

# Unlocking our Potential



NOVEMBER 2019

THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

## Northwest Territories passes new Mineral Resources Act

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E: mining@gov.nt.ca  
T: 867-767-9209

[NWPETROLEUM.COM](http://NWPETROLEUM.COM)  
E: petroleum@gov.nt.ca  
T: 867-777-7480

[NWTGEOSCIENCE.CA](http://NWTGEOSCIENCE.CA)  
E: ntgs@gov.nt.ca  
T: 867-767-9211 Ext.63469

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**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

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*Cover: Makenna Klochko of Yellowknife takes the controls of an excavator at a Surface Mining training program. See: Celebrating 15 Years at the Mine Training Society (page 14) - Mine Training Society/billbradenphoto*

# Unlocking our Potential

As you read this edition of our magazine, a new government is taking shape in the Northwest Territories.

Following an October election, there is a very new look to the NWT's Legislative Assembly. Yet among its many new faces, there remains a common concern – the future of the NWT economy.

To lead the charge for a stronger economy, Premier Caroline Cochrane has appointed Yellowknife Great Slave MLA Katrina Nokleby as the Minister for both Industry, Tourism and Investment and Infrastructure. (She is also the Minister Responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.)

A geological engineer by trade, the new Minister has a background working alongside the northern resource industry. For more than a decade, she's worked in Yellowknife as an earthworks, environmental, and ice engineering consultant; work that has seen her travel Canada's North from Nunavut to the Yukon.

Recognized and respected in her field, she has served on Council of the NWT and Nunavut Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists, and as president of the Association of Engineering Consulting Companies.

The NWT's 19th Legislative Assembly has already set out its priorities for the next four years. Among them is a commitment to increase resource exploration and development.

With Minister Nokleby at the helm, there's someone in the driver's seat with an idea of how the industry works. Now the task at-hand is to put that knowledge to work as the government works to improve the territory's investment climate.

As you'll read in this edition of our magazine, there's much to build on. You'll read about the recently-passed Mineral Resources Act, the consensus we have built and the commitment to balance that will carry our work forward. You'll get updates on 10 of the most promising projects underway; and you'll hear about some ground-breaking infrastructure investments and an organization responsible for 15 years of building a stronger local workforce.

Read on — and look out for our distinctive publications at conferences over the next four years. We'll keep you updated as Premier Cochrane, Minister Nokleby and their colleagues get to work Unlocking Our Potential.

# Northwest Territories Passes New Mineral Resources Act

What's in it - and what's next?

As one of her final acts before dissolving the 18th Legislative Assembly, Northwest Territories' Commissioner Margaret Thom gave royal assent to the territory's first-ever stand-alone *Mineral Resources Act*.

Championed by then Minister Wally Schumann, the formal passage of the Mineral Resources Act, culminated almost four years of development by the GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

## Listening, Balancing, Compromise

That work included timely and detailed engagements with industry and Indigenous governments alike.

**“The result,” says Pamela Strand, Assistant Deputy Minister, Minerals and Petroleum Resources, “is legislation that will lay the groundwork for a stronger mining and exportation sector – and one that reflects the realities of doing business in the NWT.”**

So what's in it for Industry? Understandably, when governments make new laws about mining, companies get wary. “We understand that,” Strand says. “Our message is that there's a need for balance – and to recognize our modern way of operating in the NWT.”

The focus on balance appears to have paid dividends. Industry, Indigenous governments and other stakeholders have all publicly expressed their support for most of the new Act - no small feat in a process where differences can sometimes become the norm.

“Our focus on a solid and inclusive engagement process means we're starting with a solid foundation,” Strand says. “As we move forward and as industry stakeholders and Indigenous governments find common interests reflected in legislation, I think it's safe to say we're going to be successful in working together.”

Through the development process, industry's primary advocacy group has been the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines. “Their input contributed significantly to the design of an Act that would allow us to stay competitive in the global industry.”

Already, the legislation is receiving acclaim for its unique approach to legislating benefits. While the territory has become the first in Canada to legislate the requirement for some kind of benefit agreement, it has left the content of the agreements up to the regulations.



