



## Scenes at a standoff

Interview by *Listed Staff*

**Who** Robin Goad, president, CEO and founder of Fortune Minerals Ltd. (TSX:FT), a diversified miner headquartered in London, Ont., with several properties in Canada. Of those, the closest to launch is its NICO metals mine in Northwest Territories, where construction is set to start next summer following its approval this year by the Tlicho and federal governments.

**Involvement** Fortune's highest-profile property this year wasn't NICO, but the Arctos project, a high-grade anthracite coal deposit in the Stikine Valley of northern B.C. A mine is planned and in July, Fortune began permitted field-work as part of the environmental assessment. That ended in September, when members of the local Tahltan First Nation in the community of Iskut who oppose the mine escalated weeks of protest, occupying Fortune's worksite.

The Stikine is part of a three-river complex also called the Sacred Headwaters, where the Tahltan and environmental NGOs want to prohibit all development. In 2012, Shell Canada gave up its gas tenures there and the B.C. government declared it forever off limits to gas development. The government still supports Fortune's coal mine, however, and after the occupation, it set up a mediation process. Goad then declared Fortune would temporarily withdraw from the property and allow talks to proceed.

**Listed** When you started the environmental assessment work, did you foresee this situation becoming so problematic?

**Robin Goad** We knew that there was opposition in the communities. The threat of interference had been mitigated because the road that

accesses the area had been washed out and so in order to successfully frustrate our activities you'd need to fly in. But the community of Iskut actually rehabilitated the washouts on the roads to allow access.

**Listed** When you formally withdrew in September, you said you'd let the government process go on. What process is that?

**Robin Goad** The B.C. government [had been] kept well informed of the protest activity and we had active dialogue...on multiple levels right up to cabinet ministers. And the government decided to intervene and conduct a mediation process. That process is ongoing right now [mid-November]. They are meeting with the Tahltans with the objective of establishing a protected area that the Tahltans can conduct their traditional activities [in] but that would not interfere with our project being able to move forward.

**Listed** Are you at the table in this process?

**Robin Goad** We have bilateral discussions with the government and the government has bilateral discussions with the First Nation. So we're not at the table together.

**Listed** How much of a concern is this to your shareholders?

**Robin Goad** Generally speaking, our shareholders are very understanding of the issues that we go through. Most of our shareholders are long-term shareholders and they've seen many actions by First Nations in our other projects that eventually get resolved and we move forward.

**Listed** In September, you also said you could seek a court injunction to end the occupation, but you opted not to. Why?

**Robin Goad** Whether a company goes to court and enforces its rights versus other ways of trying to deal less confrontationally is a business decision. We felt that because it was near the end of the season that a legal confrontation, particularly after the British Columbia government had intervened to mediate, was not going to be the right business decision for our joint venture at the time, but may be in the future.

**Listed** We've also just seen how things can go badly wrong at a blockade over fracking in New Brunswick?

**Robin Goad** That's true. We had been blockaded before, in 2005, we did get an injunction. And [this time] the RCMP informed me that there were several blockades in progress in northern B.C. at the same time as us and that it's pretty routine. Until the government determines who's in charge, I think we're going to see further escalation of these kinds of protest actions.

**Listed** In charge, how?

**Robin Goad** We don't have treaties in British Columbia. British Columbia is a jurisdiction in particular that has failed to deal with these issues in the past and...and now we're getting into all these legal conflicts to determine, basically, who owns the land.

**Listed** What are your next steps?

**Robin Goad** I'd rather not put hard lines on dates or activities. We're trying to work within the government process to resolve this. At some time the business decision about putting people on the ground again will be made and it will be based on the information we have at that time. ▼