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Happy 70th Anniversary to the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce!

As the voice of business in Yellowknife since 1946, our Board of Directors has been focused on revitalizing the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce. New mission and vision statements along with a strategic plan that focuses on membership value, education and advocacy are at the forefront of this initiative.

Our mission 'To be a leader in the improvement and development of a strong Yellowknife business community with a diversified economy and sustainable growth' means providing service and value to businesses of all sizes, in all sectors and regions throughout Yellowknife. Guided by this mission, our focus on service and value for our membership has contributed to our continued membership growth. Our organization has grown by 43.5 per cent between January 2014 and June 2016 – bringing our current membership total to 330.

Throughout 2015, we worked with all levels of government to offer educational courses to the Yellowknife business community at a 90 percent subsidized rate. The Board of

Directors has approved the continuation of this initiative and a recent survey of our membership indicated that Yellowknife businesses want training in the following six areas: management and leadership, social media, human resource management, financial management, marketing and bookkeeping. Our goal is to offer subsidized training in 2016 and continue the program throughout 2017.

As part of our revitalization efforts, our traditional events have been modified to increase value for participants and to increase revenue for the Chamber. For example, our Scholarship Golf Classic has a new format – every hole will be par 3 and participants will have an opportunity to win a hole-in-one prize on every hole. We've also modified the structure of our Small Business Week offerings and intend to offer a variety of workshops with a customer service focus. Our signature event, the Spring Trade Show, was a resounding success in 2016 and because of our growing waitlist we'll be modifying our floorplan to accommodate additional exhibitors in 2017.

We've also added new events and services for our membership to take advantage of such as Small Business, Small Talk – an event designed for entrepreneurs, home-based and small businesses which will be offered three times a year throughout 2016. This event provides free training and educational resources for new business start-ups. We're also organizing our first annual trip to China that will provide an additional revenue stream for our organization.

The growing success of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce has allowed us to attract a diverse and knowledgeable group of individuals to our Board of Directors. Their expertise and dedication to the Yellowknife business community have strengthened our advocacy portfolio immensely. So far in 2016, we've taken on eight advocacy missions ranging from lobbying the City of Yellowknife to create a local procurement policy, to supporting the creation of a tourism tax levy and lobbying the GNWT for a reduction in the small business tax. We are proud to present the concerns of the Yellowknife business community to all levels of government.

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As we celebrate our 70th anniversary and plan for the future of our organization, we'd also like to honor and celebrate our past. Thank you to the countless business leaders who have served as members on our Board of Directors. Your contributions have built a solid foundation for us and we intend to keep building for the next 70 years!

In closing, we'd like to recognize our Platinum Sponsor, First Air, and our Gold Sponsors - CIBC, Kasteel Konstruktion, Finning, KBL Environmental, Kellett Communications, and Northwestel. And we'd be remiss if we did not thank our Programs Coordinator, Kendra Lakeman, who has done an outstanding job since joining us in February 2016. Her excellent work on the "Be a Tourist In Your Own Town" campaign, our "Small Business Small Talk" events, and her strong administrative support have allowed us to expand and improve the benefits we offer to our membership.

And finally, a big THANK YOU to our membership and to the Yellowknife business community. As always, we welcome your input so please do not hesitate to connect with us.

Cheers to the year ahead!



Renee Comeau
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Want to Learn More about Chinese Culture? The YK Chamber can help

The Yellowknife Chamber's planned trip to China in April 2017 promises to be the trip of a lifetime

For Deneen Everett, executive director of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, her trip to China in April this year was one she'll never forget. "It was amazing," Everett says. "It's a completely different way of living. I have a much better understanding of China now."

Everett took part in a familiarization trip offered to Chambers of Commerce executive directors by the company organizing group tours to China. The trip she took is essentially the same as the 11-day trip now being offered by the Chamber to members for the all-inclusive price of \$2200.

Starting in Beijing, the group saw the Forbidden City, which housed the imperial palace for 24 of China's Emperors from 1420 to 1912. Despite its age, it is still the largest palatial structure in the world. The ancient contrasts with the new, as Beijing is at once a very old and a very modern city. The group also toured the facilities constructed for the Summer Olympics held in Beijing in 2008, including the famous Beijing National Stadium, also known as the Bird's Nest for its unique design and architecture.

From Beijing, the tour proceeded to Shanghai, Suzhou, and Hangzhou, each with its own tour highlights. Suzhou, home to nine million people, is China's second largest manufacturing centre, and produces iron, steel, information technology, electronic equipment and textile products. Suzhou is also the site of a leaning pagoda called Tiger Hill, or Yunyan Ta. Built between 959-961, it is older than the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy and contains

several historical sites, including tombs that have never been opened.

In Hangzhou, the tour included a visit to an immense tea plantation where Empress green tea is grown. This is a very high quality tea and not exported, so unavailable in the West. The group saw how silk was produced and watched a silkworm cocoon being unraveled for processing. They toured factories where luxury goods made of jade and hand-embroidered silk were available for purchase. "We stopped at government factories where the quality of luxury goods was guaranteed," says Everett. "Don't forget to barter in China – all prices are negotiable, even at these factories."

In Shanghai, the group toured the Bund, a famous waterfront that has been the symbol of the city for 170 years. Formerly a British settlement, the Bund became a trading port and eventually the centre of Shanghai's economy, culture and politics. After a major reconstruction in the 1990s, the Bund became a tourist destination, rich with history, art, and architecture, including several hotels and places to eat. The view from the Bund faces the modern Shanghai financial district, says Everett.

Besides the group tour, Everett says there are several optional side tours available from the tour bus which she recommends taking.

"(The tour) was life-changing for me because of the exposure to the culture and the history."

—Deneen Everett

One such tour is the canal trip the group took in Suzhou, which provided a relaxing opportunity to experience the culture and to see how the locals live.

For Everett, the highlight of the trip was seeing the Great Wall of China, which is emblematic of China's rich cultural history. Built over 2000 years, from 476 BC to 1644, the Wall stretches 21,196 kilometres across China, crossing deserts, mountains and grasslands. "It was life-changing for me," says Everett. "I appreciated the opportunity to be exposed to Chinese culture and history."

Everett says the food was excellent in any of the places where they ate, the hotels were modern and clean and the service everywhere was excellent. All of this – three meals a day, accommodation, ground tours and airfare – is included in the overall tour price of \$2200 for Yellowknife Chamber members, and \$2500 for non-members. The next tour is planned to leave from Calgary in April 2017. Airfare from Yellowknife to Calgary is not included.

For find out more about the trip to China, please call Deneen Everett, at 920-4944 or email ExecutiveDirector@YKChamber.com. Information and registration forms can be found on the Chamber website at www.YKChamber.com. **YKCI**



Yellowknife Chamber executive director Deneen Everett and partner Matt Belliveau.

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Yellowknife tourism seems
poised to take off.
And it's getting lots of help.

Tourists at the tundra/tree line in autumn.
Photo by R. Berdan. Courtesy of Peterson's Point Lake Lodge.



By Graham Chandler

Cathy Allooloo knows what Yellowknife tourists like. She's part owner of Narwal Northern Adventures which offers up a myriad of tours, trips and outdoor training. The top seller is their floating dinner theatre, where guests paddle 29-foot voyageur canoes to a scenic location on Yellowknife Bay. "The arts community is very vibrant here so we have an opportunity to profile them as part of our floating dinner theatre," she says. "We mix it up every week with something different—like a couple of painters set up on our dinner site doing a duet painting on one canvas while having dinner. It is usually something dramatic like voyageurs' canoes or a history of Yellowknife. And then we have a silent auction for the painting."

There's even more. "Lots of music," she adds. "We have a fiddler in each of the boats, we have ballad singers, flute players. The boats stop enroute to our dinner spot and some of my staff emerge from the bush in costume and character,

and do a re-enactment of some local history. At the dinner site we serve dishes like moose soup, bannock and have more theatrical presentations. Then a lovely sendoff at the end."

According to research conducted by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment -Tourism and Parks Research Planning Unit, tourism operator licenses in the North Slave region have increased slightly from 36 in 2010 to 39 in 2015. But tourist numbers are more revealing of the City's popularity: walk-ins to the Visitor Information Centre increased from 19,379 in 2012 to a City-reported 40,759 in 2015. Total visitors to Yellowknife went from 41,906 in 2009/10 to 68,778 in 2013/14, leisure travelers accounting for 70 percent and 66 percent respectively. And traffic to www.visityellowknife.com jumped last year to 134,677 hits, compared to 45,157 in 2013.

The increase in numbers of tourists coming to Yellow-



Cathy Allooloo of Narwal Northern Adventures
photo courtesy of Narwal Northern Adventures

“WE HAVE A FIDDLER IN EACH OF THE BOATS, WE HAVE BALLAD SINGERS, FLUTE PLAYERS.”

CATHY ALLOOLOO

knife happens in summer and in winter. While NARWAL's busy season is summer, Bobby Drygeese, who owns and operates B. Dene Adventures, gets busier in winter with aurora tours from mid-December to mid-April. He says people come to his Dettah cabin to experience Aboriginal authenticity too, like hunting stories, drumming, and tra-

ditional lifeways. For example, “We have the fish we catch daily,” he says. “We cut it up, cook it over an open fire and share it with them, let them try it out. They love it.” He says being truthful and honest is key. “We were taught the way we grew up to tell the truth all the time and be honest and respectful of people; doing things the right way.” It ensures his guests learn and understand the ways of the Yellowknives Dene.

For winter, aurora viewing is the top draw, says Cathie Bolstad, executive director of NWT Tourism, whose mandate is territorial. For summer it's hiking and fishing. Aurora touring has jumped from 18 percent of leisure visitors in 2009/10 to 21,191 or 47 percent in 2013/14 and now accounts for nearly half of leisure travelers' spending. “Aurora season starts in September, drops off in October and then back in November to March,” says Bolstad. “It is not unusual to see hordes of tourists in their parkas navi-

gating the main drive to and from the shops and oohing and awing at night. They go to bed late and sleep in late and a hub of activity in the afternoon into the night.”

