

Training solutions for NWT and Nunavut



photo courtesy of the Mine Training Society

Graduates from the Mine Training Program's class of 2011, from left, Clay Lennie, Kelly Lafferty, Casey Eyakfwo, Matthew Poitras, Fredelle Deneyoua, Scott Atikoyoak, Kyle Bayha, Nathaniel Marlowe, Richard Laboucan, Tim Cook, Keith Cottam, Justin Washie. Programs are coming up all over the NWT and Nunavut to address the shortage of skilled labour.

Educators aim to produce more skilled workers for new projects

by Sara Wilson
Northern News Services
NWT

With three world class diamond mines operating in the barrenlands of the NWT, competition for skilled labour is fierce. It's also an opportunity for Northerners to get high paying jobs, but first they have to get trained.

The Yellowknife-based Mine Training Society is one of many groups offering traineeships and programs designed to produce the best of the best.

What used to be an industry where someone with no skill sets would be able to get a job, now the industry is calling for skilled and semi-skilled workers to join the ranks.

"(Of) most of the jobs on a mine site, 78 per cent are in the skilled and semi-skilled area," said Hilary Jones, general manager of the training society. "If you have no skills

at all you're going to have a very slim chance."

The lack of skilled labour is of growing concern throughout mine sites all over the country, leaving employers to develop programs and train potential employees.

"If you have no skills at all you're going to have a very slim chance."

"It's not just here in the North," Jones said. "Employers across Canada are having difficulty filling vacancies. Although there are a lot of people, there aren't a lot of people with the skill set that is required."

Training institutions are working with governments and Aboriginal groups to help fill the gap and create a stable economic base for its residents.

"Mining is the future of the North and especially in the three jurisdictions," Jones said. "In Nunavut the Hope Bay mine, Baker Lake, Baffinland Iron (in various stages of operations) and on top of all of

that they are trying to develop skill sets so people can take advantage of the employment and economic opportunities. Not to mention small entrepreneurs being able to provide services to those mines."

With a growing mining industry in the North which includes gold, diamonds, zinc, nickel and silver in production phases throughout NWT and Nunavut, demand is continuously growing. Training facilities are experiencing a high turnover rate in graduation and integration into the workforce.

"Everyone that goes to the 12-week underground mine (program) I would say we have a 95 per cent success rate, and 90 per cent employment rate," Jones said. "Organizations like the Mine Training Society, the Kivalliq Mine Training Society and the Yukon Mine Training Association ... are all working with Aboriginal governments and the asset holders to identify candidates for training and then putting them through occupation-specific training so they can go through to a

job at a mine site."

The Kivalliq Mine Training Society, based out of Rankin Inlet, has formalized a partnership between the seven Inuit communities of the Kivalliq region (represented by the Kivalliq Inuit Association).

Those involved in the mining sector – the territorial government, the local holders, the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) and local and southern training institutions – will provide 540 Inuit men, women, and youth in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut with the training, certification, and job placement support required to take advantage of 280 long-term, sustainable jobs in the mining sector and spin-off economic activity.

Partnering

Partnering with industry leaders has been a key factor to the mine society's success in producing top-ranked talent for mine operations throughout Canada.

"They are part and parcel,

they sit on our council boards, they provide traineeships and they provide us with trainers," Jones said. "They are a fully-fledged partner in this whole initiative."

The federal government recently got behind the training program initiatives, with an announcement in August 2011 that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada would partner with Canadian Zinc and training programs in the North to encourage the training of Northerners.

The project came with \$3 million in funding.

"That's under the skill partnership fund, that's a good one for Prairie Creek and we hope they keep going," Jones said.

"Our mandate in the NWT is to conduct needs assessments, work to maximize wherever possible employment opportunities for aboriginal and Northern people. That's why we work closely with industry like working with Canadian Zinc to get those funds to help train people in Deh Cho so they can take

advantage of the economic opportunities."

The training society is also partnering with Aurora College to promote its Underground Miner Program. Part of students' education will be spent on a new \$1.5-million simulator, learning how to operate underground mining equipment; a two-boom jumbo drill for production drilling; a scoop tram; an underground haul truck; and a roof bolter.

