
Land Management Manual

Chapter:

Environmental Management Processes on Reserve

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Certain activities on reserve lands must comply with applicable federal environmental laws and regulations to protect environmental integrity and human health and safety.
- 1.2 In the absence of federal environmental laws and regulations, where the department is issuing an instrument to a proponent providing rights to use reserve lands (for example, a lease or a permit) or providing direct funding for construction, the department should ensure the proponent meets or exceeds provincial requirements or standards set by other regulatory or advisory bodies, where appropriate.
- 1.3 The lands officer should work with environment officers early in the planning phase to ensure that environmental requirements in relation to lands activities involving the department are carried out in a timely manner. Departmental officials will inform all parties involved of environmental concerns as soon as they are identified.
- 1.4 The lands officer must ensure the appropriate environmental clauses (such as mitigation measures, monitoring, or enforcement requirements) and timelines identified in an environmental management process are incorporated or referenced in the terms and conditions of the land instrument to be issued by the department or as part of the funding documentation.

2.0 Environmental Management Processes Overview

- 2.1 Environmental management processes applicable to land instruments and certain funding arrangements are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptions of Environmental Management Processes

Process	General Description
Environmental Review Process	<p>Under sections 81-91 of the Impact Assessment Act, the department is required to determine if a proposed project on reserve will cause any significant adverse environmental effects. This determination must take place before any action or decision is made that would enable a project to proceed.</p> <p>The Environmental Review Process is used to evaluate, anticipate and mitigate potential environmental risks associated with projects carried out on reserve for which the department is the proponent, issuing a statutory authorization or providing financial assistance.</p>

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Process	General Description
	<p>An additional non-mandatory Climate Change Assessment Toolkit may be used as a best practice to assess how a project on reserve may be at risk of climate change impacts, identify mitigation measures to reduce those risks, and enhance the project's climate resiliency.</p> <p>When a project is proposed, the department may determine that a full environmental review is not required because the project falls within the class of projects set out in the Order Designating Certain Excluded Classes of Projects.</p>
Projects	<p>The Impact Assessment Act sets out the federal requirements for assessing the potential impacts of certain proposed projects, including those on reserve. A project is defined in section 81 as either a physical activity (something requiring physical effort by humans) in relation to a physical work (human-made structures) that is not a designated project (see below) or a physical activity that is designated under section 87, and listed in the Physical Activities Regulations.</p> <p>Section 82 prohibits federal authorities from allowing projects to proceed until their impacts have been assessed; however, as per section 88, the Order Designating Certain Excluded Classes of Projects lists classes of projects that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has determined do not need to be assessed. It is the responsibility of the environment officer to determine if a project falls under the listed classes set out in the Order Designating Certain Excluded Classes of Projects.</p>
Designated Projects and Impact Assessments	<p>Section 8 of the Impact Assessment Act prohibits federal authorities from allowing work on a designated project unless the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) determines that no Impact Assessment is required or a decision statement is released stating the impacts are in the public interest.</p> <p>Designated projects are projects with the greatest potential for adverse environmental effects as listed and described in the Physical Activities Regulations (Project List). The Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada may designate a physical</p>

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Process	General Description
	activity that is not identified on the Project List if deemed to be high risk, as set out under subsection 9(1) of the Impact Assessment Act .
Environmental Site Assessments	<p>Environmental Site Assessments determine the current condition of the land and identify any environmental concerns or contamination that may impact the proposed use and value of the land.</p> <p>Environmental Site Assessments can be conducted in three sequential phases, which are followed by remediation, if necessary.</p> <p>Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (Canadian Standards Association Standard Z768-01, R2022) identify actual and potential site contamination or areas of potential environmental concern on the sites and determine if further investigation is needed. They involve the collection and review of existing information, such as environmental records, a site visit, and interviews with the site owner or other individuals familiar with the site. The Phase I report identifies the existing and potential sources of contamination or environmental concern on the site and indicates whether further assessment, including environmental sampling, is needed. Phase I Environmental Site Assessments can also provide recommendations on environmental management best practices based on observations made in the field (for example, fuel handling practices). Phase I is observation-based and generally does not involve testing. If further investigation is needed, the Environmental Site Assessment will proceed to Phase II.</p> <p>Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (Canadian Standards Association Standard Z769-00, R2023) gather specific information about the site by using sampling and analytical techniques to confirm the absence or presence of contamination on a site, and if a remediation work plan is required. For example, this could involve taking groundwater, surface water, soil, sediment or plant samples, or measuring radiation levels. It can also include modelling and geological surveys, as well as a determination of compliance with laws, regulations and standards. Phase II results confirm the absence or presence of contamination on a property and determine whether a remediation work plan is required. If the Phase II confirms levels of contamination that exceed applicable guidelines, a Phase III assessment may be carried out.</p>