Attraction to individual events is harder to measure. “But destination tourist activities give you that one more reason to come,” says Bolstad. “In the summer it is things like Folk on the Rocks, the float plane fly-in, National Aboriginal Day is becoming more of a draw. And the Northern Frontier Visitor Centre is, for the third year now, putting on the annual shore lunch championship – the competition of cooking awesome fish. Those are the main summer events.”

And for those who come for the northern lights, in the winter: “I think the mainstays are the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre with its fabulous display of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. And the Visitor Centre is becoming quite popular,” says Bolstad. The two winter festivals, the Snow



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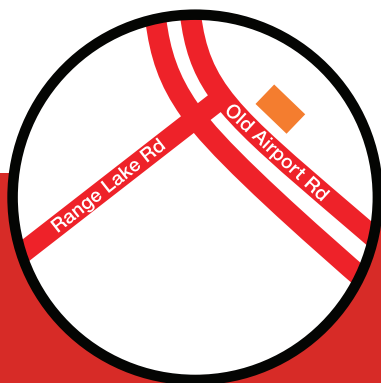
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King Festival and the Long John Jamboree, are becoming longer. "It's not unusual to see bands performing in the snow castle and books being launched, and dances which lead right into the Long John Jamboree." Some offer ice fishing at the festival.

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre has proven to be a popular spot for tourists to encapsulate their experience in a one-stop shop. Sarah Carr-Locke, Director of the GNWT's Culture and Heritage Division and of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, reports that last year's visitor tally was about 49,000, not counting school groups. "That is impressive considering the population of the territory," she says. At the Centre, visitors can take in the entire NWT's history, prehistory, and culture as well as local artist exhibitions all in the same building.

"We have a discovery gallery which is a hands-on experience geared towards children—it's a fun place where you can try on clothes and stuff and the tourists love that too," she says. The moose skin boat is the major exhibit. Current featured artist is Abraham Anghik-Ruben, "an internationally known sculptor originally from NWT, and recently featured at the Smithsonian." The

Centre's biggest upcoming project is on the special RCMP constables, opening in about a year. "We like to think about a topic that will link into the history of Canada with next year's 150th anniversary," she says. "It is an aboriginal story that hasn't really been told."

Though territorial in scope, the Centre liaises extensively with the City. "We don't really have any jurisdictional overlap with them," says Carr-Locke. "But we were part of the initial conversations on their development strategy early on."

Acting on growing interest and recognition of Yellowknife's tourism potential, in 2012 city council's Goals and Objectives directed the administration to develop separate but complementary economic development and tourism strategies. A resulting project to address provision of tourism support services became a priority in the 2014 budget. Funding was provided by the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (Cannor) "to develop a tourism strategy for the City of Yellowknife which would identify how the City can most effectively support tourism in Yellowknife and provide a clear framework for moving forward over the next five years (2015 to 2019)," says Nali-

ni Naidoo, director, communications and economic development.

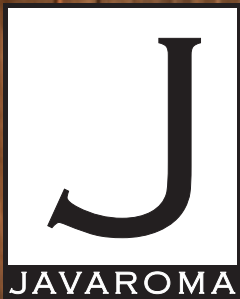
This tourism strategy has three main goals - enhancing Yellowknife's tourism management and partnership model, increasing destination awareness, and improv-

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AS A SOLID BRAND,
WELL ESTABLISHED
ON THE MAP AS A
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DESTINATION AS WELL
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TRAVEL ..."

NALINI NAIDOO



Mackenzie River Diorama at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.
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ing community tourism infrastructure and services. Among the related 25 action items is a destination marketing strategy, which was presented to city council in April 2016 and which outlines a three-year planning and implementation period starting in the second half of 2016. To enhance these initiatives, Naidoo says, the City actively partners with other tourism organizations such as NWT Tourism and the GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, as well as the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce.

“WE’VE SECURED \$1.6 MILLION IN FUTURE CONFERENCES, AND \$400,000 OF THAT IS TAKING PLACE THIS YEAR...”

CATHY BOLSTAD

The City's Economic Development and Communications Department promotes tourism to locals and visitors alike year-round through several campaigns and partnerships. For example, “Be a Tourist in Your Own Town” is a partnership with the Chamber, the City and the GNWT. The goal is to encourage city residents to take advantage of local activities and tourist experiences. #YKFestivals is an online contest in partnership with the GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to promote festivals and destination awareness. Twice a year, during the summer and winter festival season, festival goers are invited to post their experiences using text, photos or videos to Twitter and Instagram using #ykfestivals for additional chances to win.

And for tourism operators, the City is open to business. “We support partnerships and initiatives that contribute to a diverse and vibrant local and regional economy, draw investment to Yellowknife and the NWT, and encourage new business and residents to join our growing and prosperous community,” says Naidoo.

A fast-growing ambition among Yellowknife tourism stakeholders is to engage the 34 percent of visitors who come to the city for business.

NWT Tourism leads the charge. “In June 2014 we signed an agreement with the GNWT to undertake development of a convention bureau,” says Bolstad. “We built a

website and made agreements with all five regions, the airlines and the hotels, positioning us to form the NWT Conference Bureau.” By January 2015 it was ready to roll, accepting bids to hold conferences.

It's working well. “We've secured \$1.6 million in future conferences, and \$400,000 of that is taking place this year for the first time,” says Bolstad. “And there's another \$1.4 million in bids in process right now.” The initiative is NWT-wide, but Bol-

stad says Yellowknife is getting the benefit of our work. “Typically, when people are bringing a conference north, the flight to Yellowknife is high so to go on to another region they can't afford to do one more hop.”

Narwal's Allooooloo welcomes the conference bureau initiative. “We needed better coordination when conferences are in town,” she says. “When there are two conferences there is just no place for anyone



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to stay. But a couple (of hotels) under construction should help.”

Margaret Peterson, owner and operator of Peterson’s Point Lake Lodge, started My Backyards Tours in 2009 to offer a variety of city tours, including a specialty tour she calls “Introduction

to Yellowknife” designed specifically for human resources recruitment and retention services for Yellowknife companies. “If you are an employer conducting interviews with out-of-town candidates, you can increase your hiring success by letting us acquaint your candidates with our wonderful city,” Petersen says. The tour showcases the many facilities available, speaks about the services offered, and provides practical information on schools, housing, transportation and weather. “For example, some mining companies spend a lot of money to bring people up for a job interview,” she says. “We do a tour with that individual with family and show them Yellowknife and why we love living here. We take them to whatever they want to see. Some people with children want to see the school so we make arrangements for that.

Some are interested in the churches so I make arrangements with the churches. For some it is recreation. We try to do a real sales job on Yellowknife. It’s a great place to live.”

Allooloo would like to see more seasonal diversity in YK tourist offerings. More tourists are coming in the shoulder season, expecting to see northern lights, despite being told aurora viewing is better in winter. “Yellowknife needs to plan more for the shoulder season because there is so much to do here,” Allooloo says. “We could program more cultural events, for example. I think we need to work towards making Yellowknife not just a seasonal operation and not putting all our eggs in the aurora basket. We need to brand that somehow.”

Branding will be a part of NWT Tourism’s planned television commer-

“WE TRY TO DO A REAL SALES JOB ON YELLOWKNIFE. IT’S A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE.”

MARGARET PETERSEN



Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.
billbradenphoto. Courtesy of PWHNC.

cials aimed at Canada's 150th. "So, as the gateway, Yellowknife will benefit hugely," says Bolstad. "I think the city can play an incredible role in helping put NWT on the map. With tourism growing, there is an opportunity for Yellowknife to really step up and recognize it can be a pivotal point in making NWT greater than ever before."

The City shares that enthusiasm. "[Statistics] show that Yellowknife is an up and coming tourism destination ... we will be further enhanced over the next few years with the tourism strategy that is being rolled out," says Naidoo. "For the future, I see Yellowknife as a solid brand, well established on the map as a business conference destination as well as for leisurely travel where people can get a taste of living in the Canadian wilderness." **YKCI**



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Getting into business – without getting into financial distress

Many new businesses get started by those with great ideas but little experience. Where can they get advice and start-up loans?

by Beverly Cramp



Budding entrepreneurs usually have a great idea and lot's of passion for their new business. A few of them even have some understanding of the business tools and the know-how needed to run the operation. But passion and limited knowledge only gets you so far. What can you do to develop your business and avoid bankruptcy?

Fortunately, there are some local organizations and resources available in Yellowknife to assist business start-ups and to coach entrepreneurs in the finer points of business development before the bankruptcy auditors move in.

The newest resource in Yellowknife is Futurpreneur Canada, a mentoring program for young entrepreneurs (ages 18 – 39) that opened its doors in March of this year. As a national organization, Futurpreneur began its mentoring programs in 1996, initially in eastern Canada, and gradually began spreading to other parts of the country. The program matches young entrepreneurs with a business expert network of almost 3,000 volunteer mentors. Futurpreneur provides other support too.

"We have three streams - training, financing and funding, and mentoring," says Mark Walker, Futurpreneur's NWT business development manager and recently retired Northwestel vice president, business markets. The mentoring assistance pairs a new business with a local mentor, usually someone well known in the business community who has worked as a general manager of a large organization or a successful entrepreneur operating in the area. Walker already has five or six mentors ready to take on the task of grooming new business owners in the NWT.

Budding entrepreneurs and their designated mentors usually spend about four hours a month together. "The role of the mentor is not to give the 'right answer' but to ask questions that will lead the entrepreneur to what they need to know," says Walker.

Futurpreneur offers plenty of instruction to increase the knowledge and confidence of new entrepreneurs. "There will be lots of online courses – we call them crash courses – fifteen to twenty minutes of instruction on specific topics," Walker says. Additionally, Futurpreneur offers special events scheduled throughout the year such as a two-day work-

shop about creating a business plan. Walker says it's an intense few days with lots of interaction work and information on topics such as market research, pricing, markets, operations, practical trends that entrepreneurs need to know about, and financing and cash flow.

It may seem like a lot to cover in just two days, but taking the time to investigate all the major areas of what will eventually be a comprehensive business plan is crucial for success. Each area is important but some are easier to ignore than others, often at the peril of the future venture. Take, for example, market research.

