

Training program brings opportunities to Nunavut

More on-site training at Meadowbank

by Sara Wilson
Northern News Services
Nunavut

Agnico-Eagle's Meadowbank gold mine is leading the way for gold production in Nunavut, and now the company is expanding its training program with an on site, haul-truck training facility.

"We've started an in-house haul truck training program now that we offer the residents of the Kivalliq region. (We expect) these positions all to be filled by Inuit land beneficiaries," said Gerry Oriet, training co-ordinator, Meadowbank division.

The in-house program has 60 spots available for Kivalliq residents, but organizers are hoping to expand to 80. It starts with two weeks of hands-on training that allows participants to explore all the safety aspects of the giant trucks, as well as proper maintenance.

"What they will go through are the safety aspects of a 777 100-tonne Caterpillar haul truck," Oriet said. "The first steps to this is a two-week one-on-one theory (course) so they will go through some power points where they'll learn the walk around safety checks, the safe handling, the operation, the function, as well as the controls."

After the two weeks, three-month traineeships will provide the required amount of practice hours, as well as guidance toward future employment with Agnico-Eagle.

"They are going through a three-month on-site training program, like an in-house apprenticeship," Oriet said.

"They are going to gain 1,000 hours of experience and they are going to have jobs coaching. We have a life skills coach for them, it's going to be a big benefit."

While the project's aim was to contribute to the communities that help staff the gold mine, the influx of local skilled labour will help reduce the mine's operating cost.

"Hopefully our retention will be higher and our absenteeism will be decreased, maintenance costs will decrease and production will go up," Oriet said. "Which means we will be able to afford another mine in Rankin Inlet and repeat the process very soon."

The program, according to Oriet, takes training a step further than other programs because it allows future operators to learn on haul trucks

they will be using on site.

"Typically what was happening is that they were going down south and they were taking a program at a different trade college in Ontario," Oriet said.

"The big difference here is they are working on an actual straight unit 100-tonne truck in a mining environment. In the South, they were on a 40-tonne articulated haul truck, so the actual method of backing up and the skills are a little bit different. Now they are training on the real live deal."

Home benefits

That difference is being welcomed by Kivalliq job candidates who appreciate the opportunity to study at home, and skip the long flight down south.

"We've got very positive responses from the community with the fact that they don't have to leave here, their land, and they don't have to go down south," Oriet said.

"This is something I took on myself to help develop a higher skill level employee as well as to keep the money right here in the Kivalliq region. I think that's important



Agnico-Eagle's new training simulator is allowing the company to train its prospective employees on site, instead of flying students to Ontario.

ant to what Agnico-Eagle stands for and we're supporting the local communities at the same time."

The program didn't come cheap, but Oriet said the potential for success for all parties was worth the price tag.

"We've purchased a simulation system, it's called 5DT simulator," Oriet said. "It's state of the art technology

that comes out of Irvine California and it allows us to fully function inside a controlled safe environment."

The \$600,000 simulator provides a real-life experience for the operator, shocks and all.

"It's the actual console of a Caterpillar haul truck so it's the seat, dash, controls, fuel pedals – it's everything," Oriet said.

"With that program you have six electric actuators – basically it's like a shock on your car – so with having six of them, it has the full range of motion. As you incline up a hill, you actually get pushed back in the seat. It's that sensitive."

The residents of the Kivalliq region aren't the only ones to experience the thrill of driving a 100-tonne truck.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper had the opportunity to get behind the wheel in his recent trip to Nunavut this past fall.

"I taught the Prime Minister of Canada on it (in September) I gave him a certificate of honorary driver of the day," Oriet said. "It was a great experience, I was actually rather surprised, he did very well."

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New chapter for Chamber of Mines



Iqaluit office opens; general manager hired in Nunavut

by Sara Wilson
Northern News Services
Iqaluit

The Chamber of Mines NWT and Nunavut is branching out, literally, with a new office in Iqaluit.

With the City of Iqaluit growing quickly, the task to find a suitable location had its challenges, but now that a location has been selected, the team can focus on promoting mining in Nunavut.

"After some searching, we found a good location," said chamber executive director

Tom Hoefler. "It's in the same complex as the Frobisher Inn, many GN offices, and a number of other businesses. We opened the office in late April. Probably the biggest challenge was finding office space and housing in a town that is growing quickly."

To help support and promote Nunavut's sizable mining investment, the chamber has appointed

a full-time general manager in Nunavut to administer its affairs in the territory.

Taking over the reins will be Nunavut resident Elizabeth Kingston.

"Elizabeth was already living and working in Nunavut, working for the non-profit Municipal Training Organization, which has the responsibility for providing

training for community staff," Hoefler said. "She brings good knowledge of Nunavut and its communities, which will lend itself to her job with the chamber."

Kingston's background as an executive director with another not-for-profit will allow the chamber to move smoothly through the transition process.

"Her training background will also help her contribute to that very important aspect of mineral development, one that helps Nunavummiut increase their ability to participate in the mining industry," Hoefler said.