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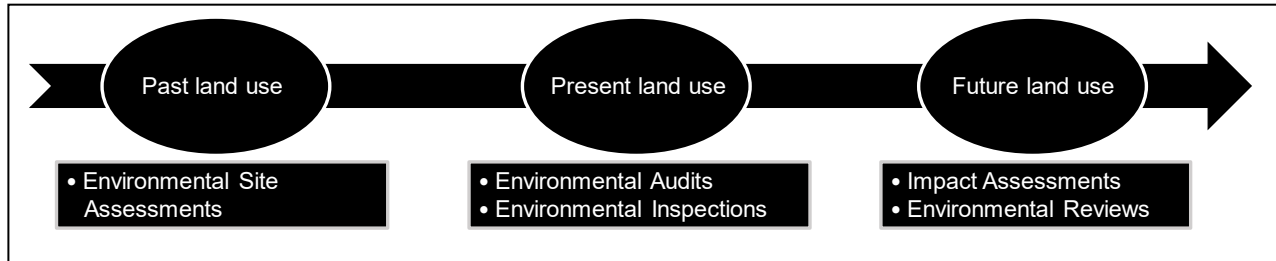
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Process	General Description
	<p>Phase III Environmental Site Assessments determine the nature and extent of contamination, including the volumes of contaminated materials, and the extent of the environmental impact and potential risk to human health. Phase III delineates the extent of contaminants identified at the site during Phase II and addresses outstanding issues with respect to the development of an effective remedial action plan.</p> <p>Environmental Site Assessments assist in determining if a proposed project is suitable for the identified lands and/or how the lands will need to be remediated (if at all) as part of the project.</p>
Environmental Inspections	<p>Environmental Inspections are not part of the Environmental Review Process but are used for monitoring and enforcement purposes, such as evaluating the compliance of a business or ongoing activity with the environmental terms, conditions, and best practices stipulated in a land instrument or funding agreement. The responsibility of inspections may fall on the department and/or the First Nation, so this aspect should be discussed at the onset of reviewing a proposed project.</p>
Environmental Audits	<p>Environmental Audits are not part of the Environmental Review Process for a project but can be useful tools for monitoring and enforcement. An Environmental Audit provides a snapshot of existing environmental practices on a property, in a facility or within an organization. Environmental Audits generally examine operations, physical activities, monitoring, sampling, record keeping and reporting practices with respect to air and other emissions, water and discharge quality, land and soil contamination, training and awareness, contingency planning, internal organization and response measures and ongoing maintenance practices. An Environmental Audit may also examine physical works and the environment's impact on the operational performance of that work.</p>

- 2.2 The environmental management processes for activities and projects on reserve described in Table 1 are used to determine the condition of the land in the past, present, and for future land use. Graphic 1 illustrates the processes employed along the timeline of land use.

Graphic 1: Processes Employed Along the Timeline of Land Use



Text alternative for: Processes Employed Along the Timeline of Land Use

Diagram showing a left-to-right progression over time from past to present to future land use. Past land use processes include Environmental Site Assessments. Present land use processes include Environmental Audits and Environmental Inspections. Future land use processes include Impact Assessments and Environmental Reviews.

