

# INTRODUCTION

## *A Decade after the Mount Polley Mine Tailings Disaster*

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**T**HE 4 AUGUST 2024 release of this special issue marks ten years since the Mount Polley Mine disaster in Northern Secwepemc Territory in the central interior of British Columbia. The disaster is commonly recognized as the largest of its kind in Canadian history, unparalleled in the quantity and speed of the heavy metal-laden waste released from the mine's tailings storage facility area. Over a sixteen-hour period, an estimated 25 million cubic metres of mine waste uprooted trees and scoured the landscape as it made its way from Polley Lake and Hazeltine Creek to the depths of Quesnel Lake.<sup>1</sup> The waste is mobilized seasonally, introducing elevated levels of contaminants (such as copper) that may negatively affect sockeye salmon populations that migrate through Quesnel Lake.<sup>2</sup>

Aerial footage and images of the disaster were circulated around the world via social media in the days after and have been easily accessed on streaming platforms since. In 2016, an Environment Canada report entitled *Releases of Harmful Substances to the Environment* statistically communicated what many felt to be true regarding just how much heavy metal was deposited into adjacent ecosystems. According to the report, the Mount Polley Mine disaster released 2.14 tonnes of mercury and 134 tonnes of lead into adjacent ecosystems. This was an amount that accounted for 92 percent of the total lead and mercury released into waterways across the entire country in 2014.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This estimate is provided by the government of British Columbia: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/spills-environmental-emergencies/spill-incidents/past-spill-incidents/mt-polley>.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew K. Hamilton, Bernard E. Laval, Ellen L. Petticrew, Sam J. Albers, Michael Allchin, Susan A. Baldwin, Eddy C. Carmack, Stephen J. Déry, Todd D. French, and Brody Granger, "Seasonal Turbidity Linked to Physical Dynamics in a Deep Lake Following the Catastrophic 2014 Mount Polley Mine Tailings Spill," *Water Resources Research* 56, no. 8 (2020): 1–44.

<sup>3</sup> Environment and Climate Change Canada, "Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators: Releases of Harmful Substances to the Environment," August 2016, [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2016/eccc/En4-283-2016-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/eccc/En4-283-2016-eng.pdf).

In an attempt to distort what so many have witnessed in the footage of the disaster, Imperial Metals has suggested that impacts associated with the spill were “primarily physical and not chemical.”<sup>4</sup> However, these claims that, although the disaster had physically transformed the landscape, the heavy metals were chemically stable and would not make their way through the food chain have been discredited by scientific studies. Notably a 2019 study by Klemish et al. found that, following the disaster, copper, arsenic, selenium, and aluminum were, in fact, “bioavailable to fish in Quesnel Lake.”<sup>5</sup>

Although the Mount Polley Mine disaster is often described as an unprecedented disaster, many of the pieces in this special issue articulate a problem that far exceeds this disaster itself. Mass ecological destruction and contamination have been a common feature of mining activity in British Columbia since 1858.

In 1858, over a three-month period, an estimated twenty- to thirty thousand people flooded the region currently known as British Columbia in pursuit of the wealth to be gained from mining. This unprecedented migration had immense and immediate ecological impacts. Ecologically precious riverbeds, riverbanks, and hillsides with fluvial deposits were dismantled, resulting in around 58 million cubic metres of mercury-laden waste and sediment being deposited into the Fraser River and its tributaries.<sup>6</sup> This widespread destruction due to mining had immediate and devastating effects on salmon runs and food security in the region.<sup>7</sup>

Just a few months after this initial flood of miners into the region, in August of 1858, Great Britain established the colony of British Columbia. The primary focus of this colony was to facilitate these destructive forms of extraction by dispossessing Indigenous Peoples of their territories in order to facilitate settler access to land. Because of the way that mass

<sup>4</sup> These claims can be seen on the Imperial Metals webpage: <https://imperialmetals.com/our-operations/mount-polley-mine/breach-overview>.