"I would love to be able to find a great deal of funding to ensure the longevity of the Underground Mining Program," Jones said. "It's an incredibly expensive program to run, but it is seen in Canada as the best practises training program."

With nearly 900 workers employed throughout the NWT and 1,400 over all three territories, the demand for programs is high and are proving to be successful for all parties involved.

"That money stays here," Jones said. "These aren't low-paying jobs, we're not just creating traineeships, we're creating future tax-payers."



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photos courtesy of De Beers Canada

The advanced exploration camp, situated on a peninsula at Kennedy Lake, about 280 km northeast of Yellowknife.

Gahcho Kue on the horizon amid 'maturing' NWT diamond industry

Maturing diamond industry to slow territory's economy; long-term forecast lightened by De Beers Canada's second planned diamond mine

by **Thandie Vela**
Northern News Services
Kennedy Lake

As diamond mining in the Northwest Territories reaches maturity, the territory still has one big diamond project on the horizon – the Gahcho Kue project.

In the most recent edition of the Conference Board of Canada's publication, Territorial Outlook, the board said the NWT economy will falter, partly due to minimal growth in the mining industry as the territory's diamond mines reach maturity, with production expected to wane over the next four years.

"After booming throughout the 2000s, the diamond extraction industry has reached maturity, and its share of economic activity will decline slightly over the next decade," the board said.

The output of the territory's three producing diamond mines, which include BHP Billiton's Ekati Diamond Mine – the first diamond mine in Canada – Diavik Diamond Mine and De Beers Canada's Snap Lake mine, has propelled Canada to the third-largest producer of diamonds by value.

Collectively, these mines produced a total of 11 million carats last year.

The board anticipates a cumulative increase of just 1.7 per cent for the non-metal mining sector for 2010 to 2015. Due to a major decline in exploration spending in the territory, there are not many projects on the horizon right now, associate director Marie-Christine Bernard said, but for Gahcho Kue.

Located about 280 km northeast of Yellowknife, the joint venture between De Beers Canada and Mountain Province Diamonds is currently in the environmental impact review process.

"When Gahcho Kue begins production in 2017, it will provide a sizable boost to the territory's diamond mining industry," the board said, forecasting a 12.5 per cent increase in real output in non-metal mining that year, and another 8.8 per cent increase in 2018 when full production is reached.

The board forecasts the Gahcho Kue mine will produce an average of 4.5 million carats per year.

De Beers' fully underground Snap Lake mine,

located 220 kilometres northeast of Yellowknife, produced 926,000 carats in 2010.

However, Snap Lake, which opened in 2008 and is expected to have a mine life of more than 20 years, is hardly a mature project, De Beers Canada spokesperson Cathie Bolstad said.

"That mine life is a long and a stable mine for the Northwest Territories economy," she said. "So while the other open pit mines are maturing and coming toward the end of their mine life, Snap Lake mine is really in its early years and it has a long-term potential for continuing."

Mining operations at Diavik are expected to continue until at least 2022. Proven reserves at the mine were estimated at 21.7 million carats as of year-end 2010, with 31.2 million carats contained in probable reserves.

For the nine months ending Sept. 30, the mine produced 5.1 million carats, on track to match production of 6.5 million carats in 2010.

Continuing exploration efforts by Diavik to possibly extend the life of the mine

have been focused on sites east and southwest of the mine.

Surface and underground mine Ekati, located about 310 kilometres northeast of Yellowknife, officially opened in Oct. 1998. Its mine life has been forecast to be 20 years, with closure and reclamation planned for 2018, the board said.

In the first quarter of this year, 689,000 carats were recovered at Ekati, marking the lowest level since the third quarter of 2006. Production dropped again to 457,000 carats in the third quarter of this year, marking a 35 per cent drop from the same period last year.

"Production was lower than all comparable periods due to the ongoing decline in average ore grades and unseasonably high rainfall that impacted operations," BHP Billiton said in an October production report.

Production at Ekati, which hit 16.5 million carats in 2007, "is unlikely to climb that high again," the board said, adding "little growth is expected in the (NWT) diamond industry over the next few years, due largely to declining output at Ekati."