"Young entrepreneurs often overlook taking the time at the front end of their planning to understand who their customers actually are by analysing such things such as their customers' demographics," Walker says. "It is common for a young entrepreneur to overlook this basic market research. But they need it so that they can target their customers properly. I find that as soon as you say, 'market research', people think it will take forever. But in today's world it can be done quickly through the Internet, local chambers of commerce, and online surveys that are



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ONLINE RESOURCES

The City of Yellowknife offers a number of online services for new and established businesses.

1 Bizpal, an online tool to help entrepreneurs navigate the business permits, licences and other requirements needed to start, operate and grow their business from the federal, provincial/territorial and participating municipal governments. Currently the tool is soft launched and a hard launch is expected later this year. (<https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/doing-business/BizPaL.asp>)

2 A streamlined access to online forms and applications (https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/living-here/Applications-Forms-Licenses-and-Permits.asp?_mid_=20575)

3 A partnership with the Yellowknife and NWT Chambers of Commerce, CDETNO, Government of The Northwest Territories Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, and others to provide links to all these organizations (<https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/doing-business/business-links.asp>)

4 A business directory (https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/VirtualCityHall.asp?_mid_=20566)

5 A special application called City Explorer with interactive maps to view zoning information and other information pertinent for businesses (<https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/discovering-yellowknife/interactive-maps.asp>)



Mark Walker, business development manager, NWT Futurpreneur. billbradenphoto

free. Ultimately, [entrepreneurs] are going to need this knowledge to be successful.”

The single biggest issue that young entrepreneurs typically fail to get right is in the area of basic financial principles. Walker gives the example of the importance of cash flow. “It’s as simple as do you have enough coming in on a monthly basis to pay the bills?”

Being in the North comes with extra difficulties for new businesses. It’s not only high costs such as rent, power, heat, communications and any needed renovations, many materials are more expensive because of the transportation costs required to ship to the north. Walker says another critical issue is staffing – can a new business keep staff if it can’t compete with the higher salaries and benefits paid by the territorial government or the diamond mines?

“There is no way a young entrepreneur can compete with them. Also, there isn’t a huge population here, so getting good employees is going to be tough,” says Walker.

A small population creates another problem for a new business – who is going to buy your products consistently enough so you can make a living? “Our market size is pretty small here and that can present its own difficulties,” adds Walker. “It’s not like starting a business in Edmonton or Vancouver.”

Having enough start-up capital is a common challenge for new businesses. It’s one of

the reasons Walker is happy to be partnering with NWT’s Business Development Investment Corporation (BDIC), a corporation set up by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) in 2005 to help northern business succeed. BDIC encourages the creation of new businesses in the territory by providing information and financial assistance to companies and by making investments in business enterprises. In fact, it was BDIC that initiated the opening of a Futurpreneur operation in Yellowknife and provides Walker with office space.

“The role of the mentor is not to give the ‘right answer’ but to ask questions that will lead the entrepreneur to what they need to know...”

Mark Walker, Futurpreneur

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Business Resource Centre, Business Development Investment Corporation. billbradenphoto

"It's good to be their partner given that they are a quasi-bank," says Walker. "Futurpreneur can offer new entrepreneurs upwards of \$45,000 in start-up financing and they can get access to even more through a combination of BDIC and Futurpreneur funding."

During its first ten years in NWT, BDIC gave more than \$70 million in financial assistance to over 400 businesses. The average loan for start-ups depends on a number of factors, including the industry the start-up is looking to develop in as different industries

have different capital requirements. The BDIC's loan maximum limit is \$2 million, which has been offered to new NWT start-ups several times since the organization started.

BDIC provides more than standard loans to NWT businesses. It also has a contribution program known as the Business Development Project Fund, which supports business start-ups and expansion. For a 5-year period, businesses can receive a maximum of \$10,000 or \$20,000, depending on the community in which the new business is operating.

For clients wanting a usual term loan but who don't qualify at one of the big banks, the BDIC can act as a guarantor, thereby providing guarantees for the business seeking the loan for working capital and also for the banks providing the loan.

BDIC invests in existing companies under its venture investment and subsidiary programs. The subsidiary program supports local employment-generating businesses around the NWT. Some well-known and successful companies that have received investment funds from BDIC include: Dene Fur Clouds in Fort Providence, the Ulukhaktok Arts Centre, Fort McPherson Tent and Canvas as well as Acho Dene Native Crafts in Fort Liard.

For new businesses, BDIC acts as a lender of last resort, which means that it can lend to entrepreneurs who can't get regular bank financing. However, this doesn't mean that BDIC will participate in any project submitted; the organization still must do its due diligence. BDIC is funded by the GNWT, and therefore lends public funds. It must make sure the funds are managed properly by evaluating the business fundamentals and the potential benefits of a project.

BDIC's broad mandate means it offers other services such as supplying information to entrepreneurs, including the guide

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“We base our decisions on two main things: the viability of the business and the character of the individual.”

David Patrick, MDDF

“How to Start a Business in the NWT” which was recently updated. The organization continues to develop new programs for entrepreneurs including the venture programs set up to assist youth, women, and disabled people.

Because financing for a new business is difficult to access, especially for a young entrepreneur with little business experience, there are other organizations that have been created to give the needed assistance. The NWT Métis-Dene Development Fund is one such funder that will take on new business clients that traditional banks have turned down.



David Patrick, general manager, NWT Métis-Dene Development Fund.
billbradenphoto

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"Typically banks are going to want much higher credit ratings and financial stability than we do, as well as substantial net worth," says David Patrick, MDDF's general manager for the last seven years. "We base our decisions on two main things: the viability of the business and the character of the individual. As many as 90 per cent of our customers probably wouldn't get bank financing."

Patrick says that MDDF's clients aren't merely account numbers in a computer. The maturity of the client, the skills they demonstrate for

running a business and their work ethic are all elements considered. "It's very much a judgement call based on a few guidelines," says Patrick.

Originally set up in 1991 to lend to Dene and Métis businesses, MDDF now offers support to any business in the NWT that may need it. Celebrating its 25th anniversary this August, the organization has provided an estimated \$25 million to more than 300 businesses in the North.

Other MDDF services include: letters of credit and loan guarantees made on a business's behalf, often with larger projects for

clients such as the GNWT (offered in lieu of bonding); working capital loans and lines of credit to provide money used to cover daily operating costs until accounts receivable are paid; and business advisory services that involve day-to-day advice and planning for clients.

"We form a relationship with our clients," says Patrick. "They regularly come to us for suggestions and feedback. Or we may call them to pass on tips. We also work through difficulties with our clients rather than threaten with repossession of their home or vehicle. It's a lot better for everyone if the problems can be worked out."

Not all support services for new businesses come in the form of funding or mentorship. Getting sound advice and direction regarding permits can prove beneficial and avoid future trouble with regulators. The City of Yellowknife offers a number of online services for starting and established businesses, accessible on its website. (See sidebar on page 11.)

The Northwest Territories government offers many business supports too. The Business Incentive Policy (BIP) gives preference for government contracts to businesses that are owned and operated within the NWT. In most cases, local businesses can charge 15% more than out-of-territory companies.

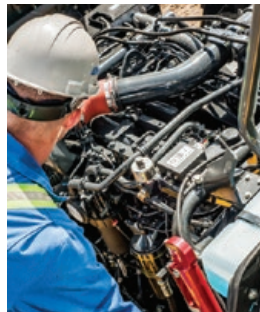
The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) offers various grant programs. For example, a major opportunity for new businesses to learn about markets is to attend trade shows. ITI's SEED policy can offset the costs associated with attending seminars and trade shows to access information regarding new technologies or business opportunities by up to \$3,000.

For an arts and culture-based business, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) has several programs that could support new businesses in the sector. Budding festival promoters or organizers can find financial support in the Support for Northern Performers program that provides financial contributions to promote and develop northern performing arts by supporting presentations of Northwest Territories performing artists.

All it takes is a little creativity to structure a business in ways that ECE can support. In some cases, the organization has to be a non-profit to get the available grants. For more information, go to: <http://www.pwnhc.ca/download/support-for-northern-performers-package/>

Ultimately, the burden of success falls on the shoulders of the new business operators. Surviving the early start-up stage is the first hurdle, says Mark Walker. "If a young entrepreneur makes it through the first couple of years, there's a good probability the business will last." **YKCI**

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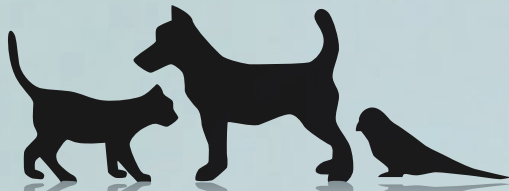
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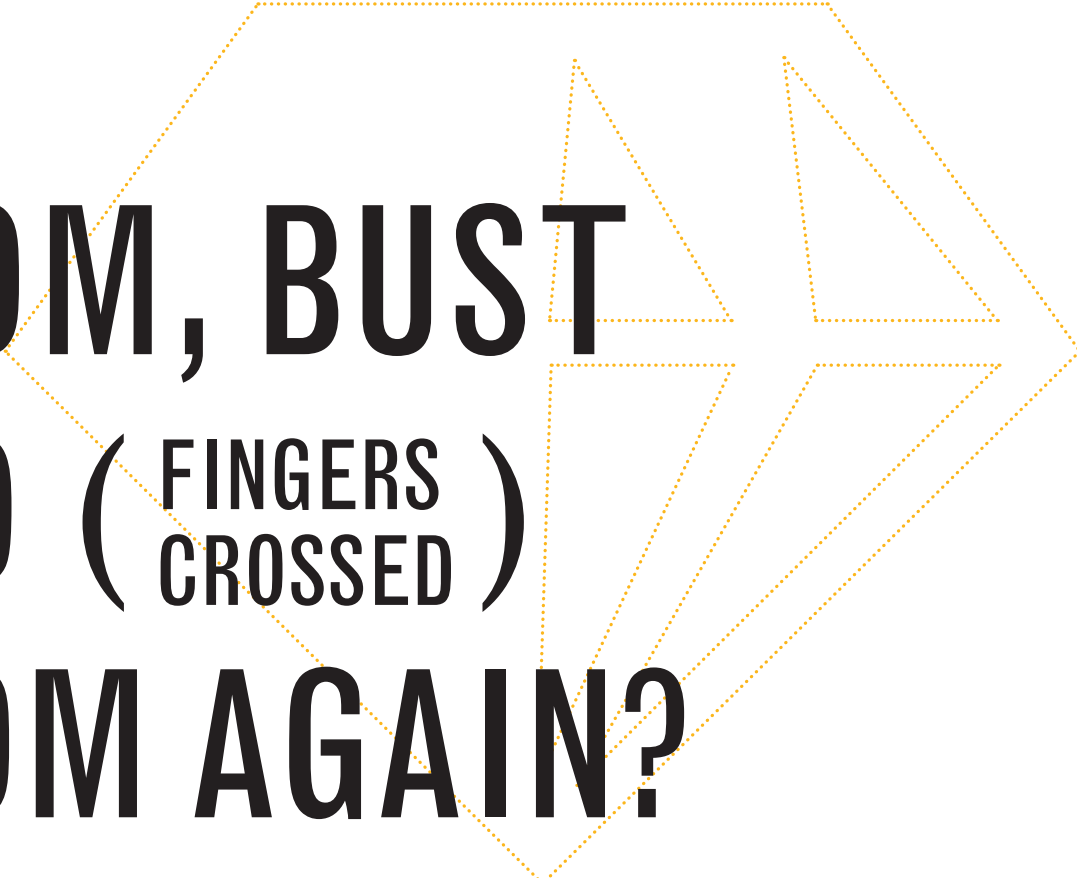
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Diavik mined open pits. Courtesy Diavik Diamond Mines