3.0 Environmental Review Process

- 3.1 When the [Impact Assessment Act](#) requires the department to make a determination on whether a project may cause any significant adverse environmental effects, this determination must be made before the project is carried out in part or in whole (in other words, before any physical activity in relation to a physical work occurs), or before providing funding to enable the project to be carried out. Under section 82(b) of the *Impact Assessment Act*, this determination is undertaken by an environment officer through the Environmental Review Process. If there is a determination that significant adverse environmental effects are expected, then the project may not proceed unless the Governor in Council decides those effects are justified in the circumstances. Environmental reviews initiated prior to June 21, 2019 (when the [Impact Assessment Act](#) came into force) are subject to the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012](#), unless otherwise determined.
- 3.2 Proponents are responsible for all costs related to the Environmental Review Process. Such costs may be considered eligible project costs for departmental funding program purposes.
- 3.3 The proponent must provide a completed [Project Environmental Impact Assessment Form](#) and other requested documents to the department to support the Environmental Review Process. Using the details provided in the [Project Environmental Impact Assessment Form](#), an environment officer conducts a risk analysis to determine the level of environmental review required for a proposed project.

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- 3.4 The environment officer determines whether the project is in a class of projects outlined in the [Order Designating Certain Excluded Classes of Projects](#) (the Order) by reviewing the information provided in sections 1 and 2 of the [Project Environmental Impact Assessment Form](#). If the environment officer determines that the project meets the Order's criteria for an exemption, then the project does not require a determination under the [Impact Assessment Act](#). However, the project is still tracked via the Integrated Environmental Management System, which tracks and reports on Environmental Review Processes and contaminated sites in accordance with the department's mandate.
- 3.5 The department must publish information about all proposed projects subject to an environmental review on the [Canadian Impact Assessment Registry](#) for a minimum of 30 days, seeking comments from the public on those proposed projects. The department is to take any comments it receives into consideration when making a determination of whether or not the proposed project will cause significant adverse environmental effects.
- 3.6 When environmental effects are identified in the Environmental Review Process, the environment officer must review the proposed mitigation measures and may propose additional measures. In their review of whether the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects, environment officers must consider, where applicable:
- a) any adverse impact the project may have on the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Canada recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the [Constitution Act](#), 1982;
 - b) environmental impacts;
 - c) Indigenous knowledge provided in relation to the project;
 - d) community knowledge;
 - e) comments from the Band or public;
 - f) climate change; and
 - g) environmental impacts of the project on social, cultural and economic conditions, and human health and safety.
- 3.7 If the environment officer determines that:
- a) a project is **not likely** to cause significant adverse environmental effects, then the project may proceed.
 - b) a project is **likely** to cause significant adverse environmental effects, then the department cannot provide its support (that is, funding or regulatory authorization) to the proposed project. In such instances, the following may occur:

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- i. the department, proponent, and Band Council, where applicable, may explore alternative options (for example, a different parcel of land, a different activity on the land), for the proposed project to reduce or eliminate the identified significant adverse environmental effects; or
 - ii. the department may seek a Governor in Council decision under sections 82(b) and 90 of the *Impact Assessment Act* on whether the significant adverse environmental effects are justified in the circumstances. If the Governor in Council determines that the significant adverse environmental effects are justified, then the proposed project may proceed.
- 3.8 A non-mandatory Climate Change Assessment Toolkit is being developed for use by project proponents and environment officers alongside the Environmental Review Process. This toolkit can be used as a best practice to assess whether a project may be at risk of major climate impacts (such as wildfires, flooding, extreme weather, extreme temperatures, and permafrost degradation) and identify tailored mitigation measures to manage these risks and build resiliency.

4.0 Impact Assessments

- 4.1 The Agency determines whether an Impact Assessment is required for a designated project, as described in the [Physical Activities Regulations](#) and section 16 of the [Impact Assessment Act](#).
- 4.2 Although the Agency conducts the Impact Assessment, the department may be contacted by the Agency to provide expertise in the following areas:
- a) environmental and lands issues on reserve (including land instruments, land targeted for reserve creation proposals, and statutory and regulatory requirements);
 - b) regional operations (community infrastructure);
 - c) Indigenous economic development opportunities (engagement with Indigenous rights holders and organizations); and
 - d) Indigenous peoples' health (health services, community health and wellness programs, drinking water quality on First Nation reserves, and social determinants of health).
- 4.3 Please consult the following resources for more information on requirements related to Impact Assessments:

[Impact Assessment Agency of Canada's website:](#)

[Impact Assessment Act:](#)

[Information and Management of Time Limits Regulations:](#)

[Physical Activities Regulations:](#)

[Impact Assessment Act departmental contacts and information:](#)

5.0 Environmental Site Assessments

- 5.1 Environmental Site Assessments are conducted in sequential phases where appropriate, followed by remediation if necessary (refer to Table 1).
- 5.2 Environmental Site Assessments are required in the following circumstances:
- a) prior to land being set apart as reserve;
 - b) prior to issuing, transferring, renewing or cancelling land instruments (including leases, permits, easements, and section 35 instruments), except for allotting lawful possession as part of an environmental review;
 - c) as part of housing developments funded using [Ministerial Loan Guarantees](#); and
 - d) prior to and at the end of a lease to assess the condition of the land.