*Pamela Strand, Assistant Deputy Minister, Minerals and Petroleum Resources - Industry, Tourism and Investment - GNWT Photo*

"It's consistent with the growing move towards sustainable finance," says Strand. "We know investors want to see benefits for Indigenous peoples demonstrated in resource projects. The flexibility in this approach allows Indigenous governments and mining companies to decide what will work for everyone."

## Incentivizing Exploration

In remote areas, like the Northwest Territories, it can be tough to get your boots on the ground as an early explorer.

The Mineral Resources Act sets the stage for new incentives to encourage exploration. The mechanism for doing so is through designated "zones".

The establishment of such zones would allow for improved terms and conditions for explorers willing to invest in priority or difficult-to-explore areas.

It's a common concept in mining legislation, but comes with a novel twist in the NWT. Here, Indigenous governments will also have the opportunity to propose these incentive zones. Zones are not meant to be permanent and will be reassessed regularly. Envisioned incentives could involve work requirements and fees but would not extend to the royalty regime.

"The result is an incentive structure we believe will give explorers a better idea of where Indigenous governments want to see exploration," Strand says. "We see it as a valuable relationship-building tool."

## Collecting Valuable Geoscience; Protecting Commercial Information

Mining is an industry built on intellectual property, of which the most valuable currency is the geoscience which allows explorers to target their efforts.

The NWT's legislation creates new ways for the government to collect geoscience information across the mining cycle through three key methods: work reporting for mineral claims, statistical

returns from producers and explorers, and by enabling the government to collect abandoned drill core and make it available publicly.

"The hope is that this adds data to our geological database," Strand says.

But the currency goes two ways. Miners and explorers have an interest in protecting their data while working on their properties.

"We respect that," Strand says. "That's why our regulations also have reasonable confidentiality measures to protect that commercial information."

## Building Better Relationships

The Northwest Territories is a unique jurisdiction where management of land and resources is shared between public and Indigenous governments.

That means there will always be more variables at play for miners and explorers.

The Mining Regulations — passed down by the federal government when the NWT took the reins of land and

resource management in 2014 — did not reflect this reality. It was a common and recurring concern for all stakeholders: governments, communities and companies.

Today's NWT legislation changes that and sets the stage for: work credits for Indigenous engagement activities, predictable dispute resolution processes, and notices to Indigenous governments about claim staking.

Indigenous engagement work credits will mean explorers and companies will be able to count their engagements with Indigenous governments towards their work requirements. "It comes down to two key concepts: engaging with Indigenous peoples is something we want to see and, as a government, we need to recognize the cost and time commitment," Strand explains.

For industry working in the NWT, the practice of engaging Indigenous government is not new and already defines the way business is done in the territory.

"Companies will be able to get credit for what they have helped to make an industry standard in the NWT,"



Community Consultations on the MRA – GNWT Photo

Strand says. "The benefit is threefold. Companies will be able to prioritize engagement spending when it makes economic sense. When it comes to mineral tenure maintenance, the value of relationship-building will be recognized and thereby encouraged. And ultimately, the goal is that conflicts between explorers and Indigenous governments are reduced."

As far as dispute resolution goes, the legislation sets the stage for several new mechanisms to arbitrate specific disputes between companies and governments.

First, it empowers the Minister to strike an independent panel to make decisions to resolve disputes on the negotiation of benefit agreements between Indigenous governments and industry. The board would include experts from a variety of fields, including the mining industry, to make a decision based on the information provided.

Second, it establishes a Mineral Rights Advisory Panel to independently arbitrate specific disputes under the Act. Like the panel expected to arbitrate benefit agreement disputes, industry experts will have a seat at the table alongside other experts.

Lastly, the new laws put the burden on government to provide notice to Indigenous governments when mineral claims are applied for in their traditional territory. "We're taking the lead on getting these relationships off on the right foot," Strand says.

## Bringing Administration and Staking Into the 21st Century

The new laws set the stage for the online administration of mineral rights and that, once the technology and rules are developed, will enable online map staking.

