

Nunavik Mineral Exploration Fund

Epoo, D., President

The Nunavik Mineral Exploration Fund (NMEF) is a non-profit organization created in 1998 through an agreement between the Ministère des Ressources Naturelles et de la Faune du Québec and the Kativik Regional Government. The purpose of the NMEF is to create and implement a strategy to foster the development of the mining industry in Nunavik. This objective is met through promotional activities, prospecting training sessions, exploration projects development, assistance to Inuit prospectors, as well as the support of Inuit entrepreneurship in mining exploration field.

The NMEF monitors the mineral exploration activities carried out on the territory and also acts as an intermediate link between the mining industry and the Nunavik organizations by diffusing information regarding: land categories in Nunavik and exploration activities permitted; local authorities, permits and certificates of authorization required; land use / mining claims; environmental provisions; NMEF guidebook.

The Nunavik territory sits in the northern part of the Quebec province, above the 55th parallel and is inhabited by approximately 12,000 Inuit people distributed in fourteen communities. For numerous years, the communities witnessed relentless mining exploration activities over the territory. With the James Bay and northern Quebec agreement (JBNQA) signed in 1975 and “considered to be the first modern land claims agreement in Canada”, the Inuit communities possess the keys to play a significant role in the mineral resources development of the Nunavik.

As defined by the JBNQA, the territory has been designed in different category lands, some of which are attributed to the communities, in full ownership, for their exclusive use and benefit. Local authorities oversee the activities conducted on the territory and provide certificate of authorizations and permits for pre-development and development projects. Land users and mining exploration project promoters should then apply to the concerned organizations for authorizations in order to carry out effectively their activities.

The Nunavik communities are well aware of the importance of such projects, its influence over the economical development of the region, but also its impact on the natural and social environment. We witness an increasing progress for Nunavik communities for taking part in consultation, recommendation, partnerships and developing strategies to welcome the industry as an important component for mineral resources development.

According to existing agreements signed with the mining industry, the communities see a direct beneficial to compensations but also precedence for employment, training and contracting for Nunavik Inuit and businesses. By establishing respectful relationships, negotiating practical benefits agreements, and jointly addressing mineral exploration

and development issues with mining companies, the Nunavik communities move forwards to economic self-sufficiency and prosperity.