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# Preliminary screening



*A booklet series about Environmental Impact  
Assessment in the Mackenzie Valley*

# THE REVIEW BOARD

## OUR VISION

*Making wise environmental impact assessment decisions that balance the diverse values, interests, and knowledge of all residents of the Mackenzie Valley, while ensuring the protection of the environment for present and future generations.*

Environmental assessment is a set of steps for decision making. It involves predicting whether a proposed project is likely to cause environmental impacts that matter (“significant impacts”), and identifying ways to avoid or reduce them.

Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board  
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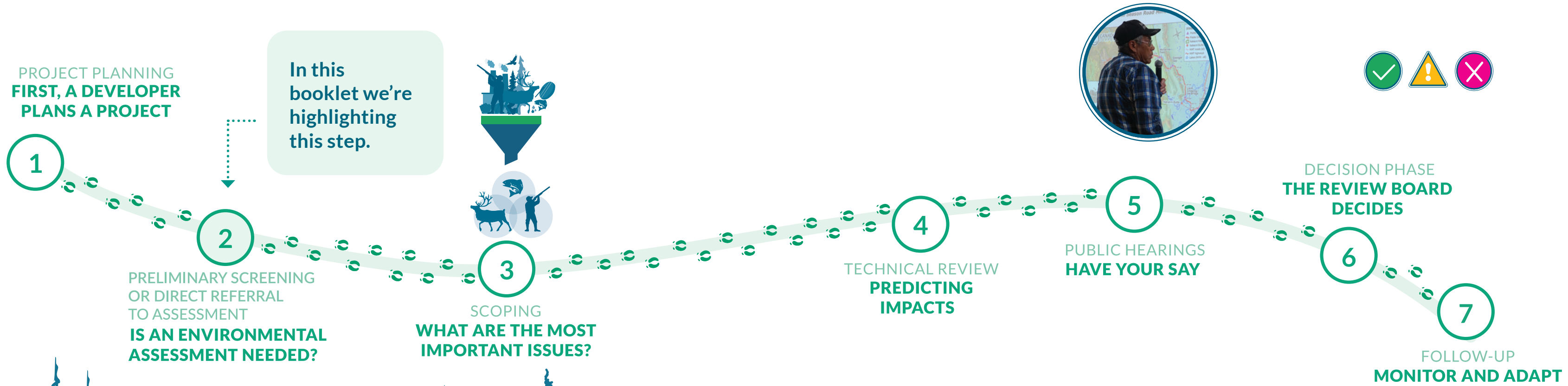
This booklet explores the Preliminary Screening phase of an environmental assessment. Preliminary screening determines if an environmental assessment is needed, or if the project can get licenses and permits without one. This decision is based on what is called the “**Might**” test, which asks if the project **might** cause impacts or public concern.

## KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Preliminary Screening is a quick look at whether a project may cause impacts
- Preliminary screening considers if a project **might** have significant impacts on people or the environment, or cause public concern. If it might, it is referred to the Review Board for a more thorough examination – an **environmental assessment**.

*This booklet is intended for information purposes only. It has been prepared in an effort to highlight key elements of the environmental assessment process. If any information conflicts with the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act or any of the Board’s Guidelines, Reference Bulletins, or Policies, the latter would take precedence.*

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AT A GLANCE



## IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NEEDED?

**Preliminary screening** is a brief, “big-picture” first look into the impacts a proposed project might cause. During preliminary screening, regulators do a high-level check to see if the proposed project **might** have significant impacts on the environment and people or cause public concern. If it might, then the project is sent to environmental assessment for a more in-depth study of its possible impacts.

### **Preliminary screenings happen when developers apply for land use permits or water licences**

Regulators screen almost all proposed projects that need a license, permit or other authorization. Screening is a quick review of the project using the “might” test (detailed on the next page). Preliminary screening is a key step to get environmental assessments for the projects that need them, and to get the public involved.

**Preliminary screenings are done by regulators. Regulators are the organizations that issue licenses and permits for projects, like Land and Water Boards.**