"This is something industry has been requesting for a long time,

but we were never in a position to do," explains Strand. "Now, we can get to work on building the technology that will allow us to provide transparent, responsive and modern staking and administration of NWT claims."

## What's Next?

With the passage of legislation complete, the work to create regulations begins.

"We'll be bringing the provisions of the Act into force in phases," Strand says. "We hope to have the key regulations complete over the next two to three years."

But, implementing new technology for administration and staking will take longer. "This kind of rule-making and technology development doesn't happen overnight. Ontario took close to 10 years to complete its transition to an online system. We will need to work on a client-by-client basis to make sure we get the digitization of existing interests done right."

As there has been all along, Strand says there will be roles for both industry and Indigenous governments to play in developing the new rules and technology.

"One of the goals in initiating this work was to increase investor certainty when it comes to the NWT mining sector. This Act can do that. But as much as we have - and will continue to - develop this Act together, we will also need to work in concert to endorse these new laws to our investors and stakeholders."

The most important thing that we can do now is to get behind this Act - and to make it work like we designed it to - for the good of everybody in the NWT."



*The gathering of geoscience - GNWT Photo*

# Q & A

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MINING RECORDER TALKS DIGITAL SHIFT IN MINERALS ADMINISTRATION

Increasingly, the minerals industry is going digital. Like many jurisdictions, the push in the Northwest Territories is public government moving its administration of mineral tenure online.

In the NWT, it is the work of the Mining Recorder's Office; and at its helm is Valerie Gordon with her more-than 15 years of experience working with the mining industry.

We sat down with her to talk about what it will mean for the territory's minerals industry.

### Q: What is the territorial government doing?

A: We are building a modern, integrated system to manage our mineral interests online in a way that supports and is reflective of our uniqueness and our priorities.

### Q: What has spurred this on?

A: It stems from our passage of the new Mineral Resources Act. The shift to digital is part of the new direction for the territory's minerals industry set out in that legislation.

### Q: So what is your end goal?

A: Ultimately, like many jurisdictions across Canada and globally, we are working to make our jurisdiction more attractive to investors. But, we see this initiative as one which will benefit all users of the mineral administration system.

It will increase the quality, efficiency and timeliness of government service; simplify the process and reduce the associated

costs for staking mineral claims; increase the overall accessibility, transparency and accountability of the mineral administration system; and improve notification and access to information for public and Indigenous governments.

### Q: Is online map staking part of the future you envision?

A: In time, of course. But our first priority is to create the registry that will need to be the foundation for such an eventuality.

### Q: How long will this transition take?

A: Getting it right is the priority. We're going to take the time we need to engage with industry and other stakeholders to develop the right technology and create the regulatory framework that will make this function properly.

### Q: What can industry expect from your team?

A: They can expect us to reach out and be active listeners. We're not going to reinvent the wheel. There are a whole lot of jurisdictions that have gotten this right and we're going to learn and build on their experiences

### Q: So where do you start and what are you doing now?

A: These are early days. We need to grow our team, put our people in the right places, source the right technology for our jurisdiction and get the basics in place. After that, the first real tangible step is to begin migrating our data to the new technology.



Valerie Gordon, NWT Mining Recorder  
- GNWT Photo

# 10

## Projects with Prospects

### Ten Projects showcasing the Northwest Territories' world-class potential

As the Northwest Territories inches closer to 25 years of diamond production, work is underway to develop mines which will keep responsible development strong for the next generation.

There is no shortage of projects poised to deliver on that aspiration across a range of commodities. Here, we highlight some of them.

### 1

#### NEHCHALACHO 2.0 (RARE EARTH ELEMENTS)

Avalon Advanced Materials struck a smart partnership with Australia's Cheetah Resources this year to bring a new vision for developing its Rare Earth Elements deposit near Yellowknife.

Now operating as Cheetah Resources, the partnership will see small-scale mining of near-surface neodymium and praesodium while Avalon continues to advance the heavy rare earths on the same property.