<sup>5</sup> J.L. Klemish, S.J. Bogart, L. Zink, and G.G. Pyle, “Quesnel Lake Database Construction and Assessment,” *Environmental Quality Series*, EQS2019-03, Victoria, BC, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew D. Nelson and Michael Church, “Placer Mining along the Fraser River, British Columbia: The Geomorphic Impact,” *Bulletin* 124, nos. 7–8 (2012): 1212–28, see 1226; Andrew David Nelson, “The Environmental History and Geomorphic Impact of 19th-Century Placer Mining along Fraser River, British Columbia” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2011); R.I. Ferguson, M. Church, C.D. Rennie, and J.G. Venditti, “Reconstructing a Sediment Pulse: Modeling the Effect of Placer Mining on Fraser River, Canada,” *Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface* 120, no. 7 (2015): 1436–54.

<sup>7</sup> Neil Nunn, “The 2014 Mount Polley Mine Disaster: Environmental Injustice, Antirelativity, and Dreams of Unconstrained Futures” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2022), 70; Neil Nunn, “Repair and the 2014 Mount Polley Mine Disaster: Antirelativity, Constraint, and Legacies of Socio-Ecological Disruption in Settler Colonial British Columbia,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 41, no. 5 (2023): 888–909, see 899.

ecological destruction, widespread and systemic Indigenous dispossession and death, and the formation of British Columbia flowed from this flood of colonial extraction, 1858 marked the beginning of an era of multifaceted devastation. This era has endured to this day. The Mount Polley Mine disaster and toxic sites at Britannia Mine, Jordan River's Sunro Mine, and Teck-Cominco's historical operations at Pinchi Lake Mine are a few of the numerous examples of the continuation of socially and ecologically destructive mining processes since 1858.

Despite all the ostensibly environmentally attentive, remorseful, and reconciliatory approaches undertaken by the Crown in British Columbia since 1858, events like the Mount Polley Mine disaster persist.

Taken together, the contributions to this special issue reflect an incredible tension that emerges from this mode of colonial governance that offers primacy to ecologically destructive forms of extraction. This is a tension of colonial governance whereby, on the one hand, the state has been formed and structured to facilitate destructive, dispossessive, and genocidal approaches to extraction; while on the other, the legitimacy of the state is bound by a social contract that requires upholding an illusion of safety and social order for the body politic. The result of this tension – this delicate dance of sovereignty in British Columbia – is a continued deference to mining alongside environmental regulatory protections that are far outpaced by the cumulative impacts of centuries of colonial extraction, and technological advances that amplify the scale, speed, and magnitude of impact.

This pattern is clear in the context of numerous regulatory reforms and state-led investigations that have unfolded in the wake the Mount Polley Mine disaster. Investigations by the auditor general of British Columbia,<sup>8</sup> the Chief Inspector of Mines,<sup>9</sup> and the Mount Polley Independent Expert Engineering Investigation and Review Panel (IEEIRP)<sup>10</sup> were conducted in a timely manner and each assured the public that the disaster was being addressed. However, while these investigations and reports

<sup>8</sup> Carol Bellringer, "An Audit of Compliance and Enforcement of the Mining Sector," Victoria, BC, Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, May 2016, <http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs/2016/audit-compliance-and-enforcement-mining-sector>.

<sup>9</sup> Chief Inspector of Mines, *Investigation Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines: Mount Polley Mine Tailings Storage Facility Breach*, Ministry of Energy and Mines, Government of British Columbia, 30 November 2015, [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/mineral-exploration-mining/documents/directives-alerts-incidents/chief-inspector-s-report-page/m-200\\_mount\\_polley\\_2015-11-30\\_ci\\_investigation\\_report.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/mineral-exploration-mining/documents/directives-alerts-incidents/chief-inspector-s-report-page/m-200_mount_polley_2015-11-30_ci_investigation_report.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> IEEIRP, *Report on Mount Polley Tailings Storage Facility Breach*, Victoria, BC, Independent Expert Engineering Investigation and Review Panel (IEEIRP), Province of British Columbia, 30 January 2015, <https://www.mountpolleyreviewpanel.ca/sites/default/files/report/ReportonMountPolleyTailingsStorageFacilityBreach.pdf>.

provided some criticism of the regulator and the mining industry, they put forward a very narrow understanding of the causes of the disaster and failed to provide mandatory regulatory action.