## WHO CONDUCTS PRELIMINARY SCREENINGS?



## Might the project cause impacts that matter?

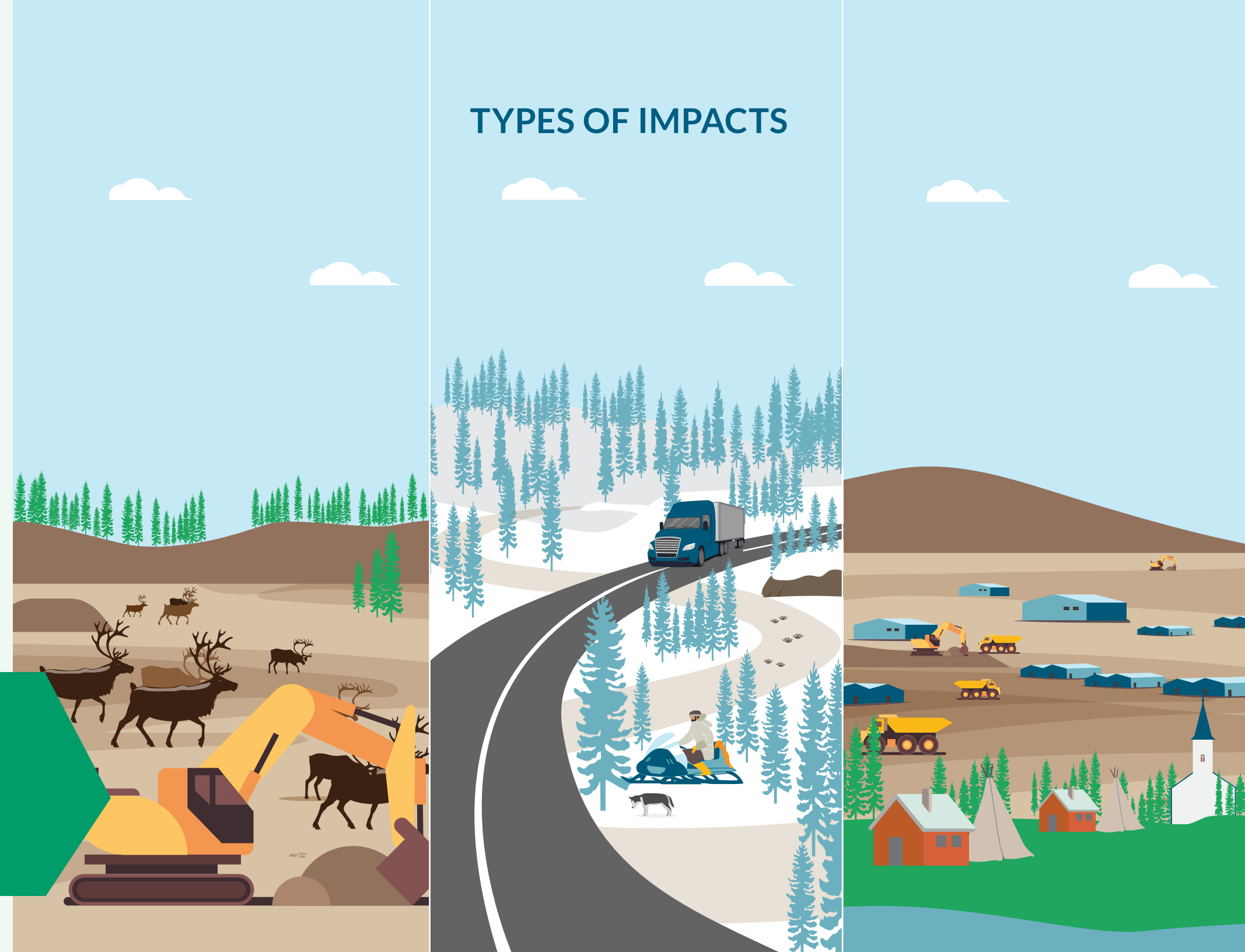
Preliminary screeners use the “**might**” test to determine if a project should be referred to the Mackenzie Valley Review Board for an environmental assessment. The might test asks if the proposed project **might** have significant impacts on the environment or be a cause of public concern.



