

Military exercise Wolverine

Blizzard set for Peg Lake area

The C Company of the the Loyal Edmonton Regiment will be a holding a military exercise in the vicinity of Peg Lake from January 25 to 27. The exercise will entail winter survival training and patrolling exercises. The regiment will be carrying weapons, but will not be carrying ammunition of any kind.

The base camp will be on the shore of Peg Lake approximately 4 kilometres south of Yellowknife. Snowmobile trails will be used by military traffic, but will remain open to the public. The public is encouraged to approach and speak with participating soldiers if they wish.

— Brett McGarry

Salvation Army exceeds goal for Christmas campaign

This past year the Salvation Army exceeded their Christmas Kettle Campaign goal of \$42,000.

Initially the charity organizers thought they were not going to be able to reach this goal, but through last minute donations and volunteering efforts, the campaign total was lifted to \$42,886.

"Because of your generosity, we exceeded our Kettle goal and were able to provide Christmas hampers both in Yellowknife and the communities of the NWT," said Jason Brinson, corps leader of Yellowknife Salvation Army.

The charity was able to donate hampers to over 480 households and provided toys to over 240 children. The Christmas Kettle campaigns is one of the largest charity campaigns the Salvation Army puts on every year.

— Brett McGarry

New kickstarted dog tour company opens in Old Town

A new kickstarted dog tour company, Sundog Adventures, opened their doors for business Monday. Based out of the former CKLB building on Lessard Drive in Old Town, the business will offer tours on the groomed trails on Back Bay. The tours will include stops at Back Bay Cemetery with a short hike into the ice caves.

"Me and my wife started our business after (we) adopted two sled dogs in 2015 from the NWT SPCA," said Richard McIntosh, co-owner of Sundog Adventures. "We started training them for tours and slowly started adding to our kennel."

Daily tours are scheduled for 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. In the summer months, Sundog Adventures plans on providing a tour boat and water taxi service.

— Brett McGarry

Christmas bird count turns 35

Yellowknifers scattered the area as part of the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 29 in order to get the latest figures in local bird populations.

There were 16 participants who counted 12 different species of birds among 2,959 identified.

According to a Ecology North's co-founder and bird biologist Bob Bromley, some species were present in the city later than usual, including an American robin and common goldeneye duck, which were recorded. This was mostly due to a mild fall and early winter, said Bromley.

Other species were spotted for the first time including two European starlings – a species more commonly seen in the summer months.

Participants also recorded increasing numbers of black-billed magpies with 91 individuals counted. There were also 2,500 individual common ravens.

— Simon Whitehouse



NMS, the photo

The Giant Mine Project team is promising plenty of local contracts once the next phase of cleanup at the Giant Mine site begins.

Giant opportunity for local business

An estimated \$600 million available for clean-up work at mine site

by Simon Whitehouse
Northern News Services

The Giant Mine Project team is promising plenty of lucrative contracts for local businesses once the next phase of cleanup at the mine site begins.

Aaron Braumberger, project team engagement manager with the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, talked up

the approximately \$600 million in contract work that lay ahead while meeting with city council Monday and how his team plans to dole out contracts so local companies can prepare for them.

"There are going to be lots of opportunities for contractors and individuals to benefit from our project," he said.

"It is important (community partners) co-ordinate so that we aren't stepping on each others' toes."

The years between 2021 and 2026 are considered to be a key period of the remediation project when most contracts will be given out to businesses to fill labour demand at the mine site, he said.

Because the federal department does not have a Northern business policy to ensure a certain amount of local firms get a certain amount of contracts, it is working with Parsons – the U.S.-based construction management company hired to co-ordinate the cleanup, the city and businesses to ensure they are well informed of services needed well ahead of time.

The project team is set to apply for a water licence with the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board on April 1. Braumberger said the hope is to be successful in August 2020 so that the team can begin the next phase of remediation which is expected to be complete by 2030.

During those years, there will be several projects that will include quarrying, demolition of the Giant Mine town site, underground stabilization, constructing a landfill, creating a channel to re-orient Baker Creek, soils and open pit remediation, surface water management, creating tailings containment areas, building water

treatment and outfall systems and hazardous waste removal. The number of contracts is undetermined at this point, however, Parsons and the Giant Mine team are to decide how many will be necessary and advertise them for local businesses well in advance, Braumberger said.

"There will be six or eight years of good opportunity for people to provide employment and for local contractors to benefit from the project with contracts," he said, adding that work will gradually cease by 2030, after which the focus will shift to long-term care and maintenance of the site.

The challenge for the project team will be packaging contracts so that they are size appropriate for local businesses while being able to manage issuing the entire number of contracts available, he said.

"We want to make sure contracts are sized appropriately so that local businesses can participate," he said. "Issuing five or six contracts in excess of \$30 million means not everybody can play that."

"We will be looking at each contract and what the market will allow and then will determine based on that what size of contracts will be issued and the number of contracts."

Matt Belliveau, executive director of the NWT and Nunavut Construction Association, said similar to GNWT capital planning, local businesses like to have information about projects "well in advance" as they may face stiffer competition from outside corporations and businesses from down south.

Belliveau said communication between Parsons and the federal government with local businesses has been positive so far.

For example, Parsons held an Industry Day in November where about 100 businesses met at the Explorer Hotel to network and learn some details of the upcoming remediation project.

"Such events generate interest from industry and small companies because they get a chance to see the technical details, timelines, schedules of when work is to go out to tender and then get prepared," Belliveau explained.

"It is also a networking opportunity with other companies as construction often involves small companies in big supply chains working with contractors and sub-contractors and sub-contractors of sub-contractors."

The construction association is hosting a Parsons presentation about upcoming Giant Mine project work during a regular board meeting, Feb. 13.

Crunching the numbers

Braumberger also discussed how the team is compiling statistics to provide information about who is working at the site.

Between 2006 and 2017, \$356 million in contracts have been spent on Giant Mine remediation work, with \$169 million of that going to Indigenous businesses. Braumberger also provided statistics that showed that between 2009 and 2017, 56 per cent of the entire workforce was represented by Northern employees, with 15 per cent being Indigenous.

Braumberger said with Parsons, the project team is aiming to increase transparency for local private industry by providing statistics concerning the workforce and sharing information about potential contracts well in advance of when work needs to be completed.

Braumberger said a number of residents and organizations have been asking for statistics concerning demographics, such as the number of women who work at the site and from which band members Indigenous workers belong to.

Much of that information is still being compiled and will be provided through various communications outlets, including newsletters and the Parsons website at a later date.



Simon Whitehouse/NMS, photo

Aaron Braumberger, Giant Mine Project team engagement manager, left, and Natalie Plato, deputy director, provided council with an update about the Giant Mine Remediation Project for the next decade on Jan. 21.