The intent is to get to mining quickly – and to establish the property as a producer on a modest scale as demand increases for these elements. Down the Road Cheetah Resources is positioning itself to offer a larger-scale, Canadian alternative to China's dominance in rare-earth mining.

### 2

#### EVRIM RESOURCES' ASTRO PROJECT (GOLD)

Big players in the global market are now talking gold in the Sahtu region thanks to the exciting Astro project – the first to discover recoverable gold in the rocks of the Mackenzie Valley.

Located in the Mackenzie Mountains near Norman Wells, the Astro project was defined through an exploration alliance struck between Evrim and Newmont Mining Corporation back in 2017.

A beneficiary of the territory's Mining Incentive Program, Evrim released the results of surface sampling at the project early this year. With chip samples rating as high as 11.6 grams of gold per tonne of rock across 18 m of outcrop, the results are extremely promising - and could open up a whole new model for exploration in the NWT.

### 3

#### NORZINC'S PRAIRIE CREEK (ZINC, LEAD, SILVER)

From closing off a traditional land use agreement with the Nah?a Deh?e Dene Band in Nahanni Butte back in January, to the recently-announced draft permits for their all-season road and new financing, this late-stage exploration project had some good news this year.

A project manager has been hired to oversee the flurry of activity expected over the next few years, including kicking off all-season road construction and mine infrastructure refurbishment and development.

### 4

#### SEABRIDGE GOLD'S COURAGEOUS LAKE: THE 12TH – LARGEST UNMINED DEPOSIT IN THE WORLD (GOLD)

The 2018 winter program at Seabridge Gold's property near Yellowknife produced some promising new targets as they seek to add to resource estimates of nearly 12 million ounces in the measured, indicated, and inferred categories.

They returned to drilling to follow-up on their high-grade Walsh Lake discovery and, with positive results, CEO Rudi Fronk is on record saying the next step will be to focus on the properties smaller, high-grade finds early in the development cycle.

## 5

## NIGHTHAWK GOLD'S INDIAN LAKE AND COLOMAC CONTINUES TO ADVANCE (GOLD)

This historic gold-producing property continues to make moves to expand their project 200 km north of Yellowknife.

In 2019, there have been big deals on financing as gold prices inched higher, and reported exceptional gold recoveries and expanded mineralizations at their Colomac and Treasure Island Projects within their Indian Lake property.

CEO Michael Byron mused in a recent press release that the Treasure Island project is well on its way to becoming a first-class asset to complement the 2.6 million ounce inferred resource already defined at Colomac.

## 8

## TERRAX KEEPS ON TRUCKING (GOLD)

TerraX Minerals continues to expand its mineralization areas on its massive gold properties just down the road from Yellowknife. In fact, the company just released its first mineral resource estimate. At around 735,000 inferred ounces, it's an estimate sure to turn heads in the market.

With gold prices soaring more than 24 per cent this year and an aggressive exploration program underway, TerraX will look to make waves in the coming year.

## 6

## OSISKO'S PINE POINT PROJECT ACCELERATES (ZINC-LEAD)

Osisko Metals has wasted no time in getting down to business after taking the reins on revitalizing mining at Pine Point.

In 2019, the company saw a near-doubling of its claims in the area, exceptional concentrate grade tests and signing of Collaboration Agreements with local Indigenous groups. It officially became the largest near-surface, pit-constrained zinc resource in Canada with the release of its Inferred Mineral Resource Estimate.

The company plans to continue an aggressive exploration program on its properties as it continues to move the project forward.

## 7

## CANTUNG AND MACTUNG TAKE THE MARKET BY STORM (TUNGSTEN)

The governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories put the Cantung Mine and the nearby Mactung tungsten deposit, acquired from North American Tungsten's bankruptcy proceedings, on the market this year.

The upswing in the tungsten market produced 10 expressions of interest from companies interested in revitalizing the mine, develop proven tungsten reserves, and get NWT residents back to work.

Look for updates in the next while.

## 10

## GAHCHO KUÉ FINDS NEW PIPE, LOOKS TO KENNADY (DIAMONDS)

The world's largest new diamond mine moved closer to expanding its life with a new kimberlite pipe found within the existing open pit plan for the De Beers-Mountain Province joint venture.