Similarly, the provincial government has introduced numerous regulatory revisions to communicate to voters that it is responding to the devastating incident. Revisions in 2016 to the *Mines Act*, for example, include changes to the Health, Safety, and Reclamation Code that mandates a new five-year mine plan updating requirements, increased bonding and reclamation protocols, and tailings storage facility restrictions. As many who work in fields that deal with mining regulation in British Columbia can attest, revisions to the *Mines Act* are proactive on paper but are subject to weak enforcement and too often defer to the needs of the mining corporations.<sup>11</sup> Revisions in 2018 to the *Environmental Assessment Act* include efforts to enhance public confidence in major industrial projects, increase meaningful participation, advance reconciliation, and protect the environment while pursuing sustainable development. The revised legislation, however, has been widely criticized for not meeting many of these goals.<sup>12</sup> Decisions on project amendments are still driven by the government and follow the status quo of previous iterations of the *Environmental Assessment Act*. For example, between 2002 and 2020, 98 percent of all applications for amendments to existing projects received approval.<sup>13</sup> The consistent approval of amendments casts doubt on the stated goals of reconciliation, meaningful participation, and environmental protection. The Mount Polley Mine disaster also initiated more stringent regulations for administrative monetary penalties, which, for example, have been applied to Teck Resources Ltd. in the Elk Valley. But, as Rick Holmes highlights in this special issue, even these record fines pale in comparison to the billions of dollars earned from taking the destructive and negligent, but highly profitable, approach to mining for which the corporation was fined.

This point about the delicate dance of sovereignty that British Columbia is tied up with in the face of widespread social and ecological

<sup>11</sup> Mining Watch Canada, “BC Lags on Key Commitment as Environmental Assessment Act Turns 5,” 27 November 2023, <https://www.miningwatch.ca/news/2023/11/27/bc-lags-key-commitment-environmental-assessment-act-turns-five-years-old>.

<sup>12</sup> West Coast Environmental Law, Environmental Law Alert Blog, “BC’s Proposed New Environmental Assessment Act: Some Things Have Really Changed ... Others, Not So Much,” <https://www.wcel.org/blog/bcs-proposed-new-environmental-assessment-act-some-things-have-really-changedothers-not-so>. <https://www.miningwatch.ca/news/2023/11/27/bc-lags-key-commitment-environmental-assessment-act-turns-five-years-old>.

<sup>13</sup> Ben R. Collison, Patrick A. Reid, Hannah Dvorski, Mauricio J. Lopez, Alana R. Westwood, and Nikki Skuce, “Undermining Environmental Assessment Laws: Post-Assessment Amendments for Mines in British Columbia, Canada, and Potential Impacts on Water Resources,” *Facets* 7, no. 1 (2022): 611–38.

destruction and death from industrial extraction is important. It is important as it speaks to the need to understand the Mount Polley Mine disaster as part of a long, complex process and speaks to a need to bring together diverse perspectives that enable diverse ways of thinking about the myriad issues that have culminated in the disaster.

Since the disaster, Secwepemc voices have shared vital insights about the ways that the Mount Polley Mine disaster is deeply rooted in larger patterns of destruction related to mining. These voices, two of whom are featured in this special issue, clarify what is needed to move to a future in British Columbia not characterized by devastation. In the months following the disaster, for example, the former Chief of the Xat'sull (Soda Creek) First Nation, Bev Sellars, and the former Chief of T'xelceme (Williams Lake) First Nation, Ann Louie, sought redress from the provincial government. In a statement, Chief Sellars placed the Mount Polley Mine disaster within a broader context of colonial governance, asserting the need for the BC government to engage in “conversations about the adequacy of existing laws, regulations, and policy in regard to the overall mining sector in British Columbia.”<sup>14</sup> Relatedly, Chief Ann Louie commented that the “provincial government bears the responsibility to effectively collaborate with First Nations on a government-to-government basis on meaningful reforms [in relation to] mineral exploration and mining.”<sup>15</sup>

