

Dr. Luisa Moreno on how Defense Metals is achieving milestones at the Wicheeda Rare Earth Project in British Columbia

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In a recent InvestorNews interview, host Brandon Colwell discussed Defense Metals Corp.'s (TSXV: DEFN | OTCQB: DFMTF) progress in the rare earths sector with Dr. Luisa Moreno, the company's President and Director. The discussion highlighted Defense Metals' achievement of shipping mixed rare earth oxide and carbonate samples to potential users, following the successful completion of hydrometallurgical piloting and flotation testing. These samples play a crucial role in qualifying their product for the Wicheeda Rare Earth Project in British Columbia.

Vital Metals stock is up 308% the past year as they commence rare earths production in NWT

Canada

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It is always interesting to look back and see if what was written comes true. About 9 months ago I wrote an article here describing how [Vital Metals was on track to become a rare earths carbonate producer in 2021](#). Fast forward to today and Vital Metals has delivered on their plan.

On July 6 [Vital Metals Limited](#) (ASX: VML) (“Vital”) [announced](#) that the Company has commenced rare earth production at Nechalacho. This is a tremendous achievement and means Vital joins an elite group of only 2 or 3 North American rare earths producers (includes MP Materials and for rare earths processing Energy Fuels). It also means Vital has become the first Canadian rare earths producer. Congratulations to Vital Metals from the team at InvestorIntel!

Mining at Vital’s Nechalacho’s North T Zone in Canada’s Northwest Territories (NWT) is underway as part of Stage 1 production strategy. Vital is now crushing and sorting ore before sending it to a Saskatoon cracking and leaching facility later in 2021. Vital has also commenced drilling to define a mine plan for Stage 2 at Nechalacho as it works to develop a larger scale, longer life rare earths project.

Vital Metal’s Nechalacho Rare Earths Mine in NWT Canada location and key zones



[Source](#): Vital Metals

Nechalacho hosts a world-class resource of **94.7Mt at 1.46% REO** (measured, indicated and inferred). Nechalacho’s North T Zone hosts **a high-grade resource of 101,000 tonnes at 9.01% LREO**

(2.2% NdPr), making it one of the highest grade rare earths deposits in the world. The resource has the potential to grow further as shown in recent drilling results that [reported](#) “broad high grade REO in near surface drilling at Tardiff Zone...thickness in excess of 60m in width and with grades up to 13.8% intersected”. Vital stated in the release that high value Nd/Pr content was an impressive 24.2% of TREO and that Zone 1 was open in all directions. These results will form part of a new resource upgrade to be part of the Stage 2 expansion plans at Nechalacho.

The metallurgy is a simple process involving a 35%+ initial beneficiation via ore sorting and 97% recovery into solution via hydrochloric acid using an industry standard process.

In more good news, in May 2021 it was [announced](#) that Vital’s offtake partner REEtec has formally accepted Vital’s rare earth carbonate sample. Vital will provide REEtec with 1,000 tonnes REO (ex-cerium) per year for five years with the option to increase volume by up to 5,000 tonnes REO per year over 10 years.

Mid-term strategy and goals

Vital aims to become the lowest cost producer of mixed rare earth oxide outside of China by developing one of the highest grade rare earth deposits in the world and the only rare earth project capable of beneficiation solely by ore sorting. Vital also aims to be the largest independent supplier of clean mixed rare earth feedstock outside China.

More than \$120 million has been spent by previous owners on drilling, permitting and project development at Nechalacho, which includes a 40-person camp and airstrip.

Vital aims to produce a minimum of 5,000 tonnes of contained REO

at Nechalacho by 2025, or earlier.

Closing remarks

Achieving rare earths production in the West is no easy task. The process towards production, including permitting, can take over a decade. Vital has now achieved a low scale small CapEx rare earths production start-up operation, with big plans to expand in the years ahead. Given management's exceptional track record to date, it is looking good for Vital to achieve their expansion plans in the years ahead.

The production of rare earths on North American soil is not only a great step forward for Vital Metals, but it is also a significant step forward for the West to secure a safe rare earths supply.

Vital Metals now trades on a market cap of A\$208 million after a great past 1 year return of [308%](#).