

Resident Geologist Program's First Nation Mineral Information Officer

Context

The Government of Ontario maintains two First Nation Mineral Information Officers (FNMIOs) within the Ontario Geological Survey's Resident Geologist Program. The FNMIO's role is to promote a cooperative working relationship between government, the minerals and metals sector, and Aboriginal communities in Ontario by providing information and technical advice concerning mineral exploration activities, practices, procedures, and economic/job opportunities.



Lead: Government (Ont.)

Steps of the Mineral Development Sequence:
Pre-exploration, exploration

Key Finding: The information and training provided by the FNMIO assists in increasing the capacity of Aboriginal communities to understand and participate in the minerals and metals sector without the participants having to leave their communities. As a result, communities are better prepared to benefit from mineral exploration developments that may occur in their proximity.

The program has been in place since the early 2000s. The goal at its inception was to increase the level of Aboriginal peoples' participation in the minerals and metals sector. The program focuses on two elements of the earliest stages of the mineral development sequence: prospecting and claim staking.

Description of Measures Implemented

The FNMIOs engage with Aboriginal communities across the province by delivering free and informative community-based courses, such as Introduction to Prospecting. The basic course is three days long and can be customized to meet the needs or wishes of the community. Additionally, the FNMIO provides educational instruction on basic rock and mineral identification techniques, on-site advice on prospecting methods, prospecting and mineral sector information to school children in classroom settings, and career fair support.



An FNMIO visit to a community can be initiated either by the community itself or through proactive outreach by the FNMIOs. The FNMIOs attend Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association events, conventions, and planning meetings; actively network; and take advantage of all available opportunities to acquaint communities with the program.

Mining companies are also aware of the project and are partners in marketing the program to communities they are engaging with.

Results

Since 2003, 123 courses/training sessions have been delivered to 1 038 participants in more than 65 Northern Ontario First Nation communities. The intention of the courses is not only to provide information, but also to develop a relationship with the participants and initiate a dialogue that would last beyond the course.

There are many positive results stemming from the work of the FNMIOs. One is that communities are developing a level of trust with the individual officers and are contacting them directly to ask questions. In addition, the program engages with a wide range of people in the community, including: school children, adults, people who are looking for new job opportunities at career fairs, and band administrators. Even if people taking the course do not become prospectors, their knowledge of the mining industry and the mineral development sequence is greatly enhanced. Moreover, the FNMIO provides the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Northern Development and Mines with valuable insights on the level of Aboriginal participation and community capacity related to the government's minerals and metals sector programs and initiatives.

Lessons Learned

One of the challenges of delivering the program is that there is a very small group of people who have the right skill sets to do this job, which necessarily requires knowledge and sensitivity to the cultural and social character of Aboriginal communities; an understanding of Aboriginal peoples' concerns; and the requisite technical knowledge of prospecting, claim staking, assessment procedures, and mineral exploration techniques and methods.

The information and training provided by the FNMIO assists in increasing the capacity of Aboriginal communities to understand and participate in the minerals and metals sector without the participants having to leave their communities. As a result, communities are better prepared to benefit from mineral exploration developments that may occur in their proximity.

For more information:

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