Nuskamata (Jacinda Mack, Secwepemc/Nuxalk) likewise placed the Mount Polley Mine disaster within a larger conceptual framing in the months following it, highlighting the need to bring Secwepemc views of the land and all its relations into the conversation. Nuskamata describes how Secwepemctsin (the Secwepemc language) encapsulates these vast relations with the concept of Secwepemculecw:

Secwepemculecw is an entire living system of interconnections. And within different Indigenous languages they have different words for this and within our language, Secwepemctsin, it is Secwepemculecw. This is the territory, this is the language, this is all of the relationships, it is the interconnectedness. It is our history, this is our future, it is our past. It is everything that makes us who we are. It's the land. It's the water. It's the air we breathe. It is the place names. All of these

<sup>14</sup> BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, “First Nations and Government Partner on Response to Mt. Polley Mine Breach,” 18 August 2014, para 8, [https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news\\_releases\\_2013-2017/2014arr0024-001208.htm](https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_2013-2017/2014arr0024-001208.htm).

<sup>15</sup> BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, “First Nations and Government Partner on Response to Mt. Polley Mine Breach,” 18 August 2014, para 9, [https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news\\_releases\\_2013-2017/2014arr0024-001208.htm](https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_2013-2017/2014arr0024-001208.htm).

things are integrated into one living system in the area that we call Secwepemculecw. It includes all of us. This is our way of life. This is our existence that we are working so hard to protect.<sup>16</sup>

Highlighting the knowledge and Law inherent in the notion of Secwepemcelecw, which has guided land use in this region for millennia, reminds us of the need to bring the reality of the violence of anthropocentric values into conversations about how to respond to the disaster. To further highlight this, we open this special issue with an excerpt from Ron Ignace and Marianne Ignace's book, *Secwépemc People, Land, and Laws*, in this issue's selection of "This Space Here."<sup>17</sup>

The excerpt from Ignace and Ignace juxtaposes two eras of colonial relations across Secwepemculecw over the last two hundred years. The first era features pre-settlement trade relations whereby, for half a century, newcomers to Secwepemc territory engaged in extractive trade relations in a way that adhered to Secwepemc Law and the knowledge systems that had informed sustainable extraction for millennia.<sup>18</sup> The second era begins in 1858 with the forms of extraction that ignored, and actively sought to eliminate, Secwepemc Law. The colony of British Columbia was established to facilitate the forms of deadly extraction that were quickly codified within BC colonial law and governance. As Ignace and Ignace describe, this transition to a deadly and dispossessive form of extraction is echoed in the 1918 Laurier Memorial, which distinguishes the "real whites" – the pre-1858 fur traders and other European newcomers – whom the Chiefs "trusted and respected" and "found were good people." "They did not interfere with us nor attempt to break up our tribal organizations, laws, customs," the Chiefs stated, "[they didn't] stop us from catching fish, hunting" and "never tried to steal or appropriate our country, nor take our food and life from us."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack), "When the Dam Fails – Responding to the Mount Polley Mine Disaster by Jacinda Mack," public lecture given at Camosun College, Victoria, BC, 5 August 2014, 5:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awTGbzKA600>.

<sup>17</sup> Among Secwepemc Nations there is a regional variation in the use of the acute accent. In this special issue, the focus is primarily on the Northern Secwepemc region where the disaster took place, and as Northern Secwepemc Nations tend not to use the acute diacritical mark, this accent is not used. We do include the mark when describing the words of Secwepemc People from a region who use the accent.

<sup>18</sup> Marianne Ignace and Ronald Eric Ignace, *Secwépemc People, Land, and Laws: Yeri7 Re Stsqeys-Kucw* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 533.

<sup>19</sup> In the summer of 1910 Chiefs from the Secwépemc, Nlaka'pamux, and Syilx Nations greeted Wilfrid Laurier with a letter that asserted the persistence of Indigenous title and sovereignty, asserting an intention to fight for a just and reciprocal relationship with the government. See Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan, and Couteau Tribes of British Columbia, "Memorial: To Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Premier of the Dominion of Canada, From the Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau Tribes of British Columbia," 1910. This memorial can be found here: <https://www.kanakabarband.ca/files/memorial-to-sir-wilfred-laurier-pdf>.

