

TRENCHES

MINERAL, MINING & EXPLORATION NEWS

FLYING HIGH – YUKON'S AVIATION INDUSTRY CARRIES THE NEW GOLD RUSH.

This summer, most of the air traffic out of Yukon does not go to Vancouver, Calgary or Frankfurt - rather it's Thistle Creek or Rackla or high in the remote Howards Pass. These are some of the remote airstrips which service Yukon's unprecedented mineral exploration industry. Yukon's bustling aviation sector is growing to keep up with the demand.

"We hope it continues," says Hugh Kitchen, President of Alkan Air. His company, with a 30-year history in Yukon aviation, has been through many cycles of Yukon's mining and exploration activity, but this time he says it's different. "Our customers in the mining industry often change, but in some areas, like at Yukon Zinc, it's great to see its growth. We've been flying into that area for over 20 years and it's incredible to see what is happening there."

Nowadays, one of Alkan's main customers is Selwyn-Chihong, situated in the Howard's Pass. "We haul on average of 3000 pounds of groceries a week out to Selwyn," said Kitchen. "We ship locally supplied

lumber, food, drilling supplies and people – if we can fit it through the door of our planes, we'll take it."

Being creative is certainly helping the aviation sector succeed. Also is the ability to grow strategically.

Horizon Helicopters is a relative newcomer to Yukon, starting up only four years ago. Cole Hodinkski was a relief pilot for other companies when he saw an opportunity to bring in a different kind of helicopter that would be ideally suited for mining exploration work.

"A lot of companies stick to the same equipment and make it work for them," said Hodinkski. "But we have been proactive in getting new equipment that fits specific niches – it increases the ability of what we can do."

This strategy is working for Horizon. The company brought the first Robinson R-44 helicopter, a fuel efficient, nimble workhorse, to Yukon 2 years before the boom. Building on their success, they

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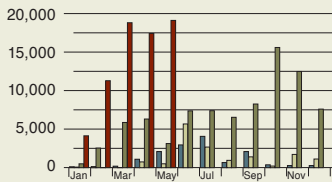
A ridge top drilling site on Antimony Mountain.

Mining Statistics

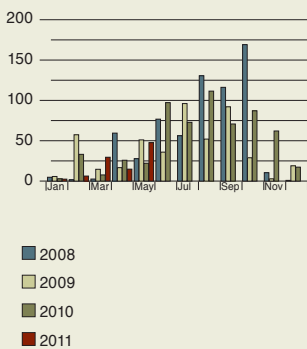
May 2011

- Quartz Claims in Good Standing – 221,623
- Placer Claims in Good Standing – 18, 120
- Prospecting Leases in Good Standing – 145

Quartz Staking



Placer Staking



At the Casino Airstrip in central Yukon.

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have recently acquired an MD-900 helicopter, the first one in Canada, a powerful, unique machine that uses a jet thruster instead of tail rotor and would be capable of handling bigger applications.

“It’s all about controlled growth,” said Hodinkski. “We could become a larger company but it’s more important to us to retain our great crew of people and keep the quality of our service high.”

Service is the essential word to describe the aviation industry, for without it, almost all of Yukon’s exploration would be impractical. Most of the exciting new discoveries are located far from current roads, and the infrastructure to build and maintain exploration camps requires almost all materials to be airlifted in – from wood and drilling supplies to groceries and staff. Also, the tens of thousands of soil samples extracted each year by exploration crews need to be shipped off to labs in Whitehorse, Dawson and south for analysis.

Helicopters, which are able to fly and land almost anywhere, are used mostly in claim staking and remote exploration activities, while the most established exploration projects use remote airstrips for fixed-wing aircraft.

Yukon’s community airports are also seeing a lot more action. The Yukon government’s Aviation Branch operates 29 facilities across the territory, from small community aerodromes right up to the international airport in Whitehorse. Of these facilities, Dawson, Mayo and Watson Lake are seeing the largest increases in air traffic.

Dawson Airport, by far the busiest of Yukon’s community airports, has seen almost a doubling

of activity in the last two years. In 2010, there were over 8,600 takeoffs and landings at the Dawson airport. This increase in volume, however, is not a problem to the people who manage traffic at Yukon’s community airports.

“The observer communicators at our Community Aerodrome Radio Stations sites have gained experience over the years assisting in the busy forest fire activity with wildland fire management operations,” explains Mark Ritchie, Superintendent of Community airports with the Yukon government.

“With this experience, they are very successful in handling the recent increase in activity at our community aerodromes related to the current boom in mining exploration. We are more than confident we can efficiently and safely handle the current and forecasted increase in aviation activity for the foreseeable future.”

Cautious optimism may be the best way to describe the aviation sector in the current exploration climate. Veteran companies are doing well, new companies are finding opportunities and the air traffic is being successfully managed. But this does not mean everyone is rapidly expanding their business.

“We’re being consistent and conservative with our business,” said Hugh Kitchen of Alkan Air. “It takes months to obtain new aircraft, train staff and bring it online; and we have to do this within our already full schedule. Besides, all of the exploration happening now will evolve into different levels of activity and we need to take the long term into account.”

For now, however, Yukon’s exploration boom is literally being carried by the aviation industry, whether it’s in the hull of a familiar Twin Otter or perhaps in a futuristic MD-900 Helicopter. ■



YUKON ENERGY, MINES AND RESOURCES LIBRARY (EMR LIBRARY) - YOUR SOURCE FOR YUKON AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS, MAPS, AND MINERAL ASSESSMENT REPORTS.

