

# THE GOSSAN

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## NEW FACES AT THE TOP

There's been a changing of the guard at Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Limited (VBNC), with some familiar faces moving into the most senior positions with the company.

Bob Cooper is the new President of VBNC, replacing Phil du Toit, who has transferred to New Caledonia to become the President of Goro Nickel.

Cooper is the former General Manager of Labrador Operations, a position that has recently been filled by Tom Paddon. Interestingly, both gentlemen are from rural Newfoundland and Labrador; Cooper from Point Leamington and Paddon from North West River in Labrador

In an interview, Cooper recognized the achievements of his predecessor, who demonstrated strong leadership in bringing the Mine and the Demonstration Plant online, ahead of schedule and under budget.

"Phil du Toit kept a steady hand on the rudder during some turbulent times," Cooper said. "Reporting to him was a diverse team of people, all leaders and



*Bob Cooper  
President*

innovators in their own right, but he was able to unite everyone with a single vision. He made sure the goal was clear, then he gave everyone the space and the authority they needed to achieve those goals. He was also quick to recognize achievement and celebrate wins along the way. It was a pleasure to work with him."

Cooper has two priorities for the near term, he said. "I think we need to further strengthen our Labrador operations - we are doing well there, but we can also get stronger in a number of areas. And we need to focus on building the long-term business, by bringing the commercial plant online, and getting a better handle on our plans for the resource beyond the mining of the Ovoid."

Cooper says there is another resource that is equally important: the people who make VBNC work. "Ultimately, it's the people who make the business," he said. "If you're a truck driver, mill operator or whatever, you might not consider yourself a business person. But you run the business every day. You enable the business and make things happen. You are a business person as much as I am."

Tom Paddon echoed Cooper's point about further strengthening Labrador operations. "We have a good

operation that is functioning well," he said. "What we really need to do now is consolidate in a number of areas. We have to firm up our knowledge about the resources at the site, including the underground, so that we can better plan for the future. We need to consolidate the strengths of our people, in terms of making sure that we have a good working and living environment, while providing skills development opportunities so that they can see a progressive career path within the company. There are opportunities to improve safety performance, and we plan to strengthen our safety culture at the site. We'll strengthen and build on the solid base that is already in place."

Labrador Operations also said farewell recently to Heather White, one of the first female mine managers in the country. "As part of Heather's career development, she was transferred to Hong Kong, where she will work in the marketing division," Cooper said. "Inco sees great potential in Heather and she is being exposed to various aspects of CVRD Inco's global operations to broaden her experience. Heather won a major international award recently from Mining Journal, a worldwide magazine, for being such a noteworthy role model for women in mining. Heather is definitely an inspiration to others - men and women - and we wish her well in this new assignment." ▼



*Tom Paddon  
General Manager, Labrador Operations*

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## KEEPING THE FOCUS ON SAFETY

The safety record at VBNC during 2006 was exceptional in some areas, such as the Demonstration Plant in Argentina, where there were no disabling injuries. However, there are still opportunities for improvement.

"At the end of last year, we weren't entirely satisfied with our safety performance," said Earl Dwyer, Manager of Environment, Health and Safety. "We are not where we want to be and we need to refocus our efforts on improving workplace safety."

Near the end of last year, the company contracted Dupont to conduct an audit of its safety programs. "We wanted a totally objective review, and Dupont delivered," Dwyer said. "The audit demonstrated that we need to improve in a number of areas, so we are taking steps to do that. We won't be doing a lot of new things; rather, we will refocus on the things we are doing so that we do them better."

To achieve this end, the company has tasked a management committee at each operating facility with reviewing safety programs and implementing changes that will result in improvements. Already, the company has revised and updated its Safety Principles, which guide management and employees during all aspects of work, anywhere in the operation.

"These principles are quite important," Dwyer said. "All of our safety policies, processes and procedures cascade directly from them."