These voices, together with the contributions in this special issue, communicate the need to think about solutions that address more than the unprecedented amount of water and waste that was released in 2014. These perspectives reveal the precedent for a different type of colonial relations of extraction. Setting new goals and values that align with the pre-1858 agreements with newcomers of reciprocity and respect for Secwepemc Law is a meaningful start. What would it take for members of the BC government to return to the spirit and intent of the relations that existed prior to 1858 and act like “good people” once again? The knowledge, experience, and wisdom shared below provide insight into this challenging, but important, question.

Each of the contributions to this special issue is bound by the belief that coming together to reflect on the Mount Polley disaster, with the benefit of ten years of hindsight, provides important perspectives and encourages new conversations about the complex context that led to the disaster and how to move beyond it. This special issue brings together two edited interviews, five research articles, four reflections, and a policy brief. The diverse contributions detail both Indigenous and settler responses to the disaster; situate the Mount Polley Mine disaster within a history of settler colonialism and human rights abuses; critically assess British Columbia’s regulatory regime; and highlight the challenges of knowledge production about disasters. Together, the contributions offer a range of theoretical and practical findings that provide holistic assessments of this historic event.

Our special issue begins with the voices of two Secwepemc leaders. In an interview with Bev Sellars, former Chief of the Xatsúll Nation, legal scholar Deborah Curran edits a discussion about former Chief Sellars’s experiences as Chief during the time of the disaster. This discussion further highlights her subsequent engagements with the province and some actions she took to resist the colonial-political systems that produced the Mount Polley Mine disaster. These stories and accounts of times leading up to and following the disaster include commentary and quotes from other initiatives and investigations to highlight ongoing efforts to assess and address what occurred.

Anthropologist Emma Feltes’s interview with Secwépemc leader Judy (Manuel) Wilson/tsiqw xwéxwne (Red Hummingbird) provides rich insight into the significance of the disaster for Secwépemc people and the role of provincial UNDRIP legislation in recognizing Indigenous consent and jurisdiction over resource development. The interview concludes with a lesson learned from the Mount Polley Mine disaster:

suggesting a need to shift away from an extractivist economy towards an Indigenous or regenerative economy that prioritizes sustainability for the sake of future generations.

Geographers Arn Keeling and Nolan Foster open our academic research articles by situating the Mount Polley Mine disaster within a larger history of settler colonialism that relies on wastelanding, a discursive process that renders Indigenous lands and Peoples as marginal and pollutable.<sup>20</sup> The authors trace how evolving legal frameworks and public controversies that sought to encourage environmental protection and waste management worked to entrench the settler state's "right" to accumulate resources and to dispose mine waste into the environment.

Nlaka'pamux political scientist Shianna McAllister provides a critical analysis of documents from non-governmental organizations as well as from federal and provincial governments tasked with identifying the causes of the Mount Polley Mine disaster. She draws on Voyles's notion of "wastelanding" to argue that assessments of the Mount Polley Mine disaster minimize the impact of the disaster on Indigenous communities both within (Secwepemc and Tsilhqot'in) and downstream of (St'at'imc and Nlaka'pamux) the disaster site. McAllister's analysis highlights how documents normalize particular sets of concerns that work to remove Indigenous connections to, and concerns about, lands and resources, which ultimately renders these lands ripe for catastrophic extraction and dumping of waste.

Scholar activist Norah Bowman and human rights campaigner Tara Scurr draw on Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics to argue for a reading of the Mount Polley Mine disaster as a human rights disaster. Bowman and Scurr show how regulatory capture, through corporate self-reporting and voluntary compliance mechanisms, demarcate Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as unworthy of protection from dispossession and violence.

Geographer Anna Stanley and legal historian and geographer Neil Nunn examine how Western science and the assumption of its objectivity functioned within British Columbia's free market colonial systems. The belief in the objectivity of science was crucial to the ability of the province and the Mount Polley Mine Corporation to abstract the disaster from the larger destructive and dispossessive colonial conditions of which it was a part. The authors show how Imperial Metals and the Mount Polley Mine Corporation, under colonial neoliberal systems committed

<sup>20</sup> T.B. Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo County* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 9.



to upholding the needs of extractive projects, privileged narrow, partial, and often highly strategic claims, which helped the corporation shape scientific results and narratives to their benefit.