The Wilson pipe — named for Canada's first female geologist Alice Evelyn Wilson — is the first discovery at the site in 20 years. The find highlights the potential in the area and a fresh chance to add to the future of the mine.

Just down the road, the Kennady North exploration project run by Mountain Province continued exploration efforts at its property. Within a stone's throw of Gahcho Kue, Mountain Province will continue to define the resources after acquiring the site from junior explorer Kennady Diamonds one year ago.

## 9

## ALL ROADS LEAD TO NICO (COBALT, GOLD, BISMUTH, COPPER)

It was a year of milestones for Fortune Minerals in 2019 as it advances its NICO project.

The company signed a Socio-Economic Agreement with the territorial government in January, discovered a new copper mineralization at the property, and further defined its mine plans to align with market trends.

With its federal and Tlicho government partners and investors, the territorial government broke ground on a \$200 million Tlicho All-Season Road in September. Ultimately it will eliminate costly winter road construction for mine resupply. (See Opportunity Knocks on Page 12).

# NEWSBRIEFS

## GNWT REVIEWING MIP

### **The Government of the Northwest Territories is evaluating its Mining Incentive Program.**

The Program provides funding to prospectors and exploration companies who propose new exploration projects or are already carrying out NWT mineral exploration work.

It is intended to stimulate and sustain mineral exploration activities throughout the NWT and reduce the risk associated with grass roots mineral exploration vital to a healthy, sustained, and

productive mining industry.

Using in-person, telephone and online surveys, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment and the Northwest Territories Geological Survey are gathering feedback from those involved in the NWT's mineral exploration and mining sectors; asking what is working? And what could make the program better?

The data collected will be used solely for research and evaluation purposes and all information is voluntary and anonymous.

## NEW REPORT FURTHER DEFINES GEOLOGICAL MAKEUP OF SLAVE GEOLOGICAL PROVINCE.

### **The Northwest Territories Geological Survey released detailed airborne magnetic survey data in September from a promising, yet under-studied region of the NWT's Slave Geological Province.**

The survey, part of a multi-year project to complete a high-resolution geological survey of the region, measured naturally occurring variations in the earth's magnetic and electromagnetic fields – an indicator of the potential presence of several types of mineral deposits.

Home to the NWT's three producing diamond mines, the Slave Geological Province has been compared with the legendary Abitibi Belt in Northern Ontario and Quebec, which holds some of the richest mineral deposits on earth.

The new data is now available through the Survey's website at: [www.nwtgeoscience.ca](http://www.nwtgeoscience.ca)

## 25K FUND NOW AVAILABLE FOR YOUTH TO ADVANCE CAREERS IN MINING

### **A new \$25,000 scholarship fund was introduced earlier this year for 18-30 year-olds in the NWT and Kitikmeot region of Nunavut interested in furthering their careers in diamond mining-related fields.**

The initiative between the Diamond Empowerment Fund and the NWT's Mine Training Society was facilitated by (then) Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment Wally Schumann.

"Creating education and employment opportunities for youth who live in areas where natural diamonds are found is at the heart of the Diamond Empowerment Fund's mission," says Anna Martin,

president of the Diamond Empowerment Fund.

"It's a story I think we need to do a better job of telling — how our diamond mining industry is helping our territory and getting people ahead," the Minister said in his remarks.

The announcement was made at the Kimberlite Career and Technical Centre at Yellowknife's École St. Patrick High School, a fitting venue for the message. Originally opened in 2004 thanks to the support of NWT diamond mines, it fosters and produces pre-trades ready students for the northern workforce.

## GNWT INVESTS \$1 MILLION IN MINERAL EXPLORATION

**Nineteen projects will benefit this year from funding provided under the GNWT's Mining Incentive Program (MIP). The projects were selected from 28 applications marking continued interest in the territory's mining and exploration potential.**

The program, now in its fifth year, saw an increase in grassroots prospectors qualifying for funding, and projects that spanned several commodities across many regions in the Northwest Territories.