With these players slowing down and approaching the end



Philippe Mellier, De Beers Group CEO, left, and Jonathan Oppenheimer, chairman of the board of directors of De Beers Canada, examine a drill bit being used in a deep drilling project at the Gahcho Kue Project advanced exploration camp on Oct. 3, 2011.

of their mine life, Gahcho Kue "is certainly a very important project for the Northwest Territories," Bolstad said.

Gahcho Kue is forecast to be constructed over the 2014

to 2016 period with an estimated 11-year mine life.

A decision on whether to construct and operate the diamond project is expected in July 2013.

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Belcher Islands home to growing iron resource

Canadian Orebodies hires up to 18 Inuit during first season of drilling

by Sara Wilson

Northern News Services

Belcher Islands, Nunavut

Initial drill results from the Haig Inlet iron ore project show promise for a large iron ore deposit on the scale of Mary River and Roche River.

The project, operated by Canadian Orebodies and 90 per cent owned by the father-son team of Donald and Gordon McKinnon, is located on the Belcher Islands in the far southeast corner of Nunavut in Hudson Bay. The property covers over 14,180 hectares on Flaherty Island, one of the islands in the archipelago.

A significant amount of work was carried out in the 1950s by the Belcher Mining Corporation which estimated a resource of 907 million tonnes, grading at 27 per cent, figures the Canadian Orebodies is hoping to see, if not surpass. Results from this year's drilling season showed an average iron grade of 29 per cent, leaving the company eager to expand upon that.

"We were very pleased to see our results coming in line if not better than the historical results on the grade so far,"

said Gordon McKinnon, who is also Orebodies president. "We're looking at how consistent the grade is and how consistent the intervals are."

The company has acquired and staked portions of land around Haig Inlet that fits the requirements suitable for open-pit mining.

"There's a lot of work left to do before we can consider this project becoming a viable mine," McKinnon said.

"Right now with the first drilling (begun) it will need a significant amount of (further) drilling."

McKinnon is also factoring in an environmental assessment of the mines operation. "We don't know of any significant environmental factors at this point," said McKinnon.

"That would be something that would come out when we start doing the environmental base-line studies. For just general environmental concerns we hold a high regard for the environment and we understand that the local Inuit there have a high reliance on the

environment where they are located."

The company has been working with the Belcher Islands community of Sani-kiluaq, population 850.

"That was a major concern with the council when we were coming in to work to ease those concerns," McKinnon said. "We did everything in our power to ease their concerns on the environmental issues.

We employed a member of the community appointed by the council to be the environmental monitor for our project, to make sure that we stayed in line with all the concerns and the views and traditions of the local Inuit."

In addition to preserving the Northern environment, the company is committed to employing locally rather than moving employees from the south.

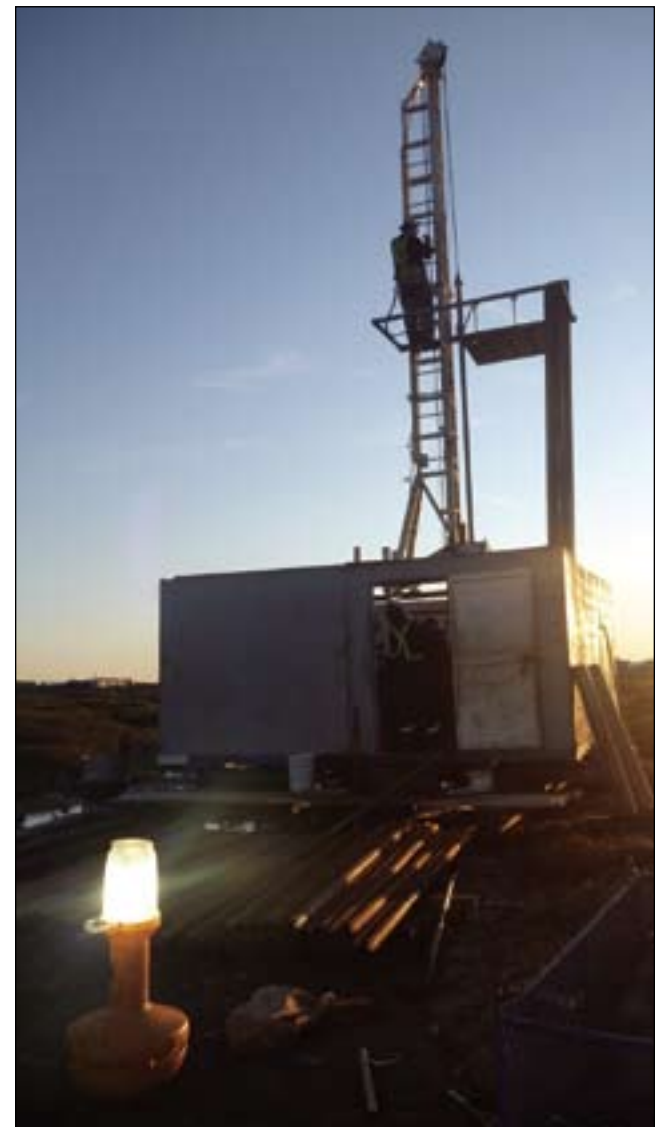
"This year, we employed approximately 17 to 18 Inuit on the Belcher islands," McKinnon said. "From our last discussions with the