The not-for-profit organization, whose aim is to encourage, assist and stimulate the development and growth of the mining industry in the the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, felt there was a need to set up shop in Iqaluit.

"Since Nunavut was created in 1999, the chamber has worked on behalf of Nunavut interests from its Yellowknife location," Hoefler said. "Mining investment has consistently grown in Nunavut since about 2002, except for the dip of the recession in 2009."

Positive outlook

With the predictions for the future of mining in Nunavut looking favourable, it's a positive outlook that the chamber is hoping to help maintain.

"This year's projections are that Nunavut will attract the fourth-highest mineral investment in Canada," Hoefler said. "Our members and governments have been eager to see us establish an office in recognition of the growing importance of mining to Nunavut. It is for this reason that we were pleased to be able to open our new office."

It's an important step, one that has been acknowledged by the federal government.

"We were also pleased when the Prime Minister of Canada himself announced the federal government's support for the chamber office and its work," Hoefler said.

The endorsement came during Prime Minister Stephen Harper's visit to Nunavut this past summer when he announced the Government of Canada is partnering with the Government of Nunavut on a three-year pilot project to increase the capacity of the Chamber of Mines to represent mining interests in Nunavut.

In addition, the funding in support is aimed to help the chamber work with governments and communities to help create benefits for Nunavummiut and Canadians.

Iqaluit resident Elizabeth Kingston, left, has been hired by Chamber of Mines NWT and Nunavut executive director Tom Hoefler to head up the new chamber office in Iqaluit.

Thandie Veila/WNSL photo



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Golden promise for Rankin Inlet

Agnico-Eagle works towards advancing Meliadine project

by Sara Wilson

Northern News Services
Rankin Inlet

Rankin Inlet is hoping to get a great deal bigger with the proposed Meliadine project, a mining initiative that would allow the community's population to capitalize on the economic stimulus.

With a population of close to 3,000 people, the hamlet has proved itself in past years with its ability to work with Agnico-Eagle on its Meadowbank mine, just north of Baker Lake.

"There's has been a lot of people that are coming out to Rankin to get training and also work at Meadowbank," Pujjuut Kusugak, mayor of Rankin Inlet said. "It's helped people that otherwise might not have employment opportunities in Rankin in their field of expertise, things like heavy equipment, mechanical, labour, and just different opportunities for their skills. It's been pretty positive for people here."

The Meliadine deposit, an additional venture by Agnico-Eagle, has probable mineral reserves as of December 2010 of 9.467 million ounces of gold, a deposit that would enable the project to sustain itself for years to come.

With a project the size of Meliadine comes an influx of people, which could create a boom, according to Kusugak.

"(Population growth) has been minimal right now," Kusugak said. "What we need to plan more for is the influx of people if the Meliadine (mine) opens. It's going a big change for a lot of people, pretty much a boom in the population. It could cause some difficulties but also on the other side its going to provide much-needed employment for many people."

Environmental issues and socio-economic issues were raised at last year's public meeting, concerns Kusugak said are valid.

"There's some people that do have concerns about that and they're valid points," Kusugak said. "With want-



photo courtesy of Steve Hatch

Rankin Inlet started out as a mining town in the 1950s with the Rankin Inlet nickel and copper mine, which operated from 1957 to 1962.

ing to provide training and employment opportunities for people in this region it's kind of a sacrifice we have to make."

Kusugak said he believes tough environmental standards for mining operations in Nunavut will help minimize the fears.

"The mining companies are under very strict regulations about not leaving much of a footprint after the project is done," Kusugak said. "After visiting the Meadowbank mine, it's a really well-run operation, very clean, very organized and we'd expect the same thing around Rankin if not better."

The majority of residents

in Rankin Inlet and surrounding areas were in favour of the project and especially a few related construction projects, Kusugak said.



Pujjuut Kusugak

He said those who came out for the public meetings showed their support for the construction of an all-weather road that would help connect the Meliadine project with communities in the region.

"We do receive a lot of correspondence with people coming into Rankin," Kusugak said. "They want to make sure that the hamlet knows that there is exploration or any activities going on around the area. Also with Agnico-Eagle we have a pretty

good relationships explaining what activities are going on, if there's anything we need to be aware of, it's been a good relationship so far."

With demand for skilled workers in the North, Rankin Inlet has established a training program that is seeing people moving to the hamlet to expand their skill sets.

"The trades school is for oil burning mechanics, plumbing, electrical and intro to carpentry. There are various course being taken at the trade school," Kusugak said. "They are looking to expand and offer heavy equipment operators and mechanics. There's also a management study course that happens here."

fact file

Population: approximately 3,000 people; second largest community in Nunavut, after Iqaluit

Major economic activities: Mining, transportation hub, art and Government of Nunavut offices

Median total income: \$30,760 (2008)

Labour force: 1,125 persons in the workforce (2006)

While the future looks bright for the Northern hamlet, Kusugak has big plans for the economic stability of the area.

"I'd love to see it be more self-sustaining, people working more together to make

sure that Rankin is taken care of, basically the community looking after itself," Kusugak said. "I think mining would be pride-building for people who otherwise wouldn't have opportunities to support their families."

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