BOOM, BUST AND (FINGERS CROSSED) BOOM AGAIN?

Yellowknife's business community has been buoyed by 25 years of prolific diamond exploration and mining. Does the multi-year downturn in mineral exploration have Yellowknifers worried about hard times to come, or looking forward to the next boom?

By Bill Braden

When word broke in 1991 that a gravelly outcrop way up in the barrenlands held a treasure trove of diamonds, it wafted virtually unnoticed over Yellowknife's business sector. This is a gold-mining town. Diamonds? Nah.

The savvy local mining guys knew better, but they were too busy staking up an area that would soon be bigger than France to tell anyone. And almost overnight, a new breed of miner was in town, chatting in unusual Belgian, Australian and South African accents, bankrolled by equally unfamiliar companies with names like BHP Minerals (now BHP Billiton), Rio Tinto, and De Beers.

That was 25 years ago. What a difference a quarter century makes.

With the closure of the Con gold mine in 2003, Yellowknife shed its 65-year long heritage of gold mining and fully embraced – many will say “was rescued by” – the diamond industry. The rich diamond deposits in the Northwest Territories have ranked Canada third in global production, and Yellowknife calls itself the Diamond Capital of North America.

So what does this mean to the Yellowknife economy, and its hundreds of business owners? It really comes down to the spending power generated by these big economic engines, and how successful Yellowknifers are at capturing the opportunities.

With the Ekati and Diavik mines, and the Gahcho Kué project coming on stream later

THE DIAMOND MINES' IMPACT ON YELLOWKNIFE'S ECONOMY

*EKATI Mine
** NWT Bureau of Statistics
***City of Yellowknife
**** NWT Nunavut Chamber of Mines

DIRECT MINING EMPLOYEES RESIDENT
IN YELLOWKNIFE (2014):

743 **

AVERAGE INCOME (2011):

\$96,384

TOTAL PAYROLL:

\$71.6 million

TOTAL GOODS AND SERVICES
SPENDING IN NWT*** 2013

(SNAP LAKE, DIAVIK, EKATI):

\$621million

(approx. 70% of total procurement)

PROPERTY AND FUEL TAXES
PAID TO GNWT****
(ALL MINES AS OF 2011)

\$213 million

INDIRECT MINING EMPLOYEES
RESIDENT IN YELLOWKNIFE (2014):

105 **

AVERAGE INCOME (2011):

\$87,260

TOTAL PAYROLL:

\$9.2 million

NWT GROSS DOMESTIC
PRODUCT (2013):

\$3.85 billion **



DEH CHO BRIDGE TOLLS: **** | **\$1.5 million annually**
(ALL MINES APPROX.)

in 2016, Yellowknife's financial picture will be enhanced with these numbers: between 900 and 1,000 mine employees, resident in Yellowknife, with average annual earnings of about \$100,000, for a total payroll of approximately \$100 million (estimates from GNWT, Statistics Canada and company data, 2011 to 2016.)

Ekati, now owned by Dominion Diamond, directly employs some 630 resident workers. Diavik reports that it counts 227 resident workers of its total workforce, plus another 84 contract employees. Gahcho Kué will be in production by late 2016, with an estimated total workforce of 400. Alongside those well-paid jobs (2011 average \$96,384) is the indirect labour force impact in the supply and service sector. The GNWT estimates that for every direct mining job, 1.5 more are created in every market sector from trucking to aviation to office supplies.

Woven into this story is the massive capital cost of building these mines in one of the world's most remote regions. At roughly \$1 billion each (and in the case of the Gahcho Kué project, some 700 workers) these projects gave a much-needed jolt to the North's economy.

The picture gets very clear that the discovery of diamonds was indeed a remarkable rescue with a solid future. Several Yellowknife businesses, small, and home-grown, shared their stories of growth and diversification in the diamond era – or some cases, not so much.

BBEX:

By land, air, ice and sea

From their start 40 years ago in a backyard shed on Ragged Ass Road, Max Braden and the late Rick Burry started Braden Burry Expediting and quickly built a solid reputation serving remote green-field exploration camps from the Alberta-NWT border to the Arctic Islands.

Successive owners seized the opportunities created by the expanding international scope of mining the NWT. They broadened into logistics, specializing in remote locations, and now have bases in six NWT and Nunavut centres plus Edmonton, Winnipeg and Ottawa. Rebranded as BBEX, it became a NorTerra company owned by the Inuvialuit Development Corporation of Inuvik since 2007.

Sean Grey, BBEX's vice-president of business development, says the company was involved in many of the North's major discoveries. "As the mines grew, so did BBEX in scale, locations and our systems, tied to a diversification strategy started more than a decade ago," says Grey. "In Yellowknife specifically, we are highly reliant on the mining



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that is supported from Yellowknife, more so than our other operations.”

Experience and knowledge gained from servicing the northern mining industry allowed BBEX take the next steps to expand its business. “BBEX has been fortunate and positioned well in a way that’s allowed the company to take the lessons we’ve learned from working for mining clients and apply

them to other industries in the north and across Canada,” says Grey.

That’s recently been enhanced with strategic alliances with international freighters Air China, Air France and KLM. With diversification into other markets, BBEX now counts its directly-generated mining business at less than 25 per cent of revenues, Grey says.

The eventual sunseting of the original diamond mines will have a severe economic impact on the region, says Grey. “But over four decades we, as have other northern businesses, learned to evolve between the cycles in the mineral exploration and extraction industries. As a strategy in the region, we see opportunity and our responsibility to work together to make new developments feasible.”



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MATCO:

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Started in Norman Wells as a small business in 1966 when owners Lloyd and Ray Anderson saw an opportunity with the area's booming oil and gas sector, MATCO (Mid-Arctic Transportation Company) was one of the first land-based transportation companies to serve the Sahtu. It now has eight locations in the N.W.T., Alberta and the Yukon.

In 2013, Northern American mover Manitoulin Transport acquired MATCO. Leon Johnson, MATCO's corporate, commercial and international sales manager, credits the diamond era as a major catalyst for the company's growth. "Yes, the mining industry, in particular in Yellowknife, the diamond mines, have absolutely spurred additional moving business for our company. We have benefitted in local, domestic, cross-border, commercial and international activity and relocations."

Doing business with international clients has upped the game for many northern suppliers in their own safety, equipment and organizational standards. MATCO is no exception, says Johnson. "There were multiple aspects that were required in order to elevate our services to meet their (international clients') relocation, human resources, ISO and safety standards."

"The mining industry and diamond mines in particular have been a major customer of ours over the last 20 years and we hope that continues as we move into our next 50 years of business," he says.

INKIT:

Custom treatment always works

"We do business for the mines, and companies that work for the mines. They're interwoven into all kinds of businesses," says Dawna Marriott, president and project manager for Inkit, a design and advertising firm that's marking 36 years in business.

Marriott says that while Inkit has not specifically tailored its services to attract business from the mines, all of the work Inkit does is custom, tailored to the needs of the specific client. "We do a lot of work for Diavik and we've developed a really good working relationship with them," she says. "... we know what they expect and we give them what they need. There's that trust there because we work with them so much. It would be like that with any client."

She's found the big miners want to give northern entrepreneurs a fair chance at their business. "If you provide good service, good quality and competitive prices - obviously it will often be a little bit more expensive than the south - but if you do good work they tend to try to work with northern companies."

OFFICE COMPLIMENTS:

Mining's not a big player

Judy Murdoch is business manager with Office Compliments, a familiar name in business circles in Yellowknife since 1986, supplying temporary office support and services. Murdoch says while the overall economy has enjoyed the diamond era, it has not made a big addition to OC's bottom line for several years. And she's okay with that.

Noting that the large companies all have their own human resources departments and staffing resources, she says they have only occasional need for the services OC can provide. "We do provide temporary staff on request, but it's not a large percentage. In a few cases, the placements we have made with them have resulted in those people going to full time positions."

That's a good thing for the worker, but it reflects the chronic strain put on a lot of

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SUB ARCTIC SURVEYS: Built on the diamond surge

"It was a very big impact. It put us on the map," says Bruce Hewlko, president, and with his wife Sonja, owner of Sub Arctic Surveys Ltd., of the diamond staking rush in the early 1990s.

With ties to the legendary Arctic surveyor John Anderson Thompson, the Hewlkos started Sub Arctic in 1992, by happy coincidence right on the cusp of the diamond exploration boom. "We started working with BHP Billiton in the winter of 1994. And Diavik and Aber in 1994 when they made their first discovery. It carried through to about 2003 with Snap Lake and Gahcho Kué," he recalls.

