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NICO mining assessment underway

Tlicho Government bid to postpone environmental assessment thrown out

by **Thandiwe Vela**
Northern News Services
Whati/Lac La Martre

The environmental assessment for Fortune Minerals' proposed NICO project just north of Whati is now underway after the successful submission of the mining company's Development Assessment Report (DAR) to the Mackenzie Valley Review Board.

The 3,000-page document was officially submitted to the review board in May, after the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories dis-

missed an application from the Tlicho Government to halt environmental assessment of the mining project.

According to Justice L.A. Charbonneau's written decision, at issue is the construction of a 27-km all-season access road, which Fortune says the GNWT is planning to construct, connecting the Behchoko, Whati, and Gameti communities with Highway 3 to Yellowknife.

The mining company also plans to build a year-round road from the new highway to the NICO project site to haul

material and fuel to the site and transport ore out. Both access roads would be on Tlicho lands where there is currently a moratorium on land development due to ongoing development of a land use plan in accordance with the Tlicho Lands Protection Law.

After the Wek'eezhii Land and Water Board told Fortune it was not eligible to apply for land use permits for activities on Tlicho lands without proof of right of access, the mining company applied for assessment of components inside the NICO project's claim block, with plans to submit a separate application for its proposed all-weather road site at a later date.

The application was referred to the review board, which decided to include the impact of construction of the access road in addition to the impact of Fortune's eventual use of the new GNWT highway for consideration in the initial environmental assessment.

The Tlicho Government argued in Supreme Court the review board acted outside its jurisdiction by refusing to postpone the environmental assessment until access issues, especially regarding the potential roads, were resolved.

The review board argued that "an indefinite postponement of the (environment



An aerial view of Fortune Minerals' NICO mine site, located 50 km north of Whati.

photo courtesy of Fortune Minerals

BUSINESS Briefs

by NNSL staff

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An easier way to start a business

Lüdlü Kue/Fort Simpson

A new online business permit available in Fort Simpson is creating an easier avenue for entrepreneurs to develop a business in the community.

BizPaL is a business permit and license service that cuts down paperwork and provides entrepreneurs with access to information on the permits and licences they need to establish and run their businesses. Currently, BizPaL is running in Fort Smith and Hay River, as well. Eventually, all NWT residents will be able to use the system to assist with their businesses.

"Small businesses in the NWT are the backbone of our economy, and offer diversified employment across the territory," said Minister Bob McLeod in a prepared statement.

Mayor of Fort Simpson Sean Whelly said in the community of 1,250, there are more than 100 registered businesses and it's important to assist both current and future residents to make the right decisions when planning their start-up.

"BizPaL will be a great tool to promote business in Fort Simpson, by putting all the necessary regulatory and licensing information in one easy-to-access website," he stated in a press release.

Interested entrepreneurs can acquire more information by visiting BizPaL's website.

— Sarah Ferguson

NWT gross domestic production increases

NWT

The gross domestic product for the NWT rose by 5.8 per cent in 2010, the third highest increase in Canada, according to the NWT Bureau of Statistics. GDP increased for all provinces and territories last year, with Nunavut and Newfoundland seeing the greatest increases. Nationally, GDP rose by 3.3 per cent between 2009 and 2010. The GDP is the market value of goods and services produced in a given timeframe.

— Thandiwe Vela

Braden-Burry Expediting expands to the Kivalliq

Kivalliq

Kivalliq customers who use Braden-Burry Expediting for their shipping needs will now have an easier time accessing services in both English and Inuktitut.

Last week, the company announced the expansion of its freight consolidation services to the Kivalliq region with the creation of a toll-free number. According to a press release issued by BBE, the new service will make it easier for Kivalliq customers to organize the shipment of goods by providing them a direct link to the Arctic Sealift Centre.

Dominique Napayok, who is originally from Whale cove, will be answering the centre's calls.