Note: Lease precedents (available from the department) provide the basis for all leases and include necessary policy and legal requirements to ensure consistency and accuracy when negotiating terms. Leases should include a clause requiring site assessments and remediation of the site at the lessee's expense prior to the end of the lease.

- 5.3 Environmental Site Assessments must be conducted by an independent, qualified environmental professional in accordance with the Canadian Standards Association.
- 5.4 The environment and lands officer must confirm the lands to be assessed and the scope of the Environmental Site Assessment prior to a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment being undertaken.
- 5.5 The environment officer, or other officer deemed responsible, must prepare a report confirming the lands are in a condition that meet the required standards for the proposed project. This report is to be provided to the appropriate departmental official to inform decision-making.
- 5.6 Where applicable, environment officers should identify specific Environmental Site Assessment report recommendations which should be addressed in the

documentation approving the project. The environment officers should have an opportunity to review any applicable documentation and make recommendations.

- 5.7 If the Environmental Site Assessment identifies contamination on the site, lands officers and environment officers must inform the Band and discuss the level or extent of remediation required.
- 5.8 Under the Additions to Reserve process, First Nations may establish third-party agreements assigning financial responsibility for contamination on proposed reserve lands. Where remediation is undertaken by the responsible third party, remedial actions must achieve environmental conditions acceptable to both the department and the First Nation. If the third party fails to fulfill its obligations, the federal government will not assume responsibility for the contamination.
- 5.8.1 Sites that are not the responsibility of Canada are not eligible for Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan funding through the department's Contaminated Sites On-Reserve program. The department upholds the Polluter Pays Principle, which holds those responsible for contamination accountable for remediation.
- 5.9 For additions to reserve and reserve creations, please consult Canada's [Additions to Reserve / Reserve Creation Policy Directives](#).

Stale dating of Environmental Site Assessments

- 5.10 If an Environmental Site Assessment indicates that no further investigation of the lands is needed, then the Environmental Site Assessment may be valid for up to five years, except for leasing (see 5.12). After 5 years, an Environmental Site Assessment report is considered to be stale dated, and the site must be reassessed to update the report before it can be relied upon. Reassessments, typically paid for by the proponent, on all or part of the property, may also be required if there have been any developments, improvements or physical changes on the land, or, at the discretion of the environment officer, at any time within the maximum 5 year time frame.
- 5.11 The validity of an Environmental Site Assessment for lands proposed for addition to reserve may be extended, provided no developments, improvements, or physical changes have occurred on the land prior to the lands obtaining reserve status. The First Nation must submit a written request to the department to extend the validity of the Environmental Site Assessment. Following this request, the department and the First Nation will jointly confirm whether any developments, improvements, or physical changes have occurred. If none are identified, the department may extend the validity of the Environmental Site Assessment results for an additional 5 years.

Specific Pre-Reserve Designations

- 5.11.1 Where an addition to reserve or reserve creation process requires a pre-reserve designation to grant a lease under the *Addition of Lands to Reserve and Reserve Creation Act*, the Environmental Site Assessment conducted for leasing purposes will be stale dated after 1 year. The Environmental Site Assessment must be current at the time the pre-reserve lease granted in accordance with the specific pre-reserve designation takes effect upon reserve creation.
- 5.12 An Environmental Site Assessment conducted for leasing purposes on reserve status lands will be stale dated after 1 year. The Environmental Site Assessment must be current at the time that the lease is granted.
- 5.13 Environmental Site Assessment reports are site-specific and may be subject to different stale-dating timelines at the discretion of the department.

