

“When you love what you are doing, you are retired.”



Wilbert Antoine, Manager, Northern Development for Canadian Zinc Corporation's Prairie Creek Mine, unloads freight from a ski plane at the mine site. Photo courtesy of Canadian Zinc.

Wilbert Antoine

Manager, Northern Development, Canadian Zinc

By Beverly Cramp

Wilbert Antoine is the Manager, Northern Development, for Canadian Zinc Corporation's Prairie Creek mining project. It's a job with a wide range of duties and responsibilities in service of advancing Canadian Zinc's Prairie Creek project and involves him in discussions about the project with territorial, federal and local government personnel, including at the community and First Nation council level.

Antoine usually has three employees who assist him but the economic downturn in the mining industry meant the Fort Simpson office saw a reduction in local staff. Antoine has picked up the slack and works longer hours.

Moose hunting is the reward for his hard work. His loves to be out on the land, hunting, trapping,

snowmobiling, and boating on the Mackenzie River. The solitude in the outdoors is, he says, second to none for total relaxation and regaining his energy and balance.

He usually donates much of the game he harvests to the seniors' lodge in Fort Simpson, but this year so far, he hasn't taken them very much. "We weren't successful at harvesting a moose," says Antoine, who is an elder with the Liidlii Kue First Nation. But being outdoors was reward enough. "There was lots of fresh air, lots of beautiful mountains, yellow leaves and the Mackenzie River was just like glass."

Prairie Creek's, and Antoine's, main challenge now is to complete the environmental assessment for the mine's proposed all-weather road, part of which goes through the Nahanni National Park. Once completed, and after government approvals, the company will advance to road construction and mine production.

Antoine has more than 40 years' mining experience, working in several positions from operations to management, at mines such as Cardinal River Coal in Hinton, Alberta and Dominion Diamond's Ekati

Mine at Lac de Gras.

He spent his early years in Fort Simpson and later went to various residential schools in different northern communities. He completed his final year of high school at Mayerthorpe, Alberta, and his post-secondary education in Edmonton. The lesson he learned from these years is that without an education, there appeared to be nowhere to advance.

Antoine counts many influential people in his life including his parents and grandparents, and in particular, his grandfather, for early guidance when he was young. He also recalls his high school teacher, Mr. Tompkins, for his determined foresight in Antoine's education, and most importantly, Father Pochat at Grandin College in Fort Smith, "for his patience" says Antoine. "He was never ever critical of our mistakes we made as young adults."

Antoine loves his work at Prairie Creek so much that his family and friends have said, "When you love what you are doing, you are retired." **MN**