Nations experience this as gatekeeping with opportunities going overseas, or existing networks while communities are informed late or not at all.
- **Legislation & enforcement**
  - Industry talks about audits and templates;
  - First Nations push for legislative changes at federal, provincial, and municipal levels to mandate Indigenous procurement and secure a seat at the table in law, not just policy.
- **Competition vs collaboration among communities**
  - Industry sees competition among Nations as a challenge to manage.
  - First Nations see that competition as partly engineered by industry structures and strongly advocate for broader, collaborative regional models

## 4. Key Takeaways

- **Guidance and Experience Needed:** Inconsistent procurement policies and isolating siloes reduce confidence and participation due to varying evaluation and reporting structures and lack of communication of good practices.
- **Timelines & Design Barriers:** Short bid windows and bundled contracts restrict Indigenous business access.
- **Shift Toward Ownership:** Communities seek to build equity in mining supply chain companies, co-ownership, and IBA commitments, which are measurable and documented, beyond set asides.
- **Capacity Gaps:** Workforce experience or business experience gaps and lack of access to opportunities prevent Indigenous firms from prime contractor roles or an over-reliance on paper joint ventures which do not build community capacity and end up being cost-plus additions to inflate mine development costs.

## 5. Recommendations

- Develop a sector-wide mining procurement framework, supported by guidance materials and workshops, to improve transparency and consistency in bid evaluation processes and reporting mechanisms across the industry. Establishing consistent, transparent procedures, including knowledge transfer through face-to-face workshops, would enhance community access to procurement opportunities and increase community confidence that was previously reduced due to varying evaluation criteria and report back structures.
- Enhance the existing business registry by incorporating a digital portal component that both profiles First Nation–led and First Nation–owned businesses, including the right company contact or community representative, and promotes sector-specific procurement opportunities. This platform would improve regional visibility for Indigenous businesses while ensuring that firms seeking opportunities are informed of available contracts and partnerships within the sector on a regional basis. Utilizing the opportunities presented at the vendor-of-record meetings will accurately inform the portal to ensure maximum benefit for industry and First Nation businesses.
- Support capacity building for Indigenous youth and small businesses through regional economic development organizations. Work with regional economic

development bodies, such as Thunder Bay's Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) and the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF) to expand training and mentorship initiatives for Indigenous youth and small businesses. Site-level mentorship opportunities would allow participants to gain hands-on industry experience, through potential co-ops or internships, while fostering knowledge exchange between youth and industry professionals and increasing awareness of Indigenous traditional knowledge and cultural practices within the sector.

- Encourage more meaningful First Nation participation in mining-related, business supply chain partnerships. Work with industry partners, government, and regional economic development authorities to develop partnership models that move beyond paper joint venture (JV) structures that provide limited participatory benefits to First Nation communities to building actual community participation in businesses. Emphasis should be placed on approaches that support information-sharing, joint ventures with actual, direct capacity building participation, and business-related skills development, resulting in long-term community benefits.
- Provide pre-development support and workshops to First Nation communities that may lack the financial and technical resources required to undertake financial modelling and legal due diligence. Such support would enable communities to better participate in business opportunities, including programs such as the Indigenous Opportunities Financing Program (IOFP), which is designed to support Indigenous equity participation in Ontario's critical mineral supply chain.



*Figure 1 First Nations Round Table*



*Figure 2 Industry Round Table*