council we were the largest employer on the island at that time.

"We had a huge interest in employment when we initially started, a large number of people applied for jobs and we hired as many as we could, locally. It's good for the community and it's more cost effective for us as well, because we don't have to bring any of our personnel up there, and going forward we are probably going to be looking at a bigger program we look to be hiring even more next year we hope."

While the future looks bright for the iron-ore project, the road has been filled with learning experiences for the exploration company.

"This is our first year getting up there, and we've just learning the ropes of operating in Nunavut and working with the Inuit," McKinnon said, adding that the severity of the climate dictates the work schedule. "The winter is too harsh at this point and wouldn't be cost effective for us to be doing any exploration work, so we're kind of boxed in to summer exploration only."



photos courtesy Canadian Orebodies

Canadian Orebodies has had a promising year at Haig Inlet in the Belcher Islands with drill results showing an average iron grade of 29 per cent.

fact file

Company: Canadian Orebodies

Location: Belcher Islands, Nunavut

Estimated reserves: 907 million tonnes grading 27 per cent iron ore

Ownership: 10 per cent ownership presently, with the option to expand to 25 per cent in a second payment in stock issuances.

Status: Further drilling to confirm proposed resources to continue in 2012. A resource estimate and technical report is anticipated to be completed by the first quarter of 2012.



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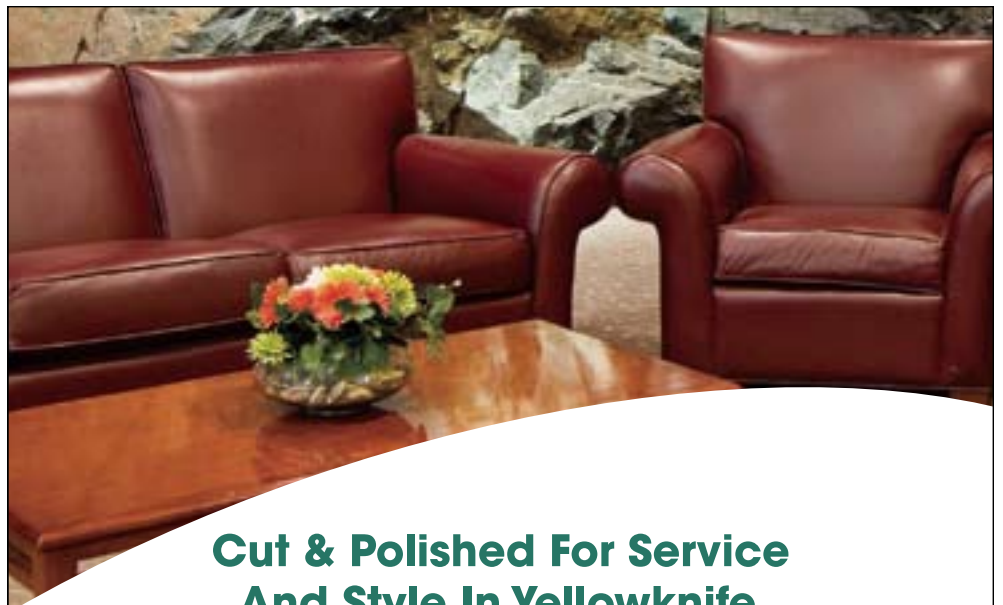
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