Environmental Site Assessment Standards

- 5.14 Please consult the following resources for more information on standards and requirements for Environmental Site Assessments:

[Canadian Standards Association, Phase I Environmental Site Assessment: CAN/CSA Z768-01 Phase I Environmental Site Assessment \(CSA, 2022\)](#)

[Canadian Standards Association, Phase II Environmental Site Assessment: CAN/CSA Z769-00 Phase II Environmental Site Assessment \(CSA, 2023\)](#)

In some circumstances, the [National Classification System for Contaminated Sites](#) scoring may be required.

[A Federal Approach to Contaminated Sites](#)

[Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan Decision-Making Framework](#)

6.0 Environmental Inspections

- 6.1 Environmental Inspections are included in the terms and conditions of a land instrument based on the nature of the project and are undertaken by the environment officer. An environment officer may conduct additional inspections at their discretion based on other factors (for example, public complaint).
- 6.2 Environmental Inspections do not have to adhere to the Canadian Standards Association standards applicable to formal Environmental Audits. During an

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Environmental Inspection, the environment officer must consult with the lands officer to confirm the terms and conditions of the land instrument, if any, that identify the authorized activities and impacts. These clauses will influence the scope and frequency of the inspection.

- 6.3 The environment officer and Band Council must determine the process for monitoring and Environmental Inspections prior to the issuance of the land instrument and that process must then be described in the land instrument.
- 6.4 Environmental Inspections are to be undertaken by a qualified environmental professional, or equivalent, from the department or the Band. The purpose of the inspection is to identify any issues and follow-up with the department to determine if any further action is required.
- 6.5 Environmental Inspections may result in further environmental site inspections or reviews to inform compliance and enforcement.
- 6.6 Any non-compliance with applicable environmental standards and regulations identified by an environmental inspection must be corrected so the project is compliant with the terms and conditions of the land instrument. Where the land instrument is silent on this issue, the department may determine the approach and timeline.

7.0 Environmental Audits

- 7.1 Environmental Audits are a formal process undertaken by environmental auditors or consultants for projects already in operation. Environmental Audits are evaluations that may include the assessment of the project's compliance with applicable environmental laws, regulations and standards and they may include an assessment of an environmental management system, as well as any associated reporting requirements.
- 7.2 The results and findings of an Environmental Audit are recorded in a final report and may include recommendations for improvements to the project. The information gathered is used to monitor compliance of existing operations with provincial standards and codes, federal legislation, and best practices prior to issuing or renewing land instruments, or in some instances, for an additions to reserve process.
- 7.3 If an audit is conducted before a land instrument is negotiated, then the land instruments must incorporate environmental terms and conditions based on Environmental Audits (see Table 1). Environmental clauses may include the requirement to submit periodic environmental monitoring reports or annual audits.

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However, audits performed after a land instrument is signed can only be used to ensure compliance with the existing terms and conditions of the land instrument.

- 7.4 A Band Council or the department may request the audit of an activity or facility. The lands officer should involve environment officers early in the process.
- 7.5 Environmental Audits must be conducted by an independent, qualified environmental professional in accordance with the Canadian Standards Association. These audits are generally undertaken and paid for by the proponent.
- 7.6 The Environmental Audit must be reviewed by the environment officer and provided to the lands officer. The lands officer will forward the recommendations and requirements for redress by the proponent as needed. The departmental recommendations and the Environmental Audit must be available to the Band Council upon request.
- 7.7 The results of the Environmental Audit and the recommendations made by the environment officer and the Band Council may be used to enforce compliance with requirements of the existing land instrument; or, it may be used during negotiation of a new land instrument.

Audit Standards

- 7.8 Please consult the following resources for more information on audit standards and requirements related to an Environmental Site Assessment:

[Canadian Standards Association, Environmental Audits: CAN/CSA Z773:17 \(R2022\) Environmental compliance auditing](#)

Annex A: Relevant Statutory and Regulatory Authorities

Federal Environmental Authorities

The following is a list of federal environmental legislation that applies on reserves. This list is not exhaustive and consultation with an environment officer is required to ensure adherence with all legislation that applies to a given project:

- [Impact Assessment Act](#), 2019
- [Species At Risk Act](#), 2002
- [Canadian Environmental Protection Act](#), 1999
- [Migratory Birds Convention Act](#), 1994
- [Fisheries Act](#), 1985

Indian Act Requirements

The relevant sections of the [Indian Act](#) are as follows:

Reserves to be held for use and benefit of Indians

18 (2) The Minister may authorize the use of lands in a reserve for the purpose of Indian schools, the administration of Indian affairs, Indian burial grounds, Indian health projects or, with the consent of the council of the band, for any other purpose for the general welfare of the band, and may take any lands in a reserve required for those purposes, but where an individual Indian, immediately prior to the taking, was entitled to the possession of those lands, compensation for that use shall be paid to the Indian, in such amount as may be agreed between the Indian and the Minister, or, failing agreement, as may be determined in such manner as the Minister may direct.

