

Building Aboriginal Business Capacity at the Diavik Diamond Mine

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Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. continues to provide significant business benefits to northern and aboriginal companies. During construction, nearly 75% of the \$1.2 billion in contracts were with northern firms, and nearly two thirds of this was with Aboriginal firms. Now in operations, Diavik is committed to using best efforts to purchase 70% of its annual goods and services from local businesses. In addition, Diavik is outsourcing a significant proportion of its operations labour to local firms, of which the majority is Aboriginal.

Diavik has championed a unique Business Improvement and Planning Model for Aboriginal contractors supporting the operation. The model is based on the notion that for the mine to maximize its socio-economic benefits, Diavik and its aboriginal contractors need to forge active and enduring operational partnerships to pursue efficiencies and growth opportunities. These partnerships are leading to the creation of sustainable and competitive Aboriginal businesses that can grow their businesses beyond the borders of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Through partnership and commitment, local Aboriginal companies are achieving operational excellence at Diavik in the areas of explosives, logistics and site services, fuel supply, general freight and trucking, aviation support, and underground mining. Achieving excellence includes core business deliverable of yield and cost, and in the areas of Aboriginal Participation, Environmental and Socio-economic performance and best practices. Drawing a balance between these important elements will set all participants on the right course of achieving a sustainable mine with sustainable communities.

Ultimately, aboriginal business participation in mining is a long term process, requiring leadership and sustaining commitment from mine management, communities, and government. Sustaining and growing this leadership and long-term commitment is the real challenge that lies ahead.