Hewlko scrambled to keep up with the demand, at peak season having close to 30 of his 45-person workforce dedicated to mining, and in particular, exploration surveys. But since 2003, it's a very different story: from 50 per cent of demand for surveying services coming from mining and exploration, it's plummeted to five per cent.

"There's no exploration projects on the go, very little mineral claim staking requiring surveying. And the small operators don't have any money. The crash in exploration has had a big impact of the bottom line for SAS," says Hewlko.

Hewlko has re-tooled the business to construction surveying and still keeps a seasonal team of up to 25 employed, several of them in the company's satellite office in Iqaluit, set up three years ago. But he laments the dearth of exploration and its impact on those local businesses that relied almost entirely on it. "It's changed a lot from a mining town to an administrative town. There's a bit of different feel in the community. We've adapted, but others, specifically made for exploration, are really hurting."

Hewlko has hit on what is universally seen as the NWT economy's Achilles heel: that without robust exploration today, we're in danger of not replacing our huge reliance on diamond mining as and when its sparkle dims and dies.

That won't be for some time, at least on the horizon that most small businesses watch. Ekati, with its recently green-lighted Jay Pipe expansion, could be producing until 2030. Diavik has affirmed it will be mining until at least 2023, and then will be involved in reclamation for several years after that. And the De Beers-owned Gahcho Kué project, set to go into full production by late 2016, has at least an 11-year life.

Some advanced exploration does contin-

ue, notably Kennady Diamonds Inc. exploration play next door to Gahcho Kué, and a number other small explorers in the same region, but the days of a healthy, diversified prospecting climate have been drastically diminished across the North since 2009.

But there are two projects now underway in Yellowknife that will keep the local mining dollar pulsing.

On Yellowknife's doorstep is the TerraX Minerals Inc. program to explore ground neighbouring both the Giant and Con works.

TerraX's president Joe Campbell is proving again the old maxim about gold mining: your new mine is probably next door to the old one.

TerraX has been methodically re-sampling ground just north of the Giant mine since 2013 and is finding impressive grades. TerraX is years away yet from confirming a viable deposit, but has captured the attention of senior investors in the potential for new gold in the Yellowknife Greenstone district. "TerraX has put between \$2 million



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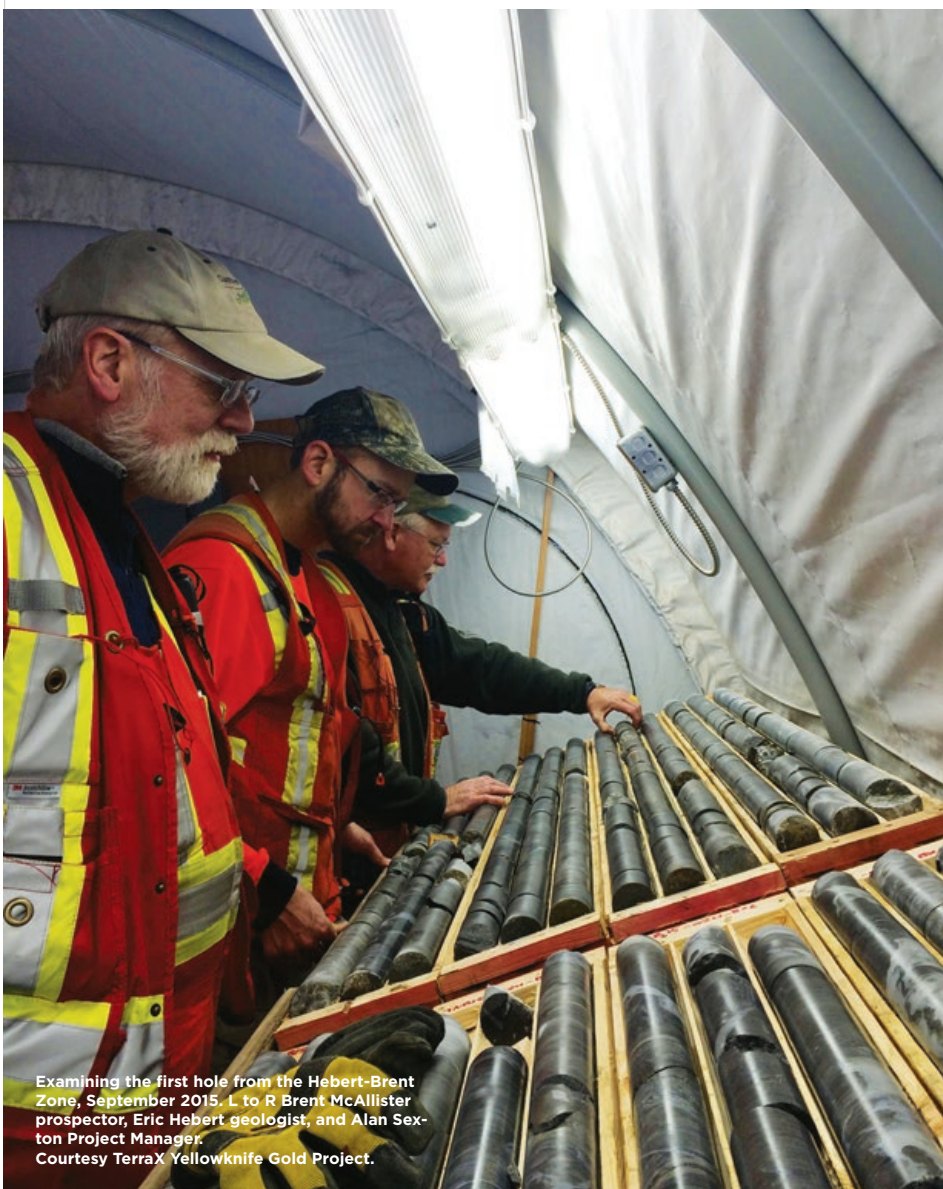
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Bruce Hewlko, president Sub Arctic Surveys.
billbradenphoto



Examining the first hole from the Hebert-Brent Zone, September 2015. L to R Brent McAllister prospector, Eric Hebert geologist, and Alan Sexton Project Manager.
Courtesy TerraX Yellowknife Gold Project.

and \$5 million per year into the Yellowknife economy over the last three years,” says Campbell, “made up of services, supplies, consumables and labour. Our expenditures have increased every year since inception of the project.”

Campbell cautions that exploration spending is linked to investment spending, something that’s “highly variable” on the junior exploration market. But it is running drilling and ground geophysical programs almost year-round, employing approximately 30 people, and later this year plans to open a permanent office in the city.

The other big mining-related project Yellowknife contractors are anticipating is the closure of the sprawling Giant mine site, which shut down in 2004. In its 56 years of operations, the Giant mine yielded seven million ounces of gold, but left behind a toxic mess that will cost taxpayers about \$1 billion and a decade to remediate.

Sharon Nelson, senior communications advisor with Public Works and Government Services Canada, says a main contractor for the work has yet to be selected, but the construction management deal will likely be worth between \$600 and \$700 million. “The percentage spent locally cannot be determined at this time. However, efforts to provide opportunities locally are being made,” says Nelson, adding that work packages will be tendered giving local businesses the chance to be involved.

While the premature shutdown of the Snap Lake Mine by owner De Beers late in 2015 was not entirely a surprise, it rattled Yellowknife. It was a sudden wake-up call to

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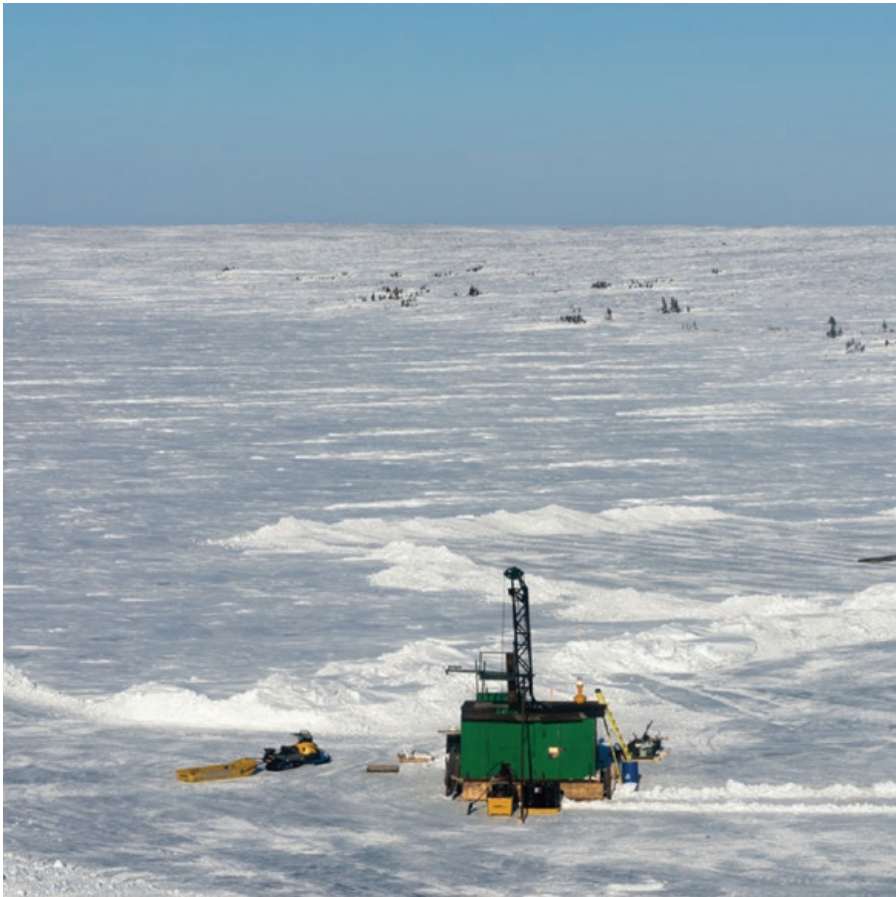
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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MINERALS AND PETROLEUM



the reality that any resource-based economy is never rock-solid. Current mine plans call for Diavik to begin spooling down in 2022, while Ekati could see 2030 before beginning reclamation activities. Local entrepreneurs aren't yet anticipating the end of the diamond economy, but they know that day will come.

