



**The Diavik Community-based Training Approach**

**A Case Study & Discussion Paper**

**Government of Canada Skills and Learning Agenda**

**National Aboriginal Roundtable**

**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories**

**September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002**

**Prepared by:**

**Diavik Diamond Mines Inc.**



## **The Diavik Community-based Training Approach**

### **Introduction**

Development of Canada's diamond industry over the past decade has provided new opportunities to forge partnership linkages between the private sector, local communities, educational institutions and Governments to improve both the delivery and success of training and other knowledge improvement programs.

Canada is among the world leaders in technological development and practice. Mining companies such as Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. are at the forefront of technological developments that contribute to Canada's leadership. DDMI has a vital interest in encouraging members of its neighbouring Aboriginal and other northern communities to pursue career choices in technological fields both for the entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills these individuals will acquire and for the management and leadership skills they will develop over time. Equally important, qualified technicians and apprentices will play a leading role in maintaining DDMI's and, by extension, Canada's, position in high tech disciplines.

### **The Diavik Community-based Training Approach**

In simple terms, the Diavik approach draws on three basic elements.

- The first element is that training programs should ideally be directed to address specific and clearly identified needs – in other words there should be a ready end market for the skills being acquired by the trainee. A major project like Diavik is an ideal setting for such an approach but this principle can be applied as well to other initiatives in the private and public sectors.
- The second element is that partnership relationships be established with educational institutions and relevant community and government service groups to optimize the use of the existing knowledge and skills base in the region of the project. Again DDMI has been fortunate in developing training partnerships with Aurora and Nunavut Arctic Colleges and to have had the active support of the Territorial and Federal Governments for these initiatives.
- Lastly, DDMI has received the active support of its neighbouring Aboriginal and other northern communities who have taken ownership and accepted shared responsibility for the outcomes of the Diavik Community-based Training Programs. In addition to the increased human resource capacity flowing from the training program, another key outcome has been that each training project undertaken in the community has resulted in something being left behind for the long-term benefit of the community, thus contributing to sustainable development of the community and the north as a whole.

## **The Practical Steps**

First and foremost there is no one set script to the Diavik Community-based Training Approach. It all starts through a process of consultation: DDMI shares its list of the knowledge skill requirements it needs to address its business objectives over the short, medium and long term; our neighbouring Community leadership and Adult Educator professionals assist in identifying individuals and prioritizing community-based projects that could be involved to effect skills enhancement training to meet DDMI's needs; and educational institutions are brought in to assist in the planning for delivery of the training program curriculum.

Next comes the assessment stage for possible entrants into the training program. Potential candidates are selected from lists of job seekers compiled by DDMI, community and Government sources. Candidates are interviewed and tested for general suitability by community Adult Educator and Aurora and Nunavut Arctic College professionals. Generally one finds potential candidates may have quite different levels of formal qualifications and so, using computer based modules, custom-built training programs are designed for each individual trainee. The general objective of each program is to position the individual to successfully take a Trades entrance examination upon completion of the training program.

Almost 90% of the 200+ participants in the Diavik Community-based Training Programs conducted over the past two years have taken up employment at Diavik or elsewhere. For those individuals who have not achieved Trades entrance standards upon graduation from their training course, there is the opportunity to further pursue this through the adult education centres set up at the Diavik site and other locations. The communities, particularly our outlying communities, are benefiting from the skills acquisition by community members not only in terms of increased employment income coming into the community but also the increased human resource capacity resident in the community in areas such as electrical, instrumentation, plumbing and auto mechanic skills.

## **Lessons Learned and a Way Forward**

It is important that business, communities and governments are encouraged to develop a sense of shared responsibility for training and development. Private sector business has a role to play in identifying the knowledge, skills and needs upon which potential training programs can be based. These programs can be successful provided all partners accept that gaps exist at an individual level and adopt modular training programs to address these knowledge gaps.

It is important that Government adopt a flexible approach to delivery of its services, and support its educational institutions as training providers for skills that can be immediately absorbed in the surrounding labour market.

Recognizing that differences in capacity exist between larger and smaller private sector firms in terms of taking the business leadership role in these endeavours, local Government perhaps has a role to play as an active planner of marketplace needs for groups of smaller and medium sized companies in its region in much the same way DDMI has acted as the needs planner for its larger scale enterprise, the Diavik Project.

A challenge for senior levels of Public Government is assuming the responsibility to ensure that their current spend for contract services contributes to increased knowledge, skills and learning in Canada. Roughly one-fifth of Canada's labour force is public sector employees. Perhaps equally important, as the total public sector spend in Canada is slightly more than 40%, this implies that about one quarter of the private sector labour force is employed to provide goods and services to governments at all levels in Canada. If not already in place, departments within Government should consider internal management goals to adopt partnership and shared responsibility approaches towards training with its service providers, perhaps in a manner similar to the Diavik Approach, in order to contribute appropriately to the development of Canada's workforce.

In most cases Government has a broad responsibility to formally permit capital investment programs proposed by private sector interests. It would seem appropriate that a policy direction towards training like that agreed between the Government of the Northwest Territories and DDMI for the Diavik Project, could be considered broadly applicable to large capital investment programs undertaken in Canada.

It is suggested that any combination of the above could be applied with good effect to address adult education, training and entry-level employment concerns of our Aboriginal communities across Canada. Here public government's role should probably be limited to policy, funding and provision of educational services. It is suggested that the most likely successful outcomes will arise through tripartite consultation between Aboriginal communities, business and educational interests.

-----

For additional information, contact:

**Diavik Diamond Mines Inc.**

PO Box 2498,

5007-50 Avenue,

Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P8

Tel: (867) 669 6500 Fax: (867) 669 9058

E-mail: [Diavik@diavik.com](mailto:Diavik@diavik.com)

Website: [www.diavik.ca](http://www.diavik.ca)