Several initiatives are being undertaken to enhance safety, Dwyer added. "We're implementing an integrated Health, Environment and Safety Management System, which prescribes a systematic approach to safety and environmental protection, and we are setting ourselves some pretty high standards. We are looking

**Safety will not take second place to any other management responsibility**

**Our Pledge.**

We regard the health and safety of every person working on the Voisey's Bay project of paramount importance. Nothing we do is so important that we cannot take the time to do it safely. Everyone involved in our operations must work together as one team to ensure that health and safety risks are minimized. We are fully committed to providing safe and healthy working conditions and to developing a good safety culture.

Building a safety culture requires that safety meetings be a forum for frank and open dialogue where everyone feels their contribution is welcomed and more importantly that actions will be taken to address health and safety issues raised. This means giving the highest priority to safety and fostering a good safety attitude in all our people.

Fostering the safest possible workplace requires a strong and shared commitment to good health and safety management. Everyone involved in the operation has a role to play. Everyone must feel responsible for their own safety and the safety of the people they work with every day.

The achievements we have had with the Voisey's Bay project can be measured in many ways, but none is more important than having a team that is fully committed to working safely.

**Take time to do it safely.**

at improving our inspection procedures, which are always important because they identify often simple measures that can be taken to make the work site safer. We are also looking at strengthening the incident investigation methodology, to ensure that we learn from incidents and avoid making the same mistake twice. Every incident must be reported including near misses, because there is much to be learned from those as well."

VBNC has had the Dupont Safety Training Observation Program (STOP) in place since the start of operations. "However, we know there is room for

improvement in how STOP is being utilized," Dwyer said. "It's a proven program, but we need to go back and refocus and make sure that everyone is fully trained and using it effectively. For example, there's a pocket card that helps people focus on what specifically they should be looking at and thinking about before starting any task. Is this being used to full advantage?"

Even the best safety programs are only effective when they are embraced by every employee in the company, Dwyer said. "We are making good progress, but there is still some work to do before we create the safety culture we want across all areas of our operation." ▼

## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OPENED

The Voisey's Bay Skills Development Centre, located in the Accommodations Complex at the Mine and Concentrator site in Labrador, had its official opening on January 24. Despite bad weather in St. John's, which prevented several invited guests from attending, about 100 employees and special guests from Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Sheshatshiu gathered to celebrate the opening of the Centre, which is the only private work site in the province to receive Adult Basic Education (ABE) designation.

"We are actually one of the few workplaces in the country to achieve this distinction," said Bob Marshall, VBNC's Superintendent of Training. "Very few companies have gone to this length to develop their people. It's just

a great thing to do. It helps improve worker retention, because employees can advance their education while staying employed with us, as well as improve their prospects for advancement within the company."

"Four years ago it was a vision that one day VBNC would have a Workplace Literacy, now Skills Development Program, through which employees could improve their personal and workplace skills," said Dave Cluney, who oversees training at the Mine and Concentrator. "It started as a test program with a Literacy Educator working out of Happy Valley-Goose Bay which eventually led to the hiring of our Skills Development Trainer, Kathleen Moriarty.

The official opening was a milestone, not only for

VBNC but also for other industries in this province – it shows that Workplace Literacy is very alive and is an achievable program that companies can offer to their employees. Cluney added that "we are having success stories every day. It not only makes for a more capable and interested employee, but also brings to the family unit a sense of pride and achievement in having obtained what was previously an un-achievable goal."

Adult Basic Education (ABE) comprises three levels of public schooling. Level 1 represents the elementary years, while levels 2 and 3 coincide roughly with junior high and high school course material.

*see Skills Development Centre Opened on page 3*

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But this is just the tip of the iceberg, according to Kathleen. In addition to ABE, learning opportunities at the Centre include English as a Second Language (ESL), Workplace Essential Skills, General Reading/Writing/Math, Communication Skills, General Educational Development (GED), Computer Basics, Trades-Related Preparation, Leadership Training, and Online Mining Courses.

"As interests are expressed new areas will open up," Moriarty said, adding that the company intends to apply for new certifications to further expand its service offerings to employees.