"I don't think it's too far out to not think about it," says Inkit's Dawna Marriott. It's too soon to panic about it, but it's obviously something to keep in mind. You don't want to tailor yourself just to diamond mines... they won't be here forever. And it's going to be [followed by] something else."

"The region and the territory has done well by the investments of the explorers and the miners," says Leon Johnson of MATCO. "Our decisions and actions now will determine the economic state of affairs in the 2020s and 2030s."

And while the downturn in exploration has put a dent in the survey business, Bruce Hewlko has seen enough cycles – from base metals in the 1970s, to gold, to oil and gas, then diamonds in the 1990s – to know "there's always something going on."

"I'm always bullish on the North," says Hewlko. "We're in a little bit of a lull right now. But there always seems to be something coming on stream." **YKCI**

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#SHOPYK

Six Reasons Why Shopping Local Matters

Money is the lifeblood of Yellowknife's economy, and local businesses are its heart

By Matt Belliveau

Consumers across Canada are harnessing their purchasing power as they embrace the "Shop Local" trend. The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and the City of Yellowknife have recently ramped up promotion of the #ShopYK message – but do you know why it's so important to support local businesses?

1 Spreading Wealth

Money is the lifeblood of Yellowknife's economy, and local businesses are its heart. When you spend your money at a local business, it gets pumped right back into your community in the form of salaries, taxes and fees. The "Local Multiplier Effect" kicks in when that business re-spends your money at other local businesses to recirculate it again and again in a cycle of local prosperity.

2 Building Communities

Yellowknife-based non-profits, charities and events all look to local businesses for a large portion of their resources – not only in the form of much-needed funding, but also through the donation of goods, services and volunteers. Long John Jamboree, for example, comes together with the help of over 80 sponsors, almost all of which are locally-owned businesses.

3 Improved Service

Shopping in Yellowknife gives you direct access to knowledgeable staff. Local employees can recommend products that meet your specific needs, give you the inside scoop on upcoming sales, and provide follow-up support after you make a purchase.

4 Creating Jobs

According to Statistics Canada, small businesses were responsible for creating 77.7% of all new private sector jobs in Canada between 2002 and 2012 (about 100,000 jobs each year). When you shop local, you're not only investing in Yellowknife's small businesses, you're helping to drive the growth of their local payrolls.

5 Promoting Creativity

When you shop online, you're supporting the national sales strategy of a distant corporation. When you shop local, you're supporting the unique and unusual products that help make Yellowknife an interesting place to live and visit. It's just one more reason to give the gift of custom glassware from OldTown Glassworks or to chow down on a hot plate of Monkey Tree Poutine.

6 A Better Environment

The further a product travels to reach you, the more greenhouse gas emissions are released along the way. You can cut down on these emissions by buying products that are already here in Yellowknife. Emissions from shipping are even lower for traditional arts and crafts and other products that are "Made in the NWT" – by the north, for the north.



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YELLOWKNIFE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MARKS 70 YEARS

A FOCUS ON
BUSINESS AND
COMMUNITY
GROWTH WAS
CRITICAL TO THE
CONTINUING
SUCCESS OF THE
YELLOWKNIFE
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

In 1946, ENIAC, the first programmable digital computer, began operating, the bikini titillated the French fashion industry, Montreal beat Boston for the Stanley Cup, and a new car cost \$1120, about half the average annual wage of \$2500. A new house was more than double that at \$5600.

The big news in Yellowknife in 1946 was all about gold. The gold mines re-opened after a war-induced hiatus, and a huge staking rush to find more gold properties started just as the war ended. Factories re-tooling from war to industrial production caused a scarcity

of jobs in southern Canada, which drove several men and women returning from Europe's battlefields north to work in the gold mines and company-built communities.

That same year, an enterprising local named Gerry Murphy proposed the establishment of the Yellowknife Board of Trade. He thought businesses needed to lobby all levels of government to ensure that laws governing local businesses were fair and equitable. He also thought the group could focus on community improvement to assist the fast-growing post-war population,

expected to expand more when Giant Mine started up in 1948.

Accordingly, the Yellowknife Board of Trade started up in April 1946, pre-dating the Chamber of Mines and the establishment of the Municipality of Yellowknife in 1953. The new Board of Trade was housed in the basement of the Yellowknife Community Centre, next to the library, where it remained until 1982. Murphy became the Board's first president.

The Board got off to a running start. In the first year, it produced a report on the feasibility of a winter road between Hay River and Yellowknife, produced a pamphlet promoting Yellowknife, hosted the Canadian Congress of Mining, lobbied for a federal constituency separate from Yukon and against a 15 percent tax on air transportation. It was not levied, thanks to the Board's efforts.

Over the next two years, membership grew to include nearly 80 businesses and individuals, and the Board held regular monthly meetings. In keeping with its focus on community development, the Board successfully campaigned for construction of an indoor ice arena. In 1950, the Gerry Murphy Arena was completed in the new town-site, established in 1945-46, up the hill from Old Town. In 1950, the Board lobbied to get home improvement loans, available under the National Housing Act, extended to the Northwest Territories.

The Board's lobbying efforts focused on high transportation costs, increasing taxes, community improvement and political development for the next several years. In 1958, the Board made a presentation to the Royal Commission on Taxation, requesting tax concessions and increased tax exemptions to stimulate northern development and encourage families to keep their children in schools. In the 1960s, the Board, along with other Yellowknife residents, successfully lobbied to have Yellowknife named the capital of the Northwest Territories, which occurred in 1967.

Promoting tourism became a long term Board goal, and in the 1950s, the Board opened a seasonal tourist information office in the Museum of the North. It was eventually taken over by the Northwest Territories Tourist Association. The Northwest Territories Tourist Conference took place in 1960. In 1974, a mining log cabin from a site near Giant Mine was purchased and moved to the park beside City Hall to use as a seasonal tourist information cabin. This cabin now houses the Fireweed Studio. In 1991, the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre took over visitor information services.

In 1959, the Board adopted Raymond the Raven as its official logo. Raymond was the brainchild of Mary Bryant, owner of Mary's Tea Room. As early as 1954, the Board considered changing its name to the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, which happened in 1973.

As the city grew, the Chamber continued to lobby for business and community. The town got a big boost in 1970 when it hosted the first Arctic Winter Games, an event lobbied for by the Board of Trade. In the 1970s, the Chamber held a series of public election forums and also began to offer business management courses, which it continues to do today.

The first Annual Spring Trade Show was held in 1982, which has continued every spring since. The Chamber also promoted and organized Raven Mad Daze in June for several years to promote shopping downtown. A long-time supporter of home-based businesses (about 39 percent of all Yellowknife businesses) and small businesses, the Chamber promotes development through working with Futurepreneurs and the Northwest Territories' Business Development Investment Corporation. Networking is promoted through the Chamber's Business After Hours monthly receptions and at business luncheons.

Gold mining had a large role in Yellowknife's economy since the 1930s, starting with the Con Mine in 1938, and expanding with the Giant Mine start-up in 1948 and had the Chamber's attention very early on. Both mines closed in the early 2000s. In the 1990s, the huge diamond staking rush resulted in the development of Canada's first diamond mine, Ekati in 1998. The Chamber made a presentation to the Environmental Assessment Review Panel in support of the Ekati project and for local business benefits and has supported industry since then.

The Chamber provided financial support for the construction of the Northern Frontier Visitor's Centre in 1991, and upon completion, moved into offices on the second floor where it stayed for several years. Eventually, the Chamber moved to the Commerce Building downtown, sharing the space with the NWT Chamber of Commerce and the NWT Construction Association.

Currently, there are 330 businesses on the membership roll, a 43.5% increase over 2014. Over the past year, the YK Chamber has advocated for many issues including: increased community funding from MACA, a reduction in the small business tax, and the creation of a local preference policy for the City of Yellowknife for contracts under \$100,000 for goods and services and \$250,000 for construction projects. The YK Chamber successfully lobbied for no property tax increases in the 2015 and 2016 municipal budget and is currently working on an education initiative that will provide affordable training for businesses in Yellowknife. **YKCI**



Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce Travel Bureau.
Photo courtesy of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce.

YELLOWKNIFE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENTS

1946	Gerry D. Murphy	1982	John Kingsmill
1947	Allen T. Lambert	1983	L.R. (Len) Jason
1948	Percy W. Atkinson	1984	L.R. (Len) Jason
1949	Percy W. Atkinson	1985	Dave Talbot
1950	John Parker	1986	Stefan Simek
1951	R.E. Horton	1987	Ron Williams
1952	R.J.M. Major	1988	Dave McCann
1953	Doug Finlayson	1989	Dave Jepson
1954	Doug Finlayson	1990	John Vertes
1955	W.G. McGruther	1991	Shirley McGrath
1956	John Parker	1992	Joe Auge
1957	L.F.G. Borden	1993	Steve Richards
1958	W. Wilson	1994	Fred Leonardis
1959	Peter Bromley	1995	Elizabeth Wyman
1960	Graham Bromley	1996	Gabrielle DeCorby
1961	Graham Bromley	1997	Garth Malakoe
1962	M.E. (Lanky) Muyres	1998	Gord Van Tighem
1963	Doug Finlayson	1999	Mike Piro
1964	Doug Finlayson	2000	John Ondrack
1965	D. Delaporte	2001	David McPherson
1966	Mike Piro/W. Cole	2002	David McPherson
1967	Doug Finlayson	2003	Jerry Jaud
1968	Malcolm Fraser	2004	Steven H. Meister
1969	Alex Sinclair	2005	Steven H. Meister
1970	Glen MacRae	2006	Steven H. Meister
1971	Derek Finall	2007	Jim Erikson
1972	Doug Finlayson	2008	Jon Jacque
1973	Jim Ivens	2009	Patrick Doyle
1974	H. Budgeon	2010	Warren McLeod
1975	Fred Henne	2011	Larry Jacquard
1976	Fred Doman	2012	Jason McEvoy
1977	Grant Hinchey	2013	Jason McEvoy
1978	Fred Richinger	2014	Jason McEvoy
1979	Hugh Tebo	2015	Jason McEvoy
1980	Albert Eggenberger	2016	Renee Comeau
1981	Albert Eggenberger		

THANK YOU

To the many Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce Presidents, Boards of Directors and staff members, both past and present, all of whom have worked tirelessly for 70 years promoting Yellowknife and ensuring the growth of the local business community for the benefit of all residents





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From Hobby Brewers to Brewmasters: Success at the Woodyard Pub & NWT Brewing Co.

