



FUTURES

Yukon Mine Training Association Newsletter

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Monitoring the Environment

Yukon mines must meet stringent regulatory standards, and the Yukon Mine Training Association (YMTA) is working to ensure that they have trained local staff who can make sure they meet those requirements. As part of its mandate to build up the number of skilled workers in Yukon, YMTA sponsored a 14-week course for environmental monitors.

Environmental monitors are the conscience of a mine site throughout its lifespan, playing an essential role through the exploration process, during the mining itself, and continuing through the closure and remediation phase of the mine.

They are trained to collect the baseline data in an area through water sampling, wildlife and plant surveys, and ground water monitoring. They also guide the day-to-day operations of a mine by ensuring that the site is in compliance with environmental regulations. As well, monitors identify areas that may need attention or remediation once the mine is nearing the end of its lifespan.

“It is a really, really important job,” said Environmental Engineer Gillian Chown, who taught the 14-week course to five students from Liard First Nation.

Of the five students who took the YMTA-offered course, one is already hard at work at Yukon Zinc’s Wolverine mine site.



Professional Supervisor Course Builds Mine Site Skills



Supervising workers on a mine site is a challenging endeavor. Supervisors must draw together their knowledge of staff personalities, staff skills, and a deep understanding of the functioning of the mine site. The next step of building a strong team is making sure that training opportunities and interesting challenges are available to all workers. That is a tall order for any supervisor.

A three-day course funded by YMTA and presented by Minto Explorations Ltd. taught mine supervisors the skills they need to achieve these goals on their worksites, and to become more effective managers.

Randy LaRiviere took the course. He is a general foreman at the Minto mine site. His jobs include overseeing mine supervisors, preparing safety and procedure logs, and working toward



better safety standards.

LaRiviere started his career shoveling rock and has worked his way up through most of the jobs on a mine site, including being a mill operator. However, he says that his understanding the work doesn't mean that he can't learn new skills as a supervisor.

"I've taken this course three times," he said. "Each time you take away something different," he added.

As part of the course, Pat Van Bibber came to answer questions from trainees about working in a cross-cultural environment like Yukon where people of European descent work alongside people from Yukon First Nations. LaRiviere, who has some Cree heritage, thought that this was one of the most important parts of the course.

"We asked Pat questions and he was able to talk about some of the common misunderstandings – for instance, if you're talking to a First Nation elder and they're

looking down or away, it doesn't mean they aren't paying attention. They're listening to you, but they don't look at you," he said. "In a European context that can be considered rude, but it is not rude in First Nation communities," he added.

"We have a number of agreements to hire and train personnel from the First Nations' whose land we work on," said Minto Explorations Manager of Health, Safety, and Human Resources Denis Leblanc. "We want all our employees to have a positive experience working on Minto Explorations property, and we think this course will increase understanding between workers on the work site."

"It was great to take the time to really think about how to create a safe and positive work environment for all employees at the Minto mine site," said LaRiviere. "During my career, I've been in lots of situations where I've used the techniques I learned in the Professional Supervisor course."

"YMTA's funding for this training reflects its commitment to providing opportunities and environments where employees who are part of Yukon First Nations can thrive," said YMTA Executive Director Tracy Thomas. "Along with other training opportunities, this course is part of creating an environment in which mining and mining-related industry can create new opportunities in Yukon."

LaRiviere is enthusiastic about the skills and practice that the Supervisor training offers.

"Learning and training are important in getting high performances out of your team. You're only as good as the people you work with. When you're striving for improvement and safety, training falls right into that," he concluded.



Into the Deeps: Yukoners Train for Work in Underground Mining

For 14 weeks this summer 8 Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council members are learning how to be hard-rock underground miners. This training will take them from the classroom to the mine site.

The course they're taking involves classroom learning, but the students will also be spending time in a work environment at the Cantung mine, putting their book-learning to the test as they practice the skills that are essential in any underground mining situation.

"It takes years to become an underground miner. It's like an apprenticeship to become a mechanic," said North American Tungsten's Vice President of Environmental and Corporate Affairs Wade Stogran. "As you work you take more courses and get more experience. There is also a lot of safety training. This summer's course gets you in at the ground level. From then on miners improve their skills over years."

