



A2A Rail Media Statement

November 12, 2020

Alaska to Alberta Railway (A2A Rail) Launches Transformative Approach to Partnership with Indigenous Communities in the Northwest


A2A Rail, under the leadership of well-known Indigenous business leader J.P. Gladu (formerly the President of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business), recently re-launched its outreach and Indigenous engagement processes with Indigenous communities and governments in the Northwest. Initial meetings were temporarily halted while A2A Rail sought a US Presidential Permit to build the railway through Alaska and into Canada. With that permit in hand as of September 2020, the company can turn to the foundational process of building collaborative relationships across the corridor area.

A2A Rail is a large-scale corridor development project, centered on the construction of a railway between northern Alberta and the international ports in southern Alaska. The route, which connects producers and consumers in Western Canada with the large and growing markets in East and South Asia, passes through the traditional homelands of numerous Indigenous communities, who are proposed to be actively involved in all aspects of the project.

A2A Rail is proceeding with a two-track process for the development of the project. First, the company has reached out to Indigenous communities to offer the opportunity for equity holding in A2A Rail. Project Chairman and Founder Sean McCoshen is committed to making 49% of the project available to Indigenous communities, an offer unprecedented in the history of a major multijurisdictional project development in Canada. At the same time, A2A Rail has invited Indigenous communities to co-produce regionally appropriate

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approaches to technical engagement and permitting, one that reflects the needs and aspirations of the people of the Northwest.

A2A Rail is determined that this undertaking will transform the development process in Canada, highlighted by Indigenous leadership of the project, provision for substantial Indigenous equity ownership, extensive participation by Indigenous workers and businesses, and a dramatically different approach to Indigenous engagement and permitting. As President Gladu observed, "At no time in Canadian history have Indigenous people factored so prominently in the design and development of a major infrastructure project. The leadership of A2A Rail will define success equally by the achievements of our Indigenous partners as we do on standard commercial metrics."

A2A Rail is reaching out to community and government leaders in northern Alberta, Northwest Territories and Yukon to kick off both an Indigenous-led Investment Model and a Technical Engagement & Permitting process. While initial discussions proceed on the Indigenous-led Investment Model, development process and timing, the A2A Rail Technical Engagement team will also commence its meetings with community members to consider such issues as site location, the identification of heritage and culturally sensitive areas, strategies for engaging with Indigenous businesses, and training and employment opportunities for Indigenous residents.

Indigenous leaders have long called for a new approach to project development, one that respects Indigenous and treaty rights and that allows for active and early engagement with the design, construction, and operation of infrastructure being built on their lands. A2A Rail plans to deliver on such a collaborative approach.

The A2A Railway is more than a railway. While A2A Rail is designed as a multi-function carrier carrying cargo to and from East and South Asia, the railway is intended from the outset to be the foundation of a much broader effort to build economic opportunity in Northwest Canada. A2A Rail will work with Indigenous and regional leaders and businesses to identify commercial and employment prospects in related fields, from tourism to mining, forestry and agriculture. By connecting the Northwest of North America to global markets and creating numerous regional commercial opportunities, A2A Rail will bring prosperity and opportunity, implementing a model of development that is inclusive of, and responsive to, the aspirations and values of Indigenous peoples.



Pull quote: JP Gladu, "A2A Rail provides an opportunity to reinvent the relationship between Indigenous peoples and major infrastructure projects. We are determined to build partnerships with First Nations and Metis communities through an Indigenous-led Investment Model along the A2A Rail corridor. We are also reaching out to Indigenous communities, asking them to join us in defining an approach to technical engagement and permitting that works for their people and region."