

Aboriginal Mining Funds

Context

The development of the mining industry must be done responsibly and must involve Aboriginal communities. This commitment poses a number of challenges, in particular, gaining a better understanding of the mining industry, entrepreneurship, and development of the labour force.

In 1997, the Government of Quebec established the Aboriginal Mining Funds to encourage Aboriginal communities in Quebec’s James Bay and Far North regions to become involved in the development of mineral resources in these regions.

This initiative has been instrumental in increasing the involvement of Aboriginal communities in the development of mineral resources and addresses five major objectives:

- Develop mining exploration in the territories that are relatively underexplored with a view to responsible development;
- Develop a high level of expertise in the Aboriginal communities that will lead to job creation;
- Bring awareness to the local communities and inform them about the exploration and development activities that are currently under way in the region;
- Encourage the creation of Aboriginal-owned businesses that are capable of operating in the mineral resources sector; and
- Promote communications and business ties between Aboriginal communities and mineral exploration companies.

Description of Measures Implemented

Two Aboriginal funds were created in northern Quebec:

- The Cree Mineral Exploration Board (CMEB) was created as the result of an agreement on a new relationship between the Government of Quebec and the Cree of Quebec, signed on February 7, 2002. The CMEB was created in March 2002 under an agreement between the Quebec Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (MENR) and the Cree Regional Government. From 2002 to 2012, the MENR provided \$3.6 million in funding for the CMEB. The contribution from the Cree Regional Government for this same period was approximately \$2.5 million.
- The Nunavik Mineral Exploration Fund (NMEF) was created in 1998 as the result of an agreement between the MENR, the Kativik Regional Government, and the Kativik Regional Board of Development. Since 1998, the MENR has provided \$4.84 million in funding for NMEF’s activities. The Kativik Regional Government’s contribution for this same period was \$813,000.



Source: Cree Mineral Exploration Board

The Government of Quebec's participation and encouragement are continuing with a \$300,000 contribution per year for both funds.

Results

The activities undertaken by the Aboriginal Mining Funds can be summarized as follows:

1. Awareness and advocacy activities that encourage community members to become more involved in mining development: From 2001 to 2013, the CMEB and the NMEF have participated in 38 and 41 activities, respectively, at the regional and provincial levels.
2. Training activities leading to the title of prospector, which helps foster a skilled labour force and an expertise leading to job creation within Aboriginal communities: From 2001 to 2013, the CMEB and the NMEF executed 15 and 26 training activities, respectively. The training usually lasts for a period of one to six weeks. Approximately 230 people have participated in these activities.
3. Support for exploration that encourages the autonomy of prospectors in targeted communities and develops exploration in unexplored territories: From 2001 to 2013, the CMEB and the NMEF have supported 23 and 25 exploration projects, respectively.
4. The realization of mineral exploration projects that promote the integration of targeted communities into various projects being conducted in the areas concerned and develop mineral exploration in underexplored territories: From 2001 to 2013, the CMEB and the NMEF have independently carried out 2 and 19 projects, respectively. In addition, the CMEB has supported 34 projects and the NMEF has realized 8 projects in partnership with exploration companies.
5. Business creation: From 2001 to 2014, the CMEB has helped foster the creation of 5 exploration companies, 5 prospecting companies, and 12 services companies, while the NMEF has helped foster the creation of 2 exploration companies and 7 service companies. The involvement of the funds promotes the emergence of entrepreneurship in targeted communities and the creation of Aboriginal businesses working in the field of mineral resources.

Lessons Learned

In general, the mineral exploration funds have improved the readiness of the local communities in the following ways:

- Raised awareness and encouraged the participation of Aboriginal communities in the mining industry;
- Introduced Aboriginal youth to the reality of mining exploration and operations;
- Encouraged the development of ties between mining companies and Aboriginal communities;
- Fostered the creation of Aboriginal-owned businesses; and
- Contributed to the development of the mineral potential of northern territories.

For more information:

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Cree Mineral Exploration Board

cmeb.org

Nunavik Mineral Exploration Fund

nunavikmineralexplorationfund.com