Possession of lands in a reserve

20 (1) No Indian is lawfully in possession of land in a reserve unless, with the approval of the Minister, possession of the land has been allotted to him by the council of the band.

Certificate of Possession

20 (2) The Minister may issue to an Indian who is lawfully in possession of land in a reserve a certificate, to be called a Certificate of Possession, as evidence of his right to possession of the land described therein.

Minister may issue permits

28 (2) The Minister may by permit in writing authorize any person for a period not exceeding one year, or with the consent of the council of the band for any longer period, to occupy or use a reserve or to reside or otherwise exercise rights on a reserve.

Taking of lands by local authorities

35 (1) Where by an Act of Parliament or a provincial legislature Her Majesty in right of a province, a municipal or local authority or a corporation is empowered to take or to use lands or any interest therein without the consent of the owner, the power may, with the consent of the Governor in Council and subject to any terms that may be prescribed by the Governor in Council, be exercised in relation to lands in a reserve or any interest therein.

Other transactions

37 (2) Except where this Act otherwise provides, lands in a reserve shall not be leased nor an interest in them granted until they have been designated under subsection 38(2) by the band for whose use and benefit in common the reserve was set apart.

Designation

38 (2) A band may, conditionally or unconditionally, designate, by way of a surrender to Her Majesty that is not absolute, any right or interest of the band and its members in all or part of a reserve, for the purpose of its being leased or a right or interest therein being granted.

Conditions — designation

39.1 A designation is valid if it is made to Her Majesty, is assented to by a majority of the electors of the band voting at a referendum held in accordance with the regulations, is recommended to the Minister by the council of the band and is accepted by the Minister.

Certification — designation

40.1 (1) A proposed designation that is assented to in accordance with section 39.1 shall be certified on oath by an officer of the Department and by the chief or a member of the council of the band.

Ministerial decision

40.1 (2) On the recommendation of the council of the band, the proposed designation shall be submitted to the Minister who may accept or reject it.

Transactions re surrendered and designated lands

53(1) The Minister or a person appointed by the Minister for the purpose may, in accordance with this Act and the terms of the absolute surrender or designation, as the case may be,

- (a) manage or sell absolutely surrendered lands; or
- (b) manage, lease or carry out any other transaction affecting designated lands.

Uncultivated or unused lands

58(1) *Where land in a reserve is uncultivated or unused, the Minister may, with the consent of the council of the band...*

(b) where the land is in the lawful possession of any individual, grant a lease of that land for agricultural or grazing purposes or for any purpose that is for the benefit of the person in possession of the land; and

(c) where the land is not in the lawful possession of any individual, grant for the benefit of the band a lease of that land for agricultural or grazing purposes.

Lease at the request of occupant (locatee lease)

58 (3) *The Minister may lease for the benefit of any Indian, on application of that Indian for that purpose, the land of which the Indian is lawfully in possession without the land being designated.*

Disposition of grass, timber, non-metallic substances, etc.

58(4) *Notwithstanding anything in this Act, the Minister may, without an absolute surrender or a designation*

(a) dispose of wild grass or dead or fallen timber; and

(b) with the consent of the council of the band, dispose of sand, gravel, clay and other non-metallic substances on or under lands in a reserve, or, where that consent cannot be obtained without undue difficulty or delay, may issue temporary permits for the taking of sand, gravel, clay and other non-metallic substances on or under lands in a reserve, renewable only with the consent of the council of the band.

Relevant Regulatory Requirements

The following regulations apply to the issuance of permits on reserve:

- [Indian Mining Regulations](#)
- [Indian Timber Regulations](#)
- [Indian Reserve Waste Disposal Regulations](#)
- [Indian Oil and Gas Regulations](#), 2019