Why wait for the sun to get over the yardarm?
At the Woodyard, you can have oatmeal –
oatmeal porter that is – for breakfast

By Alayna Ward

NWT Brewing Co. – and the adjoining restaurant, the Woodyard, is the brainchild of university sweethearts and business partners, Fletcher and Miranda Stevens.

It all started with Fletcher's quest for cheaper beer. Then, when Miranda gave him a special Christmas gift – a home brewing kit, their fate was sealed. "I was fascinated by all the factors that can affect beer and did a lot of research – and practice – on what makes the perfect brew," Fletcher says. "We served my homebrew at our wedding in 2012 and people loved it and said we should start a brewery. I wasn't happy at my job and I loved making beer so it started from there."

Miranda also saw the need in town for a niche restaurant. Having worked in the service industry for 15 years, she knew an opportunity when she saw one. While her original dream was to run a little café, after some persuading from Fletcher they decided to marry the two ideas and the NWT Brewing Co. was born.

The Woodyard pub opened in November 2015, and NWT Brewing Co. served the first home brew on New Year's Eve. It was such a hit thirsty patrons drank the taps dry. "It's a real sense of accomplishment. When we first poured our own brews this past New Year's Eve it was both satisfying, gut-wrenching

and a huge sense of relief that we'd finally done it," says Fletcher. "We showed people we could put our beer where our mouth is, so to speak."

They experienced several challenges prior to pouring that first pint, many to do with the fact regulation, taxation, licensing and inspections for a microbrewery were mostly foreign to the Northwest Territories. But they were undeterred. "During some difficult times prior to opening, we kept thinking about what a great space it was going to be and now it feels good when we hear people laughing and enjoying what they're drinking, in this space that we've worked so hard to create," Miranda adds.

They have not only managed to keep bar stools packed since opening day, they have also put Yellowknife, NWT on the microbrew map. They've been recognized nationally for their excellent brews – most recently, in May, their Kicksled Cream Ale won a bronze at the Canadian Brewing Awards. If all goes well in the next year or so, clientele-favourite brews such as Ragged Pine pale ale will be on tap in local pubs and six-pack cans will be available for sale.

"This whole thing has totally gone beyond our expectations and we are happy to have taken this risk and built this business, together," says Miranda. **YKCI**

QUICK FACTS

Address:

3905 Franklin Avenue

Area of business:

Restaurant/
Craft brewery

Yellowknife start date:

2015

Number of employees:

20





Fletcher and Miranda Stevens raise glasses of their best brews at their new pub, The Woodyard, in Yellowknife's Old Town. billbradenphoto

Perseverance, professional staff and partnerships pay off for **Air Tindi**

From a small family flight business to trans-northern scheduled air and charter service provider, Air Tindi is on a long ascent to success

By Alayna Ward

The romance of flying in Canada's rugged northern frontier hides the gritty reality of running an airline in an area with little infrastructure, demanding safety and regulatory requirements and a sometimes punishing climate. "It's not always glamorous work," says Trevor Wever, Air Tindi's vice president for business services. "And we've all got the odd battle scar to prove it, but at the end of the day we continue to stand the test of time and provide safe, reliable and professional service to our clients."

Air Tindi's diversified fleet of more than 20 aircraft of nine different types, including Twin Otters, Dash 7s, Learjet 35A and Cessna Caravans, allows the company to provide a flexible service suitable to its operating environment. From

its Yellowknife airport flight centre and its Latham Island float base, Air Tindi's essential operations include daily scheduled flights to isolated northern communities and charter flights serving tourism, government, diamond mining, and geophysical and exploration companies. As Wever says, "We serve the companies doing the often thankless work of searching for, and identifying, new discoveries that provide new anchors for economic drivers in the NWT."

This size of fleet and the wide range of northern territory that Air Tindi covers means it needs an experienced and highly trained workforce from pilots, to aircraft maintenance engineers right through to the freight handlers and booking services

personnel. There are 180 employees working from the Yellowknife base of operations and a further 25 personnel in various northern communities to manage local freight and passenger logistics.

President Alasdair Martin has held senior roles in various mining companies and projects, many of them in the North, and Trevor Wever has a long work history in the northern commercial aviation field. Together, they work with partners Tli Cho Air, Aqsaqniq Air, Kivallingmiut Aviation, Auyiuttuq Aviation, Denesoline Corporation and Deh Cho Air to provide professional charter and scheduled air service.

The company's core business has remained relatively unchanged since it started – providing specialty aviation services in niche markets. That includes medevac operations with specially retrofitted aircraft and – perhaps what they are best known for – off-strip operations with their Twin Otters and Dash 7 fleet equipped with floats, skis and tundra tires capable of landing nearly anywhere throughout the Arctic.

"We specialize at going into places with those aircraft that not many other types are capable of," says Wever. "These types of services would be impossible without having some of the most skilled and experienced pilots, engineers, dispatchers, ramp agents and customer service staff around, and our Aboriginal partners and stakeholders are really the glue that binds everything together. Everyone has an unwavering commitment to safety and achieving the best possible result for the client, and we are extremely proud of that." **YKCI**

QUICK FACTS

Address:

Head office:
Yellowknife Airport

Area of business:

Scheduled air and charter service

Yellowknife start date:

1988

Number of employees:

180 in Yellowknife plus
25 in various northern communities



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Quality Furniture: Keeping customers happy, one sofa at a time

For nearly half a century, the Rocher family – 3 generations, with a 4th coming up – has provided neighbourly customer service at their Yellowknife furniture store

By Alayna Ward

The secret to Quality Furniture's half-century of success can be summed up in simple terms: Keep customers happy, keep staff happy, provide great service, give back to your community and treat everyone like your neighbour. "We're not a big box store and we work to be the first name in everyone's mind when it comes to quality, service and community," says Jeannie Rocher, operator of the downtown Yellowknife business.

Quality Furniture had its humble beginnings in the late 1950's, when Jeannie's father, Johnny Rocher, parlayed his love of collecting treasures into opening a second-hand store. He ran the store with his wife, Mary and, with the help of their son Les, eventually started stocking new furniture in the same retail space as the used

items. That was a hit with Yellowknifers, who were looking for new furniture that was available locally. The Rochers expanded to open Quality Furniture in 1986, becoming the largest furniture retailer in the North.

Today, the business remains a true family affair. Jeannie Rocher runs the store with help from her husband Yves and their two daughters, Jessie and Michelle. Store staffers are like extended family. "It's great working with family because the trust is there. And we have wonderful, dedicated staff that are customer-oriented and have worked with us for decades," says Rocher.

Quality Furniture's range of furnishings and home décor appeals to varying tastes: from those who like classic country charm, or perhaps retro tech, or all the way to the

other end of the spectrum for the more eclectic preferences (zebra print couch or ceramic ptarmigan anyone?)

While there is no accounting for individual customers' tastes, Quality Furniture works hard to provide a vast array of options to meet their customers' needs. They stay current with styles and trends to provide just the thing to make a house a home. "We're always busy and we know that in a city the size of Yellowknife, when

"We work to be the first name in everyone's mind when it comes to quality, service and community"

— Jeannie Rocher

you operate your own business, word of mouth is key," says Rocher. "People know they can get good service here and that we're going to treat people right because they're our neighbours. We want everyone to leave happy."

Quality Furniture has been a trusted name in the Yellowknife retail furniture business for three decades and the Rocher family collectively has a half-century of friendly customer service experience. They've done it by being versatile, listening to what their customers want and responding to changes in the market. "There's no telling what the future holds," says Rocher. "But what we're doing has worked so far and we're just going to keep on doing what we're doing!" **YKCI**

QUICK FACTS

Address:

4610 50 Street

Area of business:

Retail furniture, decorations and appliances

Yellowknife start date:

1986

Number of employees:

10



All in the family: Jessie with daughter Edith, Michelle, Mary, Jeannie with granddaughter Tessa, Yves, Clark (grandson).



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Roy's Audio Video: home to the coolest stuff in Yellowknife

If it plugs in, plays music, take pictures, shows movies or lets you Facebook your friends, you can get it at Roy's

By Alayna Ward

In 1975 a young Roy Williams returned to Yellowknife from travelling the world. He'd followed his brother to Yellowknife from Wales six years earlier, and had earned his Red Seal Certification as a radio/TV mechanic. He enjoyed his work, but he had his sights on his next career move - opening his own business.

Opportunity knocked, and Roy was ready to answer the call. He opened Yellowknife's first Radio Shack franchise, and within two years, built it up to become one of the top resellers out of more than 300 Radio Shack dealers across Canada, a distinction he maintained for most of the next 30 years.

Fast forward to 2016, and Roy's has kept pace with the changes in technology and corporate affiliations. Now under the Audio

Video Unlimited banner, Roy's offers expertise in home theatre set up, smart home design that integrates lighting, music, video and security into one central control, commercial systems, satellite dish installation, HDTVs and Hi-fi systems. Additionally, Roy's is an Apple products reseller and a Bell authorized dealer.

The store is co-managed by Roy, his wife Maureen, and his son Robin - he wears the welcoming smile a customer sees when entering the store.

One thing you won't see when you walk through the doors, however, is a bored-looking kid snapping gum and slyly texting under the counter, while trying

his best not to notice you. "We always lead with service, and we're less worried about sales numbers than we are about customer smiles," says Robin Williams. "People love it when you go that extra mile and no matter what, we always have a 100 percent commitment to customer service."