— NNSL staff

Please see **Access**, page 34

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photo courtesy of Steve Friebe

Canoe North Adventures is hosting a Sahtu Celebration in Norman Wells on July 23, to promote the Sahtu wilderness, like the scene pictured above.

Celebrating the Sahtu wilderness

Festivities in Norman Wells to highlight efforts in promoting the region

by Sarah Ferguson
Northern News Services
Lil Golline/Norman Wells

Al Pace, Lin Ward and their son Taylor have a passion for sharing one of the North's best kept secrets – its rivers.

Through their family-run business, Canoe North Adventures – based in Norman Wells during the summer months and near Orangeville Ont., during the winter – they are offering what Ward and Pace call "life-altering canoe and hiking experiences."

On July 23, Canoe North Adventures will help host a celebration of the Sahtu region, which will highlight the beauty of the wilderness and showcase its potential as a Northern tourism gateway.

The event will also highlight the outfitting design capabilities required to support canoe and hiking expeditions in the region, and Ward says Canoe North Adventures is proud to be part of the festivities.

The celebration is to highlight a collaborative effort to promote the region, between Canoe North Adventures; North-Wright Airways, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment and its subdivision for the Sahtu; NWT Tourism; and Sahtu Parks and Tourism.

Pace and Ward said Canoe North has teamed up with North-Wright Airways, owned by Warren and Carolyn Wright of Norman Wells, to transport customers by floatplane to the Norman Wells area.

According to Canoe North Adventure's website, North-Wright Airways began a major infrastructure project three years ago to construct an elaborate float base to increase access to the rivers and hiking trails of the Sahtu for wilderness expeditions.

According to the website, the cost of the project so far has amounted to \$1.7 million dollars and will likely rise to more than \$2 million during the next two years.

July 23 will also mark the grand opening of the Sahtu Aviation Museum at the new float base.

"Years ago we made a stand on the branding of the Sahtu (as a tourism area) and the movement has taken on a life of its own. Now there is a collaborative effort to make the Sahtu an official tourist destination and we owe a lot to that collaboration," Ward said.

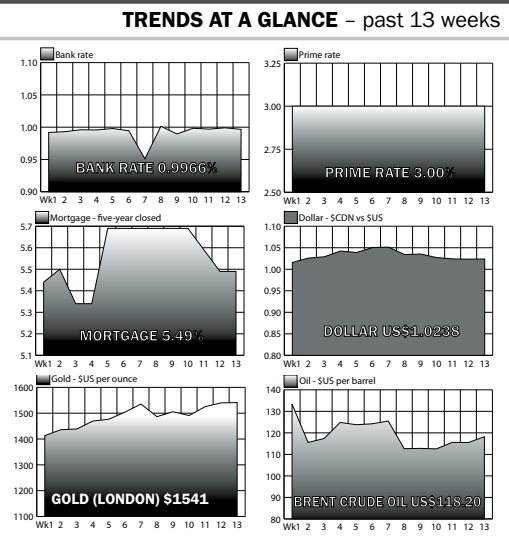
30 years of exploration

Ward said her family first came to Norman Wells in 2000, but adds they have been exploring the Canadian North for close to 30 years.

"We also do expeditions in the Yukon, but we really love the NWT most of all – the people here are so helpful and supportive," she said.

Ward says there are 10 river systems accessible from Norman Wells, and Canoe North has trips for novices as well as more advanced paddlers.

"Our typical package lasts 12



Access road is included

NICO, from page 32

assessment) would be unfair to Fortune."

Charbonneau found that the Review Board's decision to include the impact of the roads in the environmental assessment was within its jurisdiction and dismissed the Tlicho Government's application to halt the assessment, clearing the way for Fortune's submission of its report.

The mining company has been collecting environmental data for the proposed gold-cobalt-bismuth-copper mine from the region since 1998, said Julian Kemp, chief financial officer for Fortune Minerals. With the submission of the report, the company is hoping to begin construction at the site within the next two years.