The EMR Library provides clients with access to a broad range of information services. The library houses a vast collection of research material related to forestry, mining and geology, land use, agriculture, oil and gas, and energy. The library also has an extensive collection of environmental assessment and First Nations' material.

MAPS

The Yukon EMR Library has over 3000 Yukon maps:

- Topographic
- Geological
- Aeromagnetic
- Land Use

MINING ASSESSMENT REPORTS

Open assessment reports are available for viewing in hard copy (by visiting the EMR Library) or digitally (from a link in the catalogue record). You can find the EMR Library's catalogue here: [EMR Library Online Catalogue](#).

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The EMR Library has over 100,000 Yukon aerial photographs and includes photographs from the 1940s to the present.

Skyline, Yukon's air photo locator, allows you to search a map of the Yukon to identify flight lines and aerial photographs.

To view the photographs, please visit the EMR Library at Room 335, 300 Main Street, Whitehorse, Yukon.

JOURNALS

The Yukon EMR Library subscribes to over 100 current journals and houses back issues of some journals from the 1950s to the present. EMR Library journal holdings and access information is listed on the EMR Library's Journals website.

BOOKS AND REPORTS

The EMR Library provides access to books and reports on the topics:

- Forestry
- Mining
- Geology
- Land use
- Agriculture
- Oil and gas
- Energy
- Environmental assessment
- Wildlife
- First Nations

In addition, Yukon Geological Survey and Geological Survey of Canada documents and maps are available at the EMR Library

SERVICES

EMR Library's staff of expert researchers is available to assist you.

Location:

Third floor of the Elijah Smith Building

Room 335, 300 Main Street,

Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada

emr.gov.yk.ca/Library

Contact:

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Open during lunch

Did you know?

■ You can search for mining claim data online by going to <http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/mining/mapsdatapubs.html>. Scroll down the page to *Online Databases* and click on the [Mining Claims Database](#) link. This database will tell you the Grant number, Claim Type, Name, Owner, date it was staked and recorded, its expiry date and status. It will also take you to the map the claim is located on.

■ Click here to view a [map of 2010 Yukon exploration projects](#).

EMPLOYEE PROFILE:

BOB HOLMES, DIRECTOR, MINERAL RESOURCES BRANCH

It was a cross-country trip in the summer of 1971 that inspired Bob to get into mining.

Heading west from Montreal by train, and later by bus, Bob wound up in Whitehorse and found himself loving the country. He “decided to get into Mining Engineering at McGill so I could work in places like this.”

While at McGill, Bob twice returned to the North in the summer. Once to work at the Clinton Creek Yukon asbestos mine and next for Giant Yellowknife mine in the Northwest Territories.

After graduating from McGill, and winning the British Association medal for top mining engineering student, Bob headed west again towards Kimberly BC and a job working for Cominco. He started out as an Engineer in Training at the Sullivan Mine and later transferred to the Con Mine. There he worked as planning engineer for four years. His last job for Cominco was at Pine Point Operations, where he worked as a maintenance planner and engineer for two years.

Following a year backpacking around the world, Bob returned to school to earn a Masters of Business Administration at the University of Western Ontario. After graduation, Bob worked for David S. Robertson and Assoc. doing uranium litigation in New Mexico. In 1984 the management consulting firm Coopers and Lybrand brought him back to B.C., this time to Vancouver. The next four years at Coopers and Lybrand, Bob would be involved in projects all over Western Canada.



After deciding to move to the Yukon, Bob worked with Curragh Resources at Faro Mine as their Financial Planning Analyst. After two years Bob started with the Yukon government as Director of Energy and Mines in the Department of Economic Development. After devolution Bob became the Director of Mineral Resources, where he continues to work to this day.

In the 21 years he has been with the Yukon government, Bob has seen a tremendous amount of change, from devolution, to land claims, to environmental assessment. “The job has changed continuously, from managing hardly any activity to keeping up with all the new exploration excitement and three operating mines”, says Bob, “the minerals sector in Yukon is always interesting – it’s the place to be.”

CARRY THAT WEIGHT—CARGO HAULING

Hauling cargo is the main service Yukon’s aviation industry provides the minerals sector. With challenging terrain and a diverse range of conditions, Yukon companies keep their fleets light and nimble.

A Bell 206 helicopter, a common Yukon rotor-wing, can typically haul about one-half a metric tonne. A legendary Yukon fixed-wing airplane like a Twin Otter can haul about two metric tonnes of gear.

Compare that to the largest helicopter in the world, the Russian Mil Mi-26, which can lift 20 metric tonnes. The Mi-26 is famous for lifting a 20+ tonne block of ice out of the Siberian tundra containing a fully-intact woolly mammoth. Canada has one Mi-26, used by an Alberta company mostly for oil and gas applications.

The largest and strongest fixed wing aircraft in the world is the Ukrainian Antonov An-225. It can haul up to 200 tonnes. A payload for the An-225 has been as diverse as four battle tanks, a locomotive, or 100 tonnes of humanitarian supply. Only one An-225 exists (although a second is rumoured to be under construction) and is operated by Antonov Airlines of Ukraine.

If you’re really serious about hauling a lot of gear, sea is the still the best option. A typical container or cargo ship or tanker can haul between 300,000 and 500,000 metric tonnes of material. Cargo ships are typically used to haul Yukon mined ore from ports like Skagway or Stewart.

FROM THE **TRENCHES**

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For more information or to share your feedback, please contact the Mineral Resources Branch at (867) 667-3163 or mining@gov.yk.ca

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