



Former grand chief of Tlicho joins Fortune Minerals' NICO project
By CHRIS TALBOT, Northern Journal Reporter
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Fortune Minerals has recruited former Tlicho Grand Chief Joseph Rabesca as the NICO gold-cobalt-bismuth-copper mining project community relations coordinator.

Rabesca joined Fortune when the company was completing a round of public meetings and open houses in Yellowknife and the four Tlicho communities - Behchoko, Whati, Gameti and Wekweeti - near the NICO mining site. According to Robin Goad, president and CEO of Fortune Minerals, the meetings went very well. The addition of Rabesca to the Fortune staff also provides the mining company with a stronger link to the community for gathering and distributing information.

"My thinking is the more information we give to people, the more people will support the mine to go ahead," Rabesca told *Northern Journal*. "You have to involve the people. I think the mine is doing it the right way by including people like myself. The more I know about the mine, the more people will know."

Rabesca said other people in the Tlicho communities are interested in getting involved with the mine. The overall attitude toward the mine is positive, he said, unlike some mining projects of the past, noting the Rayrock Mine that was left in a mess when the project concluded. In the end, the federal government was called in to clean up the mine. In the case of the NICO mine, there aren't similar concerns, he said.

The meetings and open houses were held the week of March 26. During the sessions, Fortune representatives met with Tlicho people to discuss opportunities and impacts regarding the NICO project. The goal was to also gain greater understanding of cultural issues and traditional land use in the area. According to Fortune, the meetings were well-attended and included community members, elders, GNWT representatives, the Kwe Beh Working Group, Tlicho Investment Corp. and high school students completing a project on opportunities in mining and the benefits of higher education.

"There's a lot of support. I wasn't personally in those meetings, but there's a lot of support from

the communities and for the project and for the proposed infrastructure that's associated with our project," Goad said.

New infrastructure being constructed includes a road that must be in place before Fortune can open the NICO mine, which is currently in the environmental assessment phase. When production begins, Fortune expects to have five trucks per day with concentrate leave the site on the road.

Goad said the mine will create approximately 250 jobs during the first year of underground and open pit operation, with a reduction in staff to about 150 people in following years. He called it a significant employment opportunity for the region.

The NICO mine is scheduled to begin operation by the end of 2014, but construction of the proposed road could cause delays. According to Goad, work on the road progresses slowly. Once the mine goes into production, Fortune expects it to have an 18-year lifespan.

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