

Minerals Education Program: a program with continuing purpose

H. V. Donohoe, Jr.

Scope and Purpose

The Minerals Education Program (MEP) is a program of education and public awareness about minerals, geology, and the mineral industry in Nova Scotia. The audience for the program is drawn from residents and visitors, teachers and students, service clubs, chambers of commerce and boards of trade, land-use planners and managers, museums, government officials, and decision-makers at all levels. This program has a varied scope which includes describing the mineral industry in terms of geology and earth resources, mineral exploration, mining, reclamation, environmental sensitivity, sustainable development, land-use planning, mineral-based manufacturing, and economic development. Its purpose is to inform, advise, and educate many audiences about mineral, geological and fossil resources that affect life in Nova Scotia.

A Brief History

Mineral education has a long history within the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and earlier departments. During the 1950s, under the direction of former Deputy Minister J. P. Messervey, staff of the department and Messervey created simplified geological maps, films, and still photographs of mining operations, geological features and publications for the general public. His purpose was to publicize to a broad audience information about the geology and minerals found in the

province, mining locations, and the uses for mineral products in everyday life.

The former Nova Scotia Department of Mines continued Messervey's work after his retirement by introducing prospector training and preparing various types of maps and publications for use by teachers, students and the general public. By the early 1980s, mineral education was regarded as important enough to assign a full-time person to developing and delivering components of the program.

From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, mineral education had strong financial and administrative support from three successive mineral development agreements (MDA). In each agreement, communicating with various audiences about the MDA, the mineral industry, and the importance of minerals received substantial funding. With the end of MDA funding, the department continues to support mineral education through its A-base budget.

Components of the Program and Current Activities

The scope of the work in the MEP falls into five areas of program responsibility. These are education and public awareness, information, training, policy issues, and liaison with groups. Activities associated with these areas are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Minerals Education Program components and activities.

| MEP Component | 1998-99 Activities |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Education and Public Awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •EdGeo Workshop about earth science resources for Nova Scotia teachers •Interpretive walks in provincial parks and other areas •Talks to service clubs and geology classes •Mining Week '98 activities •Work with boards of trade and chambers of commerce |
| 2. Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Answer public inquiries about earth science and mineral resources •Write feature articles for <i>Nature's Resources</i> •Write articles and a column for <i>Minerals Update</i> •Staff displays •Prepare printed material •Answer industry inquiries •Provide information to DNR regional staff |
| 3. Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Prospectors at seminars and field trips •General public in prospecting courses •Teachers at EdGeo Workshop •Teachers at the annual Association of Science Teachers in service day •University students at annual Nova Scotia Universities Field School •DNR staff in field offices and Middle Musquodoboit Education Centre |
| 4. Policy Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mineral promotion •Land access for mineral resource development •Mineral, rock and fossil collecting •Economic development through mineral industry activity •Communications strategy about minerals for special groups |
| 5. Liaison with Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mining Week Organizing Committee •Minerals Sector, Voluntary Planning •Chamber of Mineral Resources of Nova Scotia •Mining Society of Nova Scotia •CIM Halifax 2003 organizing group |