

Meadowbank back on track

Third quarter gold production exceeds second quarter

by Sara Wilson

Northern News Services

Qamanittuaq/Baker Lake

After a fire tore through its camp kitchen facilities in March 2011, making it necessary for Agnico-Eagle to reduce staff and production levels, Meadowbank gold mine has emerged from the ashes and is getting back on track.

While the disruptive effects of the fire were felt in the first and second quarter results, Agnico-Eagle announced that its third quarter has produced encouraging results with 78,141 ounces of gold for the quarter, an increase over its second quarter results of 59,376 ounces.

The increase in production is also attributed to a second crusher and high mill reliability.

"We don't need to stop as often to do maintenance," said Dominique Girard, general manager of the Meadowbank Mine.

"Mill production and mine production are reaching their targets. Our next goal is to reduce the overall operating costs," Girard added. "We've put in place six main action plans that were instated during the last six months, and we are starting to read through some of those action plans."

Part of the strategy is to achieve better control of the extraction processes.

"Part of the action plan was to be more in control of the blasting," Girard added. "So we've revised procedure with trained people and we've found an issue which was related to a build up of ice. As we are in the Arctic, even in July we have ice build up."

Meadowbank has three open pit mines, with a mineral reserve of 3.64 million ounces of gold. A total of \$1.5 billion has been invested since 2007 to bring the gold mine to production.

Meadowbank has contributed to a huge spike in Nunavut's economy as well as its employment figures.

"It's amazing," Girard said. "I don't know exact figures but if you look at the unemployment rate in Baker Lake it might have been around the 60 per cent mark before Meadowbank, and now it's probably less than 10 per cent, so we're creating a lot of good work for all of them. We give a chance to the people, and that's part of our (human resources) target, to find the best work for each person. It's part of our values to find the best in each in person."

The company hopes those relationships will help with progress on its proposed Meliadine mine, closer to Rankin Inlet.

"Of course, that will help us," Girard said. "Generally we're getting good comments from the relationships with the communities as well as our crew on site."



photo courtesy of Agnico-Eagle

In 2010, 38 per cent of Meadowbank's employees were Inuit hires from the Kivalliq, according to Agnico-Eagle's CSR Summary Report. This represents \$51.7 million going into the Nunavut economy.

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