

Exploring zinc resources and relationships
Devonian Metals conducts drilling project near Wrigley

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PEHDZEH KI/WRIGLEY - A junior exploration company is working to determine the zinc potential at its property while building ties with its neighbour.

Devonian Metals Inc. holds three mining leases approximately 13 kilometres southwest of Wrigley on the opposite side of the Mackenzie River from the community. Tom Gerke, Devonian's vice-president, describes the company as a very junior exploration firm.

Devonian's management team consists of just two people, Gerke and Ron McIntyre, a geoscientist. Together the business partners are trying to raise the money needed to map the mineral resources at the property.

"There's something there, that's been determined," Gerke said.

Cominco, a Canadian mining company, discovered the property in 1972 and did work on the leases until 1974 including the drilling of 42 holes. Cominco identified the zinc potential but it wasn't large enough for their needs, said Gerke.

Devonian, which is based in New Westminster, B.C., purchased the leases in 2003. The company's first step has been to decide if the property is economically viable and the only way to do that is to spend money drilling, Gerke said.

In the current economic climate, however, this has proven difficult. Devonian began drilling test holes in 2007 with the intention of continuing and then the economy collapsed. Gerke credits the company's size for allowing it to ride out the storm.

"We were too small to fail," he said.

Since then Gerke has been focused on raising money to continue. Nothing took place in 2008 and 2009 but a joint venture partnership this year allowed Devonian to conduct a diamond drilling program and sink 17 holes during the summer.



Devonian Metals Inc. conducted a diamond drilling program this summer to help determine the extent of the zinc deposits in its three leases located across the Mackenzie River from Wrigley. - photo courtesy of Devonian Metals Inc.

The cores have been sent to a lab for analysis so a more precise model of the potential resources can be created.

The joint venture partner will base their decision on whether to renew the agreement on the results, said Gerke. If they decline Devonian will be back looking for other funders.

The company needs to conduct enough diamond drilling programs to create a detailed model of the underground resources so an informed decision can be made on potential future development.

"It's a long-term exploration project," he said.

While exploration is underway Devonian has also been building ties with Wrigley. Being an asset to the community is something that is part of doing work in the North and recent court decisions have backed that practice, Gerke said.

In 2007 the company, then called Aurora Resources, donated \$100,000 to upgrade the community's hotel. This year the company sponsored a children's cultural camp.

The idea for the camp came from the community and everyone from children to elders got involved. Devonian was please to sponsor the camp because it was a project that everyone could see the benefit of, Gerke said.

While Devonian's generosity hasn't gone unnoticed Chief Tim Lennie of Pehdzeh Ki First Nation said he's withholding his final judgment of the company until an agreement has been reached.

The band's economic arm, Pehdzeh Ki Contractors, is negotiating a draft memorandum of understanding with Devonian that includes an access agreement, revenue sharing and an impacts benefits agreement.

"The main thing is the integrity of the land itself," said Lennie.

Lennie said the band might be getting ahead of itself, but Pehdzeh Ki doesn't have the resources to address each new stage separately if the project proceeds.

"I'd like to deal with the end result in the beginning instead of dealing with it piecemeal," he said.

Lennie is also hoping the band will see more economic benefits from the project next year.

This year some band members were employed at the site and Pehdzeh Ki Contractors managed the groceries and some other aspects of the project but the work was minimal, he said.