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Developments  
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**ISLAND  
GOLD**

ALAMOS GOLD





## Intention in action

*Stantec's Lee Ann Malley is championing neuro-inclusion and safety in the workplace*

By Ailbhe Goodbody

Lee Ann Malley

**Senior environmental planner**  
Stantec

**Honours Bachelor of Science in Forestry (HBScF)**  
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### What is your proudest career highlight?

In the Northwest Territories, there was a gap in regulatory framework for air quality monitoring and management. Around two years ago, I championed the proposed development of the 'Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Guideline' that was scoped to mine operators. Air quality regulations over the years were met with challenges, and the guideline was a step towards closing the gap, bringing clarity of expectations to industry and government alike.



Courtesy of Lee Ann Malley

**O**ver the course of her career, Lee Ann Malley has developed proficiency in environmental management across various sectors including forestry, mining, consulting and the public service; her work in mining has brought her to the tundra of the Northwest Territories, the James Bay Lowlands of Ontario and many places in between. In addition to environmental management, she has become an advocate for neuro-inclusion and workplace safety culture.

Malley grew up in Red Rock, Ontario, and always had an interest in the environment. "I had freedom to explore and did a lot of outdoor activities. The resource economy was also at my doorstep—our town had a pulp and paper mill," she told *CIM Magazine*. "I have a memory from my early school days, where I had to share the biggest word that I knew at the time. My answer was 'environment'—looking back, this may have been career foreshadowing."

Following graduation, Malley began her career with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in Thunder Bay. "There was a recession that significantly impacted the forest industry of northern Ontario during that time," she said. "I wanted to diversify my skills, which eventually led me to an environmental career with De Beers Canada in 2013. I was part of a training program that provided a unique opportunity to learn about all facets of the business while engaging in my primary discipline."

A career highlight for Malley was initiating and leading a native seed collection program to support reclamation at the company's Victor mine in 2014. "In designing the first program, I set high biodiversity collection targets and Indigenous participation objectives, which were voluntary moves that the company supported. In part, it has helped to differentiate this mine from typical closure scenarios," she explained. Up until 2014, the mine had broad commitments related to native plant revegetation and it conducted research, but to operationalize this was new territory.

The year she worked on this project, the collection exceeded 60 species, employed over 10 Indigenous youth—some of whom worked offsite—delivered science education and had zero safety incidents.

“The program was carried on and grown by others through the years, but the values I set stuck and became interwoven with the mine’s closure story and legacy,” she said. “I often look back on this project because I learned a lot and saw how many benefits come from intentional value-based programs.”

In 2017, Malley joined the Government of the Northwest Territories as an environmental assessment (EA) analyst, later becoming the manager of her unit. Mining projects were a common focus of her role, but it also touched on other types of developments.

“Foresters are trained in multi-disciplinary resource management, which is very transferrable to the mining sector,” she said. “Forest management planning also carries a lot of parallel thought processes, which aligns with mine planning. For instance, both industries apply resource quantification techniques and sequencing for extraction, while taking into consideration environmental management, engagement, economics and constraints. The other obvious strength of a forestry background deals with vegetation and reclamation.”

She noted that like the mining industry, forestry has faced public opposition. “The importance of public engagement and consent building was always imparted to me as the key to success,” she said. “Overall, I think my degree has given me good perspectives to bring into mining and other resource developments.”

In 2022, Malley accepted a role at Stantec and moved back to Thunder Bay. As a senior environmental planner, she supports Stantec’s clients and project delivery related to EA and permitting solutions. This can involve analysis for regulatory roadmaps, gap analysis, project descriptions, preparing permit applications and supporting documents and authoring EA chapters, or coordinating for an overall EA submission.

“I don’t necessarily work for mining clients every day, but permitting solutions for a mine’s ancillary infrastructure is found within other sectors,” she explained. “We often help to advise clients on project approvals and how to proceed in a way that supports regulators to make their decisions.”

Stantec has safety and environment coordinators in every office who help assist its leadership with health, safety, security and environment (HSSE) program delivery, and Malley has this role at the Thunder Bay office in addition to her primary role as an environmental planner. She conducts HSSE orientation of new staff, serves as a local resource to help navigate safety questions related to field planning and participates on the joint health and safety committee.

“If we’re not intentional about safety, complacency and incidents can rise,” she said. “It allows me to be a better project manager too, as we are responsible for the safety of others in the field. The role allowed me to understand Stantec’s safety framework more quickly than I would have otherwise.”

### Including neurodiversity

Malley also chairs Stantec’s Canadian employee resource group (ERG) for neurodiversity, which she co-founded with another colleague in December 2022. Preceding this launch, similar groups were established at the company’s offices in the U.K., Australia and New Zealand.

“During my first week at Stantec, I came across neurodiversity content on an intranet page,” she recalled. “I was diagnosed with ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder] as a child, and the early assessments identified some other cognitive differences. Unfortunately, the challenges and barriers can be significant for the neurodivergent community, and this was the first workplace where I saw this conversation occurring.”

The ERG delivers initiatives and activities, open to all Canadian employees, based on providing opportunities for education, support and advocacy. “We host online events, speakers and roundtables, and we are developing a peer support program,” she said. “We’re essentially furthering conversation around neuro-inclusion.”

According to Malley, the group has had a great response and high event turnout. “When we manage with neuro-inclusion in mind, it brings benefits to the entire workforce,” she pointed out. “Neurodiversity as a paradigm recognizes and values neurological variation across the entire population. It values *all* minds. We’re in a knowledge economy and our labour is mainly intellectual. Valuing neurological diversity, and the expression of it in the workplace, adds strength and depth to any organization.”

She noted that neurodivergent people often report that they are not understood, and such ERGs can help to remove stigma, foster a sense of acceptance and belonging and allow for shared experience. “There is support and awareness for neurodivergent kids within the education system, but that support doesn’t necessarily continue in the workforce,” she said. “Groups like this can help to bridge a gap.”

Malley explained that one area many people with ADHD and other forms of neurodivergence struggle with is justice sensitivity (perceiving unfairness and wrongdoing in the world more frequently, and feeling it more acutely, than neurotypical people); many of the initiatives she highlighted for this profile are those with social values. “In my experience, there is also a downside to being a person who is sensitive to justice—it is not always understood at the surface [level],” she said. “I think those with justice sensitivity make great managers and leaders because they are naturally attuned to identify and strive for corrections in meaningful ways, and it makes the workplace a bit better. There is room for more understanding on the topic of neurodivergence in the workplace and the inherent leadership qualities that neurodivergent people bring.”

Looking towards the future, Malley pointed out that climate change and mining energy solutions are a significant industry challenge, and that mining projects will be scrutinized more and more from a climate lens. “I will be looking for opportunities to build more skills around energy and climate solutions related to resource developments, as well as ways to innovate on consent building and Indigenous project equity,” she said. “I think both areas will be important for mine developments today, and in the future. I’d love to have a client/project that allows me to stretch in this way. The landscape for mining expectations is changing rapidly.”

Her dream project would be to do client work related to the Ring of Fire region in Ontario. “I believe this development is an iconic nation-building project and is going to play a pivotal role for the societal energy transition,” she said. 