

THE ABORIGINAL MINER

A Gathering Of Nations And Expertise

by Mikelle Sasakamoose

Noront Resources underwent a complete overhaul of its administration over the winter and has emerged this spring with a refreshed mandate.

Both management and board members changed over the past six months with new blood informing a new direction for the company, based in the Ring of Fire.

Subsequently, new vice presidents of operations, geology and communications were appointed, in addition to the filling of the unprecedented seat of vice president of Aboriginal relations, of which Missanabie Cree First Nation Chief Glenn Nolan took the honours.

“[Aboriginal relations] was seen as a really pressing concern for the board of directors and they wanted someone on board who was well versed in First Nations issues and who was Aboriginal themselves,” said Nolan.

Also an experienced prospector, consultant and businessman, the Chief was a perfect fit.

“The biggest challenge that any company has is understanding the culture of the communities in which it works and that doesn’t just come with reading textbooks and going into the community and making some sort of dialogue,” said Nolan.

“It is how to best approach the community, how to understand some of the protocols in dealing with the people, and also to be sensitized to the issues that First Nations face on a daily basis – and I bring that kind of understanding to how we can do business.”

Part of Nolan’s new job was to help facilitate the development of an Aboriginal advisory council that would assist Noront with the development of best practices policies regarding Aboriginal affairs.

The council consists of Nolan, Jerry Asp, Leanne Hall, and Roy Whitney - and could be considered a literal best-of-the-best team with representatives from tribes across the country.

Past president and founding member of the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation, the largest Native-owned and operated heavy construction company in Western Canada, Asp is also an experienced consultant and negotiator.

“Jerry Asp is a leader and he also has a strong mining background and has evolved that knowledge to create opportunities not only for his community, but also for other communities as an advisor to a variety of different organizations,” said Nolan.

Founder and president of Woodland HR Inc., Hall has a strong business and management background and has been acknowledged widely for her award-winning human resources programs and other groundbreaking initiatives specifically targeting Aboriginal communities.

“Leanne Hall is a very successful entrepreneur in the oil sands,” said Nolan, “and has demonstrated a real commitment to providing training and individual development, not only for the men of a community, but also focusing a lot of her efforts on training Aboriginal women to enter the workforce at different levels in that sector.”

Whitney served as Chief of the Tsuu Tina First Nation from 1984 to 2001 and was instrumental in improving relations between his community, all three levels of government and the non-Aboriginal business community. He was also a past recipient of the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for business and commerce.

“Besides having been the Chief of his community, Roy Whitney has a strong business background and has been very successful in his consulting business working with extractive business in Alberta,” said Nolan, whose own background isn’t too shabby either.

A strong advocate for sharing information between the mining industry and Aboriginal communities in Canada, Nolan recently presented on the issue to the Brazilian Legislature at a special hearing on Indigenous people and mining.

He is also the second vice president of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada where he is the co-chair of the Aboriginal affairs committee.

“I have a fairly good grasp of the industry and I bring my cultural background as well, said Nolan, “and I’m not afraid to speak my mind . . . to tell it the way it is and shape some of the direction that the company wants to go in with regards to First Nations engagement.”

The First Nations Advisory Council is expected to guide Noront in establishing exemplary relationships with the local First Nations where the company’s primary assets, including the Eagle’s Nest and Blackbird Depots, are located in the Ring of Fire and the James Bay Lowlands.



Glenn Nolan