

Wemindji Exploration Inc.: A First Nation's pragmatic approach to Mineral Exploration in Northern Quebec

Wemindji Exploration Inc. (Wemex) is a private company owned by the Cree Nation of Wemindji with the mandate to acquire claims and perform mineral exploration, create JV and option opportunities with other mining companies, develop on-the-job training programs, maintain community awareness of local exploration activities, and assist Cree prospectors with financing programs.

Wemex started exploration activities in 1999 as a consequence of a staking rush due to a new gold discovery in the area. Wemex proceeded to stake, for itself, the best ground available in James Bay. Follow-up exploration on the staked claims resulted in the discovery of several new gold and base metal showings.

Wemex is the first Cree Exploration Company participating actively in the diamond exploration business. At present, Wemex is focused on gold exploration, carrying out exploration work on its properties located in James Bay.

Wemindji Exploration Services was formed to assist Cree Prospectors with acquiring and managing mining properties as well as promoting job opportunities for the Cree in the Resource sector. It has also set a mandate to establish a consulting service department to facilitate other first nations in Canada.

Wemindji set up a training program for Cree participants, teaching prospecting and development of the local mining industry. This program teaches many exploration skills including: reconnaissance mapping, rock and mineral identification, claim staking and laws, map reading, line-cutting, geophysical surveying and project management. Students that successfully followed these training programs work for exploration companies in the vicinity or have staked their own mineral properties and have made significant discoveries.

Wemindji Services has assisted Cree individuals in acquiring properties and conducting exploration work on those properties and Tallymen prospecting on their traplines.

Due to the staking rush in the Opinaca Reservoir area (where the Eleonore project is located), Wemindji Services has been reorganized in order to better serve the companies exploring in the area.