This is the program's third intake since the program budget was more than doubled to address rising demand and a need to stimulate activity in the NWT mining sector.

From 2014-2018, the MIP invested almost \$3 million in NWT mineral exploration projects, generating an additional \$14.7 million of spending on exploration projects.

## NWT GOVERNMENT EXTENDS PROGRAM SUPPORTING MINERAL EXPLORATION

**The GNWT's Work Credit Program, designed to offset costs for mineral explorers, has been extended for an additional two years.**

Under the program, the credit or value of qualifying early exploration work can be multiplied by 1.5 in the recording system — effectively increasing the value of work done and reducing burden on explorers operating in the NWT. To date, the program has generated nearly \$5 million in additional benefit for NWT exploration projects.

Reported exploration work is assessed and approved by the Government of the Northwest Territories' Mining Recorder's Office.

## GNWT AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS REVITALIZE MINING TRAIL

**Ten private sector and not-for-profit organizations are working side by side to create the Ranney Hill Geological Interpretive Trail.**

In the 1930s, Winslow Ranney was just one of many prospectors who came North seeking gold. In his search, he opened what became known as the Ranney Hill Trail. Years later, as gold mines closed, the trail was adapted for recreation. The Ranney Hill Trail is now known as a great afternoon hike with amazing 360 degree views upon its unique outcrop.

In 2013, TerraX Minerals acquired the area as part of its ongoing Yellowknife City Gold Project. It was instrumental in establishing a working group to consider ways different groups could use the trail.

A major objective of the project is to demonstrate that a trail can serve multiple uses in the community. In this case, an outdoor classroom, a tourism attraction and a recreational facility - all while still an active prospecting claim. Planned upgrades will include route markers, interpretive signs and commemorative stories on benches.

# OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

## NWT corridor projects could help solve mining industry's access challenge

The Northwest Territories' vast land mass, much of it sparsely populated, makes it a unique place in our increasingly crowded world. But it's also a reality that presents real challenges for those working to grow the territory's economy through the mineral resource sector.

It's hard, after all, to discover and develop mineral resources if you can't get to them – or get your product to market.

But while the lack of infrastructure and access has long been cited as a significant barrier to investment, 2019 has seen an encouraging turning of the page with positive developments coming in the announcements of both the Tł'chǫ All-Season Road and the Slave Geological Province Corridor projects.

Formal construction of the Tł'chǫ All-Season Road began in September. This two-lane, gravel all-season highway will be 97 kilometres long and connect the community of Whatì to the NWT's Highway 3.

Not only will this P3 (public-private partnership) project enable Whatì residents to drive in and out of their community year round, it will help reduce their cost of living and significantly

increase the operating season of the winter road serving two other Tł'chǫ communities – Gamètì and Wekweètì – currently being impacted by climate change and warmer winters.

The project, which will cost approximately \$200 million and is being jointly funded by the federal government (75 per cent) and the Government of the Northwest Territories (25 per cent), has implications for the mining sector too.

Once completed, (fall of 2022), the Tł'chǫ All-Season Road will also provide access to natural resources in the area, notably a cobalt, gold, bismuth and copper project 50 kilometres northeast of Whatì proposed by Ontario-based Fortune Minerals Ltd, and enhanced exploration access to the Bear and western Slave Geological Provinces known for their base metal, gold and diamond deposits.

The second key corridor project to get a significant boost this year was the Slave Geological Province Corridor. In August, the territorial and federal governments announced they were investing \$40 million (Canada \$30 million, GNWT \$10 million) to support environmental regulatory reviews and planning studies designed to advance this long-anticipated project.



*The first leg of the Tł'chǫ All Season Road – GNWT Photo*





*Shovels in the ground; the official ground breaking of the Tlicho All Season Road.*  
*L to R Former MLA Herbert Nakimayak; Former MLA Michael Nadli; MLA Jackson Lafferty; Chief of Whati Alfonz Nitsiza Chief of Behchokǫ Clifford Daniels; Former MLA/ Minister Wally Schumann; Former MLA/ Minister Louis Sebert; Former MLA Daniel McNeely; Gamèti Chief David Wedawin – GNWT Photo*

That funding came on the heels of \$6.8 million committed by the federal government and GNWT in March to advance planning studies and geotechnical investigations.