"It's taken significantly longer to get into production than we ever thought it would," Kemp said, adding it's difficult to get stakeholders to participate with the publicly-traded company's project without a sound time line. "Shareholders expect you to get projects done in timely manner."

The estimated 31-million-tonne deposit is located 50 km north of Whati and holds approximately one million ounces of gold, Kemp said.

"It's not a small operation, it's a world-class deposit," he said, adding the NICO project would contribute

about \$128 million per year to the NWT Gross Domestic Product over the site's 18-year mine life.

John B. Zoe, Tlicho senior adviser, said the Tlicho Government will be meeting this week to review the court's decision.

"The Chiefs need to assess it and consider the next steps, if any," Zoe said, adding the government does not have an issue with Fortune Minerals but with the authorities the board is taking.

"There's a precedent that is going to be set."

"There's a precedent that is going to be set in whatever we do with Fortune in the area that they are in," Zoe said. "Whatever process that's existing now and being used is being defined as they go along. "What we are doing is to ensure the process is right and appropriate and proper."

The mining company is planning a "significant amount" of public consultation and continued relationship building with the Tlicho Government as the permitting process continues, Kemp said.

"We are looking forward to working with the Tlicho Government and people and the other stakeholders and regulatory agencies," he said. "We'd like to develop a project everybody could be proud of."

Bismuth is mixed with other metals and used in electrical fuses as well as fire detection and sprinkler systems. Bismuth carbonate is effective in countering gastric ulcers and diarrhea

days and covers approximately 200 miles (of river)" Ward said.

"Every river in the area has a character, ranging from the gentle waters of the Keele (River) to the more intense Mountain River, but there is definitely something in the Northern wilderness for everyone," she said.

Ward also says that Canoe North Adventures has many repeat customers.

"One in three come back to do another canoe trip – 40 per cent of our adventurers are alumni, and the majority of our customers are Canadian, though we have had people from England and New Zealand come here too," she said.

Pace and Ward are also making an effort to promote hiking tours of the Sahtu wilderness and said the Canol Heritage Trail is one of the best hiking trips a Northern explorer can take.

"The Canol (Trail) has so much history behind it and has some of the most amazing hiking trails you will find in the North," Ward said.

The trail, which runs from the edge of the Yukon to Norman Wells, was built during Second World War to accommodate an oil pipeline.

"It's a very historical place, and is extremely beautiful to hike in," she said. "It's wonderful that people's eyes are starting to turn towards the North. It has so much to offer."

New Arviat taxi company

Joe's Taxi Service started in May

by Jeanne Gagnon
Northern News Services
Arviat

Arviat residents looking for a ride home from the grocery store or the airport have a new option since Joe's Taxi Service started in early May.

Owner Joe Ishalook and another driver are offering taxi rides for five dollars per person for a ride in either a four-door vehicle or a 15-passenger van.

He said they make about \$150 a day, excluding tips.

"In the fall, it should pick up. It's steady right now. It's slow but steady," he said.

Ishalook was in the taxi business from 2001 to 2004 before taking some time off.

"I am happy I have restarted the taxi (business) and I have customers that are saying 'welcome back,'" he said.

He added he is thankful to the customers as they are the one that

keeps the business going.

Joe's Taxi Service is one of two taxi companies in Arviat, the other being Anthony's Taxi.

"Challenges are keeping the customers happy and it's hard to keep everyone happy," said Ishalook. "When we get busy days, then someone will wait a little longer to get to the next customer."

Arviat Mayor Bob Leonard said he has yet to ride in one of Ishalook's taxis but he said the vehicles are in good shape.

"The service is very welcome," he said. "Taxi businesses tend to have a struggle here in this community. So,

we've had sporadic service, I guess, for some time so a new service is always welcome."

He added he is unsure of the issue explaining why taxi services tend to struggle in Arviat.

"We often go with no taxi service and then we may have too much taxi then service. It sort of goes back and forth," said Leonard.

"It's slow but steady."