Photo: Pat Kane



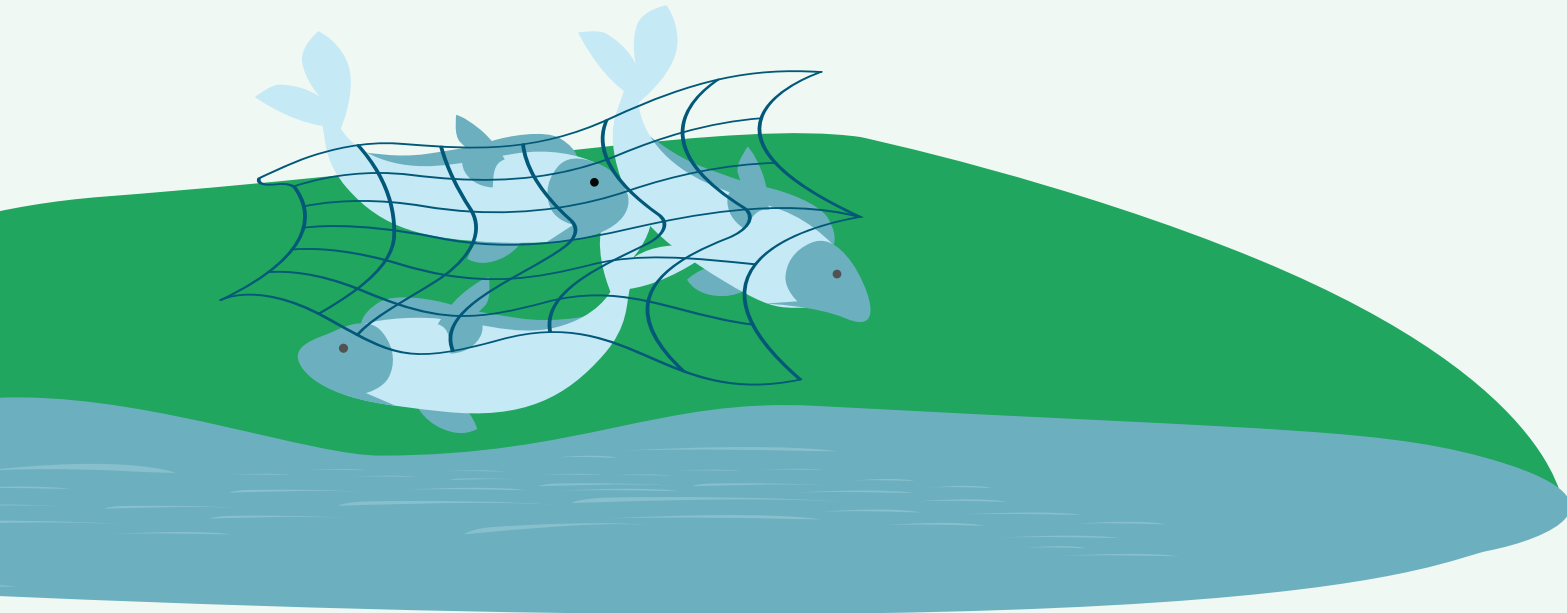
**Impact on the environment** means any effect on land, water, air or other parts of the environment, including effects to wildlife harvesting, the social, economic and cultural environment, or heritage resources.



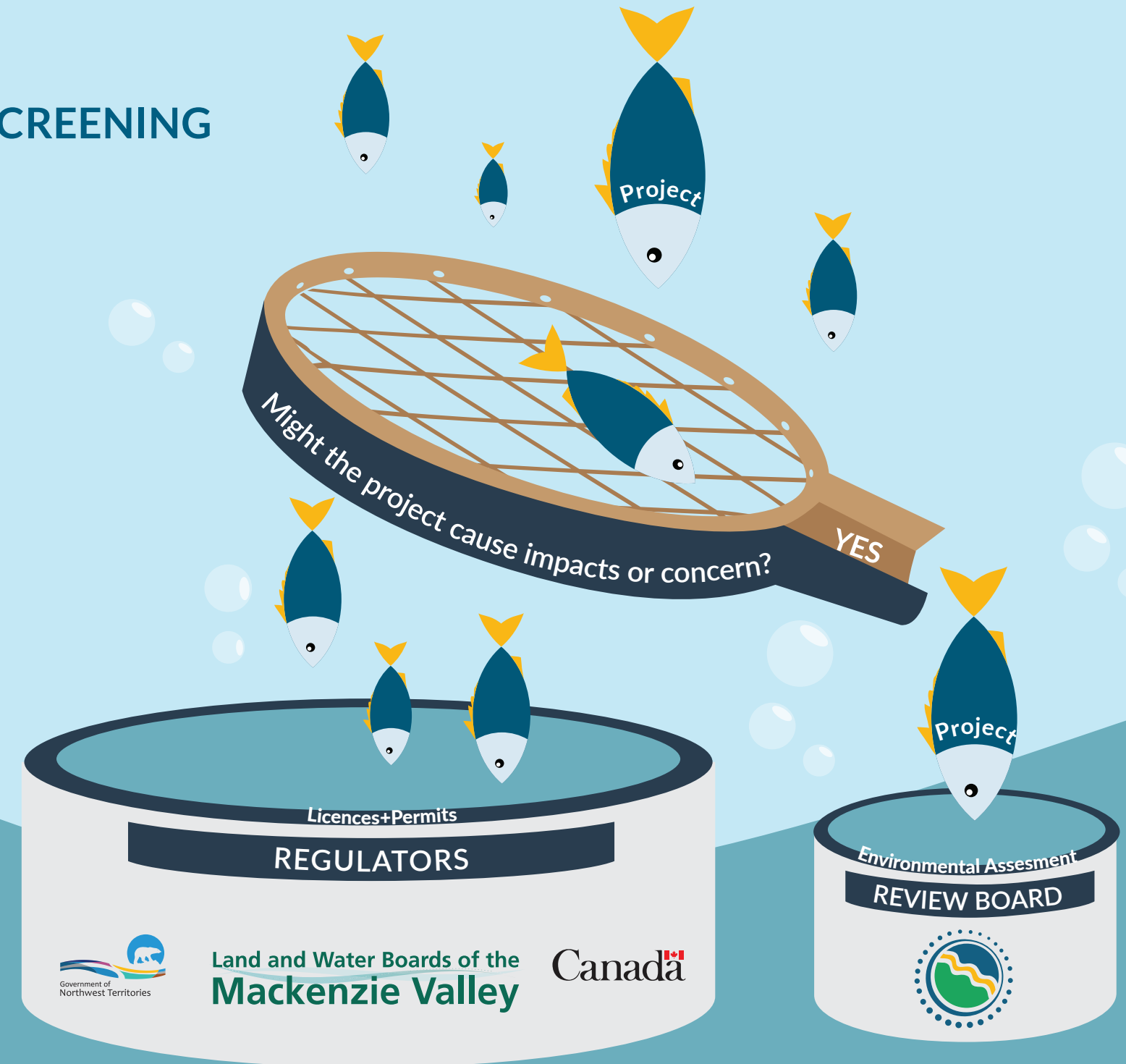
## IF THE PROJECT MIGHT CAUSE IMPACTS THAT MATTER OR CAUSE PUBLIC CONCERN, THE SCREENER WILL SEND IT TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Preliminary screeners must send any project that **might cause impacts that matter** (that is, impacts that *might* be significant after the mitigations the developer proposes) or *might* cause public concern to the Review Board. The Review Board conducts an environmental assessment on every project that it gets from a screening.