"We are applying to become a licensed GED exam invigilator, which would enable us to administer the GED exams here on site," she said. "And we will look at applying to administer other certifying or licensing exams as well, so that our employees wouldn't have to



*Kathleen Moriarty, Skills Development Trainer, reviewing information at the opening of the Skills Development Centre*

travel great distances to take their exams. We currently have several individuals who are taking courses from post-secondary institutions and we hope to be able to work with these and other institutions to offer their exams as well, in a secure environment."

At this time, there are about 20 active participants in the Skills Development Centre, engaged in a variety of courses.

"Our programs are learner-centered and flexible, customized to suit the needs of each individual who expresses an interest in workplace education," Moriarty explained. "Employees are excited to be able to continue their education while at site and I am thrilled with the level of commitment that people have shown. This is one more step in the development of a 'learning culture' at work and it shows that the company really believes in its people." ▼

## WALKING THE TALK IN PROMOTING WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

VBNC has made a substantial donation to the Women in Resource Development Committee (WRDC), which provides information on relevant issues and support to women interested in exploring career options in the natural resource sectors.

The donation will support three important programs offered by the WRDC, including Techsploration (which introduces Grade 9 girls to opportunities in the natural resource sector), Group Learning for Outgoing Women, or GLOW (fire fighters camp for women just graduated from high school), and Girls Exploring Trades and Technology Camp (in which 8 to 10 year old girls design, construct and test drive go-carts).

"We appreciate the financial contribution, of course," said Anne Marie Anonsen, Executive Director of WRDC. "However, VBNC has done and continues to do much more than that. They have been supportive of women working in the natural resource sector, and have partnered with us in many ways."

As an example, Anonsen offered VBNC's support of a 24-week orientation program offered to women interested in careers in trades and technology. "One of the program components makes it possible for women to visit various sites where industrial-type work is happening, so they can get a hands-on feel for what the job entails. Our students are touring the Demonstration Plant in Argentia all the time, and VBNC has agreed to bring the students into the Mine and Concentrator site in Labrador, at their expense, so that is really quite significant."

VBNC also understands that hiring women in non-traditional roles is just the beginning of a process, not the conclusion, Anonsen said. "VBNC also wants women to feel comfortable in their work environment," she said. "We offer a gender sensitivity training program which VBNC contracts us to deliver to all of their new hires at the Argentia site. That kind of commitment makes it possible for women and other diverse groups to work in the field without discomfort. It is essential to the success of women working here, but it also gets overlooked by many employers, who think it is enough to just invite women in."

More than that, Anonsen said, VBNC demonstrates its commitment to correcting the gender imbalance through its own hiring practices. "I really get a sense that this company means it when they say they want to have a diverse labour force," Anonsen said. "They really see the value of diversity in the labour force and are willing to break down barriers to make it happen. The Demonstration Plant in Argentia has 38% women hired as operators, in technical roles. That's unheard of in the industry. VBNC is doing very significant and strategic work to make it possible to recruit women. This company does walk the talk." ▼

### SOME OF THE JOBS THAT WOMEN FILL AT THE VOISEY'S BAY LABRADOR OPERATION

Truck Driver	Mine Planner
Welder	Warehouse Technician
Superintendent of Environment, Health & Safety	Sample Preparation Technician
Nurse	Camp & Travel Coordinator
Superintendent of Aboriginal Affairs	Human Resources Specialist
Geologist	Geological Technician
Electrician	Mill Clerk
Chemist	Catering Assistant Manager
Metallurgist	Process Helper
Inventory Control Technician	Catering Manager
Security Supervisor	Skills Development Trainer
Accountant	Maintenance Apprentice II

## DEMONSTRATION PLANT UPDATE

The research effort underway at the hydromet Demonstration Plant in Argentia is making a valuable contribution in the development of the Commercial Plant.