In a related move, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency also confirmed \$1.2 million for the NWT Geological Survey – part of a multiyear project to complete a high-resolution geological survey of the region. Data from that survey was released in September.

The Slave Geological Province is the home to the NWT's three producing diamond mines. It is a region that has been compared with the legendary Abitibi Belt in Northern Ontario and Quebec, which holds some of the richest mineral deposits on earth.

Increased access will also support the GNWT's vision of advancing the Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion Project, which would provide clean energy to the mineral-rich Slave Geological Province and transition the North's resource economy from relying on diesel-generated electricity to hydro power.

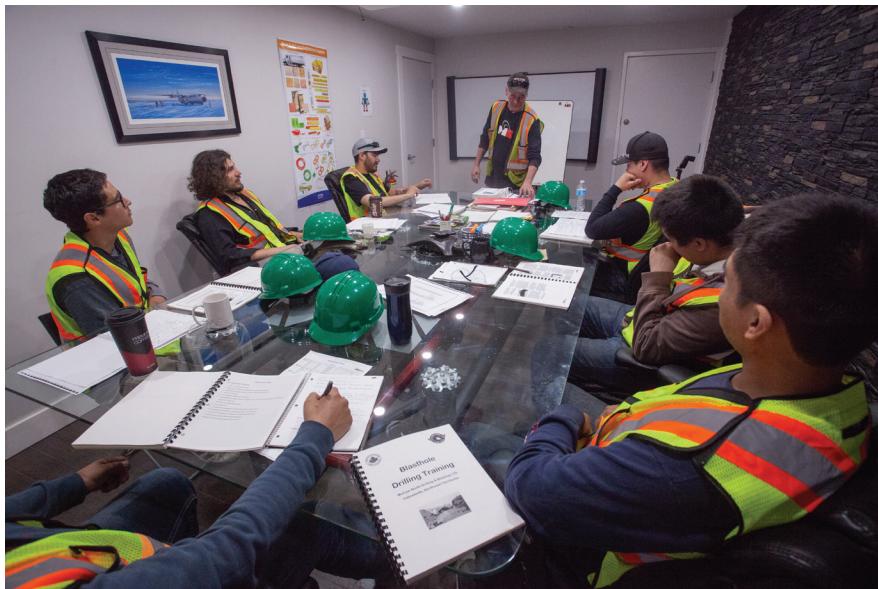
The Corridor project proposes a 413 kilometre-long, all-season infrastructure corridor northeast of Yellowknife to the NWT/Nunavut border where, ultimately, it would connect with a road being proposed by the Kitikmeot Inuit Association.

Nunavut's Grays Bay Road and Port project is a proposed all-season road and deep-water port that would span 230 kilometres from the Northwest Passage to the NWT-Nunavut border.

The long-term vision is to connect Canada's highway system to a deep-water port on the Arctic Ocean in Nunavut via Yellowknife and the Slave Geological Province.

# Celebrating 15 years at the Mine Training Society

Government-industry partnership continues to build strong local workforce for mines



*Classroom training at McCaw North Drilling and Blasting for a Driller's Helper program*  
- Mine Training Society/billbradenphoto

It's the end of an era at The Mine Training Society of the NWT.

After 13 years, longtime executive director Hillary Jones is retiring. (The task of filling Hillary's enormous work boots is now that of the equally-capable Shari Caudron.)

The change comes as the society marks an exciting 15-year anniversary in the NWT and provides us with an opportunity to look back and celebrate the role it has played in the local mining industry, and why that matters for those looking to invest in the Northwest Territories.

## Rising to the Challenge

The Society came into being in 2004 because the NWT realized it had a problem. With two diamond mines

coming online and agreements with companies to make best efforts to hire local, there were nowhere near enough skilled local workers to fill demand.

So the mines came together with the federal and territorial governments to form the Mine Training Society with a mandate to offer training, career counselling and other services designed to ready a local workforce to fill industry's labour demand.