If the screener does not determine that the project might cause impacts that matter or public concern, the project usually goes through permitting and licensing by regulators. (In rare cases, the Review Board may decide to conduct an environmental assessment on a proposed project even if the screener does not refer the project for one).



## SCREENING



## CASE STUDY: THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Exploration around Drybones Bay

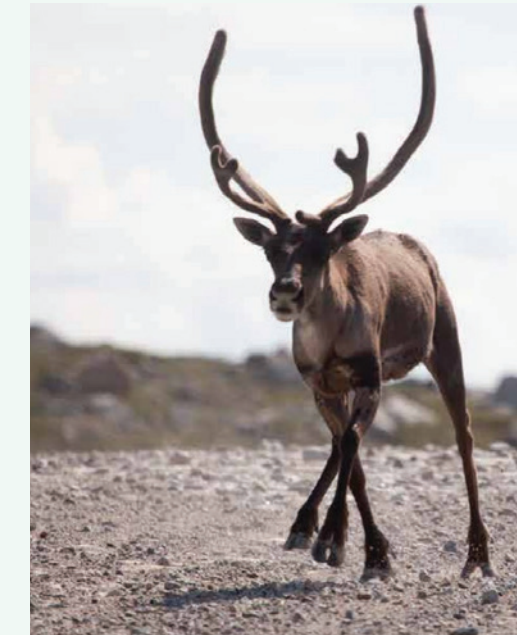
In 2003, Consolidated Goldwin Ventures wanted to conduct small-scale exploration drilling in the Drybones Bay area. The developer applied to the Land and Water Board for a land use permit. During the preliminary screening, the Land and Water Board heard many concerns about the effects this exploration work might have on cultural, social, and traditional land use in the area. The Land and Water Board determined that there was public concern about the project, and sent it to environmental assessment because of the cultural importance of this area.



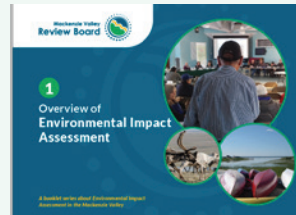
## CASE STUDY: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

### Jay Project at Ekati Diamond Mine

In 2014, Dominion Diamond Corporation proposed an expansion to the Ekati mine. Dominion Diamond applied to the land and water board for a water licence and land use permit. During the preliminary screening, the federal government referred the project to environmental assessment because of concerns about impacts on the environment, particularly about caribou and water quality.



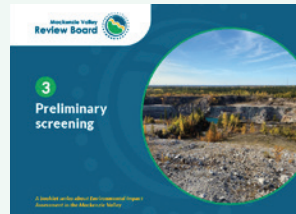
# USE THESE BOOKLETS TO HELP YOU THROUGH THE EA PROCESS



**Overview:** How environmental assessment fits into the co-management system.



**Project Planning:** What should happen before an environmental impact assessment?



**Preliminary Screening:** The co-management system decides if an environmental assessment is needed.



**Environmental Assessment:** What steps happen during an environmental assessment by the Review Board?



**Follow-up:** What happens after an environmental assessment is completed?



**Participation:** How to make your voice heard in environmental assessment.

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Review Board



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