The final research article in this special issue traces the evolution of quiet mobilization – rooted in civic practices such as letter-writing – over a five-year period (2014 to 2019) in the settler communities surrounding Quesnel Lake. Environmental and political sociologist Max Chewinski shows how social movement scholarship’s focus on contentious collective action (e.g., protests) runs the risk of dismissing quiet mobilization as non-mobilization. He argues that disregarding quiet mobilization neglects the individual and collective tactics that characterize political participation in some rural and predominantly white settler communities.

Three personal and professional reflections and one policy brief share a core concern with British Columbia’s regulatory regime. Two Likely, BC, residents, Richard Holmes and Doug Watt, critique the province’s regulatory regime based on their experiences since 4 August 2014. Richard Holmes contextualizes the Mount Polley Mine disaster within a history of lax regulatory requirements and government ties to the mining industry that solidified corporate power over natural resource development. His anger about the political-economic conditions that facilitated the disaster is tempered with two key suggestions for protecting the environment and providing the public with meaningful opportunities to engage in resource development issues. Doug Watt describes the numerous promises made by Mount Polley, provincial politicians, and regulators to protect Quesnel Lake in the aftermath of the Mount Polley Mine disaster. Drawing on news articles, environmental permits, and scientific assessments, he details how these promises were repeatedly broken over the last decade. He argues that regulatory capture and professional reliance ensure that mines like Mount Polley continue to operate at the expense of the environment.

Sonia Furstenau, BC Green Party leader and MLA, reflects on how the dumping of contaminated soil into a quarry pit at the south end of Shawnigan Lake prompted the following question and launched her political career: “What kind of government puts a community’s drinking water at risk?” Her reflection connects the threat of water contamination at Shawnigan Lake and the contamination of Quesnel Lake to British Columbia’s system of professional reliance. She documents the history of professional reliance as a form of deregulation and discusses her work

as an MLA to reform British Columbia's regulatory regime so that the government protects communities, the environment, and, of course, water.

Sociologist and regulatory researcher Max Chewinski's policy brief focuses on the public consultations organized in the community of Likely to address disaster response, recovery, and wastewater management issues. It draws on the experiences of those who participated in public consultation to highlight three key lessons that policy-makers should support in order to facilitate a more procedurally just public consultation process.

University of Northern British Columbia geographers Philip Owens and Ellen Petticrew conclude our special issue with a ten-year review of research on the Mount Polley Mine disaster. Through their work with the Quesnel River Research Centre in Likely, they contributed to scientific assessments following the spill and personally reflect on the challenges and lessons learned about academic research in the aftermath of this major environmental disaster. For example, they discuss the challenges of answering questions from residents that go beyond the scope of research projects and suggest that, to reduce community expectations and to minimize frustration, researchers provide early and clear communication about the limits of the research being conducted.

The perspectives and research shared in this special issue reflect the historical, cultural, political, and ecological complexities needed to understand the disaster itself and how similar outcomes might be avoided in the future. The reality is that in British Columbia – despite all the investigations, policy tweaks, and expressions of remorse from politicians and corporate representatives – many still feel the context surrounding the disaster is unresolved; there has not been accountability or changes to policy or legislation that matches the scale of the disaster and the systemic problems the disaster reflects. The hope for this special issue is that it will serve as a starting point to consider further how to meaningfully address the structures of devastation in British Columbia that the Mount Polley Mine disaster represents. Future research and writing is needed to detail how policy and regulation can be specifically reformed and reimagined to ensure disasters like this do not take place in the future. More work is needed also to establish concrete steps to move beyond cultures that celebrate and support fundamentally destructive and deadly approaches to extraction. We hope this special issue provides valuable perspectives for these future discussions, and inspires further efforts to think about how to arrive at a future that – rather than being characterised by death, dispossession, and destruction – is committed to values of responsibility, accountability, and social and ecological health.