The model has since been duplicated in Northern Ontario, BC and other jurisdictions.

## Getting results

Since its inception, the Society has trained nearly 7600 people with real skills that apply to the workplace.

Even more impressively, the organization has directly facilitated employment for 1590 people. In a territory with only 45,000 people, that amounts to around 7 per cent of the total local workforce, an impressive metric.

## Empowering Indigenous peoples

A large percentage of that number can be chalked up to Indigenous employees who currently make up around 20-25 per cent of employees at NWT mines.

That comes from direct partnerships between the Society and local Indigenous governments, who often nominate members of their communities and provide funding to the organization.

## Why does it matter?

For companies eager to keep their social bona fides strong and gain support from the community, a local workforce which can fill labour needs is a big plus.

The Society also reflects the territory's recognition that local employment is a goal which can't just be shouldered by the company — that government must play a role in furnishing NWT residents with the skills that meet company needs.

In this regard, the Mine Training Society has contributed to government commitments, in socio economic agreements, to provide a healthy, trained workforce from which NWT projects can draw.



*Hilary Jones, recently retired General Manager of the Mine Training Society*  
- Mine Training Society/billbradenphoto

## Money, meet mouth

And that recognition has real money behind it. Since 2004, the Society and its partners have invested more than \$120 million in the cause.

In 2019, it started delivering a \$25,000 annual scholarship for both academic and practical students in partnership with the Diamond Empowerment Fund.

With a new era beginning for the Society, one thing is clear: there are no plans on slowing down as it pushes its mission of preparing local residents to staff the NWT mining industry.

**John Ketchum**

DIRECTOR, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY,  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

## Government geological surveys, like the GNWT's Northwest Territories Geological Survey are found worldwide.

If you've ever wondered why that is - or what these organizations do, you are not necessarily alone.

It's reasonable to think that there are tried-and-true answers to these questions, and indeed there are. But recent changes to climate, environment, economic activity and other factors have led to the realization that tried-and-true no longer cuts it.

Geological surveys of old mainly conducted regional-scale studies, non-renewable resource evaluations, and generally created geoscience knowledge that others could use for benefit, most often to generate economic wealth. The work of a geological survey was, and still is, regarded as a public good - similar to the good that building a highway brings to society in general and highway users in particular.

While the importance of these traditional activities has not diminished, they are increasingly being joined by new geoscience needs that reflect recent change. As many will know, in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions, some of these changes are occurring at rates that residents and scientists alike have not observed before.

From a geological perspective, the current showpiece of Arctic change is permafrost thaw. Some landscapes and coastlines that are underlain by ice-rich permafrost are changing over timescales measured in months,

and terms such as "thaw slump" and "geohazard risk" are creeping into everyday usage.

Although all landscapes evolve over time, the situation in the Arctic has taken on a new sense of urgency as the integrity of roads, buildings and other man-made structures are threatened by permafrost change. It is already occurring, and there is more to come.

Enter the geological surveys of new. Their clients now include people from many walks of life, and the list of topics in need of study has grown substantially. Recently, the leaders of Canadian provincial and territorial geological surveys compiled a list of all the things that they do. Sixty core activities requiring specialized skills or knowledge were collectively identified, which is both an astonishing number and a modern-day reality. Artificial intelligence, 3-D geological mapping, drone surveys, geothermal energy, rare earth element studies, coastal erosion and UNESCO Global Geoparks are just some of the newcomers.

As governments tackle ever-more complex issues, geological surveys have evolved to become an active part of the narrative. They work to understand an issue and its implications, advise on possible solutions and help to inform the decision-making processes of governments and others. Although this evolution has not been without its challenges, geological surveys have generally become more engaged in generating knowledge that is solution-oriented and impacts a wider cross-section of society. For a scientific discipline that is not easily understood by the public, that is not a bad evolutionary path to follow.



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T: 867-767-9211  
Ext: 63469

**NWTMINING.COM**  
E-mail: mining@gov.nt.ca  
T: 867-767-9209