"We have completed the validation and review of all the design input to the engineering pre-feasibility study of the Commercial Plant," said Plant Manager Don Stevens. "The project team that has been assembled at VBNC's Project Office in St. John's used the engineering and process design criteria that was developed, tested and validated at the Demonstration Plant, as the basis on which the pre-feasibility study of the Commercial Plant was put together. The knowledge that we've gained thus far in operating the Demonstration Plant has been integral to the completion of that pre-feasibility study."

The next stage of engineering, the feasibility study,

will be completed by the Commercial Plant project team throughout 2007, Stevens explained. "We will need to validate the operability of the hydromet process and to produce engineering and design at a higher level of certainty for the feasibility study. So we will spend the remainder of this year trying to optimize the process, work out the remaining uncertainties, mitigate any risks that we find and demonstrate the long-term operability of the process."

The Demonstration Plant team is currently engaged closely with the experts at Inco Technical Services Limited, who are supplying dedicated, full-time support to help in evaluating the technical feasibility of the process. Vendors, equipment manufacturers and other suppliers of goods and services are also providing input and support.

"The company has reiterated its commitment at the

highest level to work as hard as possible to prove the technical feasibility of this process," Stevens said. "However, one year into the program, there are some outstanding items and we don't have all the answers. There are still a number of significant technical uncertainties remaining that we are working very hard to resolve."

Stevens said he is pleased with the level of technical expertise that has been developed within the Demonstration Plant team. "After these many months of operation, the Demonstration Plant team has become quite adept at overcoming the challenges that present themselves. Our team is getting very good at what they do, and I am really impressed by the level of technical competence in our people. They come from diverse backgrounds to embrace and learn this technology and are now working together on achieving our R&D goals." ▼

## SUPPLIER INFORMATION SESSIONS UNDERWAY

VBNC is committed to maximizing opportunities for local businesses, in the construction and operations phases of its development.

To ensure that businesses are made fully aware of opportunities associated with VBNC, the company has undertaken a series of Supplier Information Sessions at nine locations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

"Our intention is to make vendors and contractors aware of the project and the many opportunities that are associated with both construction and operations," said Miles Lippett, Manager of Procurement. "From construction and eventual operations of the Commercial Plant in Long Harbour, there will be tremendous opportunities for local companies in the provision of goods and services."

The sessions have been presented in Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor, Marystown, Clarenville, St. John's, Long Harbour and Placentia. Sessions will also be scheduled in Labrador West and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

These sessions are a way of reaching out to companies who may not have full knowledge of the opportunities associated with VBNC, Lippett said. "We really do want to put this project on the radar screen of companies in the provincial supply community. We are taking a proactive approach to raising awareness about the many opportunities that exist with the hope that they to get engaged in this process."

Attendance at the information sessions has been generally good and participants have been quite interested in learning more about Voisey's Bay Nickel. The sessions begin with a presentation about the various aspects of the project, and where we are located in the development



General Layout of the Commercial Processing Plant to be constructed at Long Harbour

cycle. "We give them some history and context, before getting down to nuts and bolts, outlining our many business needs and explaining how we do business."

VBNC has a very good track record in delivering on its commitment to provide local companies with full and fair opportunity to compete for work on the project. During the development of the Mine and Concentrator in Labrador and the Demonstration Plant at Argentia, VBNC awarded about 80% of all contraction contracts to companies from Newfoundland and Labrador. "That has set the bar pretty high for us as we move forward with the Commercial Plant development. We are confident that we will continue to see a high degree of

participation by the local supply community as long as they are competitive and have a proven track record that demonstrates good standards for quality, safety and environmental protection.

"We encourage companies to approach us with their ideas and their questions," Lippett said. "The onus is on them to step out of their comfort zone. Introduce yourselves. Tell us what you can do. Visit us on the web site, engage us and ask a lot of questions. If you have an idea, come forward and let's hear about it."

Businesses wishing to learn more about procurement opportunities with Voisey's Bay Nickel should visit the web site ([www.vbnc.com](http://www.vbnc.com)) for more information. ▼