Robert Clark is a mining instructor with years of experience under his hard hat. He's come from Newfoundland to spend time with these students as they start on the journey to becoming expert miners. For him, the

most important part of the job is being certain to take safety precautions.

"They're all getting excellent results in their evaluations," said Clark, speaking by telephone from Watson Lake. "They're learning the functions of underground mining – the general aspects to increase the safety. Ninety-nine per cent of this course is safety, safety, and safety," he added.

Hardrock mining is often done underground, and is used to extract minerals such as tungsten, copper, lead, and zinc, gold, and silver. Just as its name suggests it mines rock, unlike other types of mining such as placer mining, which takes place in gravel and sand.

The North American Tungsten Corporation is participating in the program, which simulates a real work schedule during the training period, to ensure that there are locally trained underground miners in Yukon.

The practical underground phase of the training program starts with a tour of the mine itself. The tour is followed by instructions about how to handle any emergency situations, and then the students get a chance to try scaling loose rock off "the back," or mine ceiling.

"The entire class is going up to the mine," said Clark. "We're scaling, using a jackleg drill for drilling in the "face," or wall, and stoper for drilling the ceiling," he said.

Without YMTA to connect the Corona College, North American Tungsten, and Liard First Nation, this course could not have taken place, he added.

"We're working closely with the Ross River Dena Council and Liard First Nation," said Stogran. "Together, we identified the need for local trained underground miners, for the First Nations to see some of the benefits from the mines, and for their membership to gain skills that are transferable. Once they're in the stream for underground mining, the scope of employment opens up," he added.

"It's great to see this kind of opportunity in Yukon," said YMTA Executive Director Tracy Thomas. "YMTA is glad that it could bring this kind of training to Yukon and increase the number of skilled workers in the territory," she added.

YMTA Funded Programs

This summer, YMTA is working with our partners to provide training across the Territory. Listings of some of our projects are below.



YMTA Partner: Ta'an Kwäch'än

The Aboriginal Environmental Technician Certificate Program is a 5-week course from Vancouver Island University. It will increase the knowledge and skills of TKC field staff for their monitoring and management of land and resources in the TKC Traditional Territories.

YMTA Partner: Minto Mine

The Common Core for Mill Operator Training sessions will be offered to personnel at the Minto Mine. The course will give participants a broad overview of mine functions, safety practices and the experience needed to operate the mill.

YMTA Partners: Klondike Placer Miner's Association and Northern Safety Network

Crane Operator Certification will be offered to between 65 and 90 people working in the placer mining industry.

YMTA Partners: Minto Mine and Selkirk First Nation

The Selkirk First Nation Youth in Mining program will provide eight grade 11 and 12 students with summer job placements in various areas of the mining industry. The program encourages post-secondary education and training.

YMTA Partner: Western Copper Corporation

Exploration Field assistant training for two Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation members in a variety of field exploration duties this summer.

YMTA Partners: Northern Freegold/Bushmasters

The Exploration Field Assistant Training is training two Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation members in various geological field techniques on an exploration site.

On-The-Job Training is Happening Now

New employees learn best when they are given the chance to use the skills they're acquiring. The YMTA First Nations Wage Subsidy Program gives trainees that opportunity.

After an employee is hired, their employer applies for the wage subsidy, and YMTA funds part of their wage during the training period.

The program has been an undeniable success. There are currently over twenty First Nations employees enrolled in the Wage Subsidy Program. All of them are getting full-time employment and hands-on learning in skills that are widely transferable.

On-the-job training happening in the Yukon right now through the Wage Subsidy Program includes:

Tatra Ventures Ltd. currently has 4 employees getting on-the-job training in supervisory skills, heavy duty mechanics, and heavy equipment operation.

Last Chance Placers is training a placer miner on heavy-duty equipment to qualify for full-time employment in higher-level positions.

Pelly Construction has 3 employees enrolled who are receiving on-the-job training as heavy equipment operators on the Minto mine site.

Teslin Tlingit Council is employing four apprentice carpenters.

Keyeh NejeH Golder and Associates has hired two full-time environmental technicians.