This unwavering commitment has played a crucial role in Roy's continuing success, as has staying one step ahead of the electronics game, keeping up with consumer trends and ensuring the store is well-stocked. "Back in 2004, we got rid of all our old picture tube TVs and stocked the store with flat-panel TVs," says Robin. "People thought we were nuts but then the flat-panel craze hit barely a year later and we were in a great position to supply people with what they wanted because we had the product and expertise."

Living in the North doesn't have to mean you can't participate in the latest tech craze. "It's important to have the

latest thing, and we work hard at keeping our inventory fresh, not only to build consumer credibility but also because we know how important it is to have the

newest and coolest thing," Williams says. "All our staff are also passionate about this industry and are also probably dying to get their hands on it as well!" **YKCI**

"We're less worried about sales numbers than we are about customer smiles"

— Robin Williams

QUICK FACTS

Address:

#10, 4802-50 Ave

Area of business:

Consumer electronics

Yellowknife start date:

December 12, 1975

Number of employees:

15



L to R: Roy Williams, Robin Williams, Maureen Crotty-Williams
Photo by Jeremy Findlay, courtesy of Roy's Audio Video.



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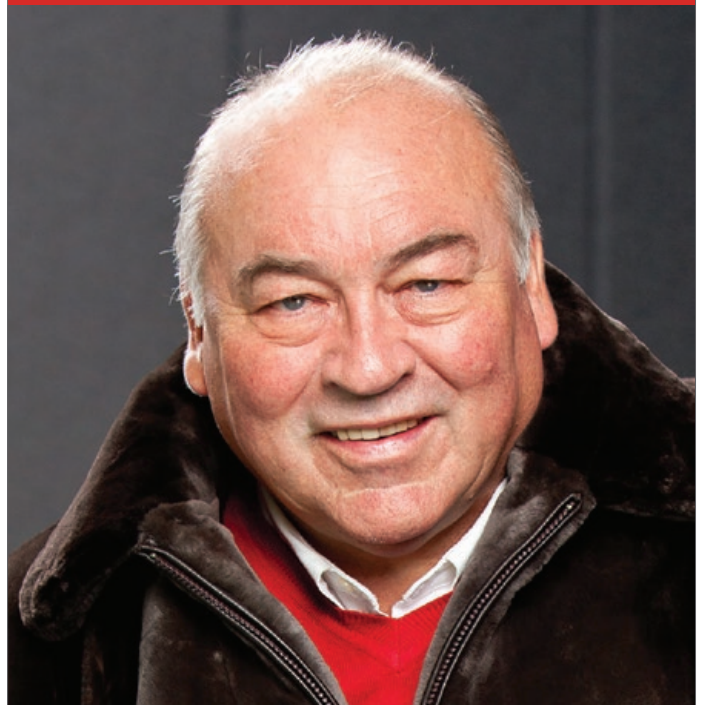


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Top of the World Travel Success is in the details

A commitment to excellence sees Top of the World through its first 25 years

By Alayna Ward

Top of the World Travel was born at a kitchen table, midwived by three friends wanting to take the next step in their careers. “We all worked in the travel industry and it seemed like a natural progression,” says Susan Mercredi, company president and co-owner. “We approached the Nunasi Corporation to partner with us and it all just came together. We’ve been going strong ever since.”

Twenty-five years later, Top of the World Travel has seen many changes. For one thing, the company’s ownership structure is different. Nunasi Corporation is no longer a partner and the company is now 70 percent Aboriginal-owned. One of the three original partners moved on, and Mike Olson, formerly with First Air in Yellowknife, bought a share in the company, joining Mercredi and co-owner Cindy Romanow a year ago, and bringing with him 18 years of northern airline experience.

The travel business in 1991 was very different from today’s. Then, many leisure travellers booked their trips through an agency, and most corporations and governments managed their travel in-house. Now, leisure travellers book their own vacations online, although Mercredi has noticed a returning trend to agencies. “Travel agents are actually gaining in popularity because people want that personal relationship,” says Mercredi. “You just don’t get that type of service from a computer.”

Much of corporate and government travel is now outsourced, and about 80 percent of Top of the World’s business comes from that market segment, including the mining sector’s shift rotational travel. It’s a demanding market to service due to the scheduling and complexity. Attention to detail and knowing customer travel preferences are crucial to getting it right. Missed flights can mean missed meetings or conferences, and for mining travellers, late

arrivals to work or going home. When cancelled flights cause airport chaos, customers rely on Top of the World’s agents to sort it out. “It’s comforting that you’re never traveling by yourself if you’ve got a good travel agent,” says Cindy Romanow. “We just fix it.”

For corporate clients, Top of the World books air tickets, hotels, cars, and meeting rooms, changing tickets as needed, often at the last minute. The company’s management reporting system can track a corporate client’s entire travel function, providing customized reports detailing employee trips taken, costs and any other needed data. “Our system is second to none,” says Mercredi. “We can design reports to meet our customers’ specific management needs.”

Growing numbers of business travellers take mini-holidays at the end of their business trips. Top of the World’s new venture, Touch the Arctic Tours, works with tourism partners to offer packaged tours across the North to business and leisure travellers. “We can build tour packages for people wanting to see more of NWT, Yukon or Nunavut,” says Olson. “We want to promote northern tourism.”

Air Canada added the icing to the company’s 25th anniversary cake by bestowing a Circle of Excellence Award in 2016 – their top performance award in Canada. Fewer than 50 travel agencies earn this award in any year.

Mercredi reflects on their quarter century of success: “We’re just regular people who work hard, have a great team that we really value, and believe in our customers.” **YKCI**

QUICK FACTS

Address:

5105 48 Street

Area of business:

Travel agency

Yellowknife start date:

April 1991

Number of employees:

18



Right- Susan Mercredi, president and co-owner with co-owners Cindy Romanow and Mike Olson

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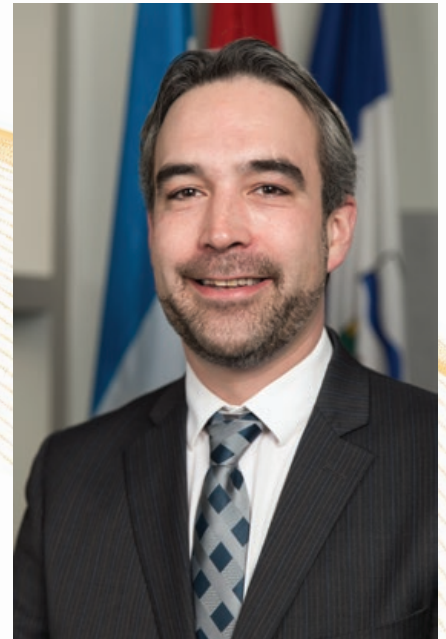
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Bizpal: Helping Yellowknife's small businesses grow



Mark Heyck | Mayor of Yellowknife

One of our City Council's goals is to actively promote economic development and tourism in the City of Yellowknife, and we are invested in promoting our community as open for business. This goal is at the heart of all our partnerships with economic development organizations such as the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce as we work together to serve our business community.

At the City, emphasis is placed on responsiveness to the business community. Investment decisions are often time sensitive, and a rapid and consistent response to an investment or business inquiry is crucial. We provide easy online access to a number of services for start-up and established businesses, including online forms allowing for faster handling times, a business directory, and interactive and informative maps. (See sidebar on page 11)

The City of Yellowknife partners with other levels of government to provide Bizpal, an online tool to help entrepreneurs navigate the business permits, licences and other requirements needed to start, operate and grow their business from the federal, provincial/territorial and participating municipal governments. A formal launching of this tool is expected later this year with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

We back businesses interested in exploring business improvement districts as a means to revitalize our downtown area. There is growing concern about revitalizing our downtown, and in April 2016

the City supported four Yellowknife business owners to attend the 2016 Business Improvement Areas of BC Conference to learn about business improvement districts. During an Open House on June 8, 2016 Yellowknife residents were invited to attend presentations from the attendees on their conference experiences and how they apply to Yellowknife.

To support the significant portion of our local entrepreneurs that are home-based – 39 per cent of business licenses are for home based business - we have made changes to licensing requirements for these entrepreneurs that play such a critical role in economic diversification and growth.

Our efforts aimed at economic development go hand in hand with our tourism strategy, as ultimately it's the local business community that will benefit from increased visitor traffic. In the spring of 2016, the City of Yellowknife developed its Destination Marketing Plan, a three - year plan that was created in response to a need identified in our tourism strategy, and that will increase Yellowknife's destination awareness. Yellowknife will be better placed to attract visitors, and compete with other northern destinations by building its conference potential, raising its tourism marketing profile and improving some key visitor information tools.

"A formal launching of (Bizpal) is expected later this year..."

Every spring, the City of Yellowknife also teams up with Industry Tourism & Investment's North Slave regional office and the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce to launch the "Be a Tourist in Your Own Town" campaign, a month long event held to promote tourism to residents.

The #ShopYK Passport Program campaign, first launched in 2013, is another yearly contest that promotes local shopping to residents and business conference visitors. The social media initiative is the result of a successful partnership between the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and the City of Yellowknife. A total of 34 businesses signed up to be included in

last year's passport, and the initiative generated a total of \$850,000 in sales.

None of these initiatives would have been successful without the engagement from our residents and business community. A business community needs many essentials to flourish:

a solid network of supporting organizations, cooperative governments, and a pool of motivated entrepreneurs. In our community, we are fortunate to be working with all of the above. It is the passion and spirit witnessed in our business community that drives us towards our goal of being a city that is a great place to work, live and play. **YKCI**



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Strong, sustainable economies share a common attribute: **DIVERSITY.**



Diversifying the NWT economy is a strong theme within the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) mandate. Similarly, it is the foundation of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce mission.

As the GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment works to achieve this vision, our partnership with the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce remains highly valued.

The Chamber provides a strong, experienced voice to the GNWT on behalf of the Yellowknife business community. Through the Chamber's work to educate and advocate on behalf of local business owners, the organization is creating a resilient and vibrant NWT economy.

I look forward to the Department's continued collaboration with the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and wish the organization continued success.

Honourable Bob McLeod
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY,
TOURISM AND INVESTMENT

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to learn more about SEED and other funding programs.

