

# Rare Earth Find in Nunavik

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By Edward Atkinson

The Nunavik territory is appreciated by Northern Quebec's expansive land mass marked by the *Quebec Boundaries Extension Act* (1912) and Canada's first indigenous land claim settlement, the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (1975). However, people have survived for over 4,000 years from the Nunavik region's natural resources. At the turn of the 20th century the Revillon Frères and the Hudson Bay Company established posts to trade with Inuit.

In 1959, the first Inuit Eskimo Cooperative was inaugurated in Kangiqsualujjuaq on the George River. Fort Chimo-Kuujjuaq's Jeannie Snowball created the fuzzy seal-skin owl which became famous in popular culture as the Ookpik ᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ. The Ookpik was chosen to represent Canada at the 1964 Philadelphia International Trade Fair. Since 1967, cooperatives have been established in all the Inuit communities of Nunavik, and the 'coop' movement united by la Fédération des coopératives du Nouveau-Québec (FCNQ). Also, in 1967, 15 muskox, called umingmak ᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ locally, were introduced from the High Arctic to a productive farm at old Fort Chimo just downstream on the Koksoak river from today's Kuujjuaq. Today, and since released, they number over 2,000.

The latest contributor to Nunavik's resource economy comes from the spectacular discovery of Rare Earth Elements (minerals) and Fluorspar located 130 kilometres south of Kuujjuaq and now in development. The proprietor exploration and development company is the Commerce Resources Corp. (CCE on the TSX.V and D7HO on the Frankfurt Exchange). The project was tagged the Ashram Rare Earth and Fluorspar Deposit: potentially the first successful Rare Earths mine in Canada and contributor to the local economy.

On May 15, 2019, Commerce Resources Corp. signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) with both Makivik Corporation and Nayumivik Land Holdings. The intention is of high importance to the region's mining economy because it calls for Nunavummiut involvement in its planning. Economic Development vice-president Maggie Emudluk signed it on behalf of Makivik and Sammy Koneak for Nayumivik Land Holding Corporation. Company president Christopher Groves and geologist project manager

Logging carbonatite drill core from the Ashram Rare Earth Elements Deposit.

© Mathieu Jalbert



Rare Earth Elements (Qarisaujanut uumaqquti ᖃᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ ᐅᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ) are critical to green technologies, such as Tugliq Energy's wind power turbine, shown here.  
© Tugliq Energy



Carpenter Saunders, of Kuujjuaq, erecting the field infrastructure.

Darren L. Smith signed for Commerce Resources Corp. The company is a founding member of the Rare Earth Industry Association (REIA).

Rare Earth Elements (*Qarisaujanut uumaqquti* ᖃᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ ᐅᓕᓕᓕᓕ) are used in leading-edge electronics which people everywhere benefit from, especially the smartphone technology pioneered by Canada's BlackBerry. Other Rare Earths uses involve all computers, rechargeable batteries, fluorescent lights, industrial magnets, and wind turbines including Tugliq Energy's equipment among other green technologies. In short, they are critical to clean and high-tech industries.

Additionally, Commerce Resources' exploration has discovered fluorspar (also known as fluorite), which is another critical mineral where China dominates production. Fluorspar is an industrial mineral used in the manufacture of enamel and ceramics, as well as in Lithium Ion batteries and some medical applications. Also, Fluorite crystals are said to increase one's concentration, self-confidence, and overall energy. The Qiviut fibres plucked from the undercoat of muskox are believed to have similar qualities after spun into a fashion: it gives off remarkable energy and heat.

In 2005, Commerce Resources decided to search for a world-class Rare Earths Elements project in light of China's dominance in then producing more than 95 per cent of the world's supply; and, in China's imposition of a global export duty. Two years later, Commerce Resources staked the required claims. Fortunately, the company's work to date represents a high concentration of Rare Earths, which are located just two metres beneath a shallow veneer of ground earth facilitating its extraction.

Saville Resources operation from the air.  
© Commerce Resources Corp.

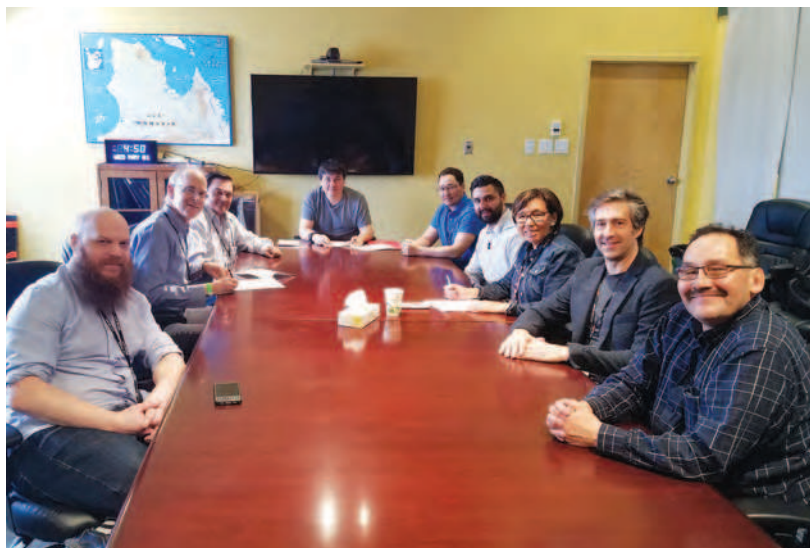
The adjacent positioned Saville Resources Inc. is Commerce Resources Corp.'s sister company. However, its chief focus is the chemical element Niobium (Saville's symbol is SRE on the TSX.V). While being called the Niobium Claim Group Property, Saville Resource's secondaries are tantalum, fluorspar, and phosphate. Saville's Niobium targets are well advanced, also close to the surface, and found to be of a much higher grade than other niobium deposits being worked globally. The price of Niobium has quadrupled since 2006: a fact which is beneficial to its Nunavik stakeholders. China buys half of the world's mined niobium.

Niobium is purposed as a high strength additive to steel, stainless steel, pipelines, ships, all aircraft and especially car and truck bodies. Adding Niobium reduces the amount and weight of steel required for all these industries and helps further Canada's green initiative.

Saville Resources Inc president Michael Hodge appreciates the heritage of the land including the history of the old Fort-Mackenzie to the west of the Niobium deposit. In 2007, Hodge arrived with the geologist and field crew for the initial site installation followed by prospecting and soil sampling. All this activity set the stage for the discovery in 2009 of the sought-after deposits near the centre of the combined claims.

The base of operations was ultimately named Camp Valcourt after their beloved camp manager Marco Valcourt who passed away in 2013. Valcourt was the driving force in ensuring that the camp operated to the highest standard, both operationally and environmentally. His legacy was the rock to Commerce Resources being recognized in 2015 with the e3 Plus Award from the Association de l'exploration minière du Québec (AMEQ) for adherence to industry best practices. Dugie Wellman succeeded as camp manager. Location & Transport Tivi Inc. (Kuujuuaq) provided the bulk expediting. Johnny May Air Charters lifted kit and personnel. Avataa Explorations and Logistics Inc. (Kuujuuaq) delivered on requested environmental assignments including drilling, the latter in a joint venture with Forages Rouillier Drilling.

The combined projects anticipate the employment of a significant number of Nunavummiut when they hit full production and many more during the construction phase. National and international stakeholders can appreciate that Quebec is viewed a top destination for mining investment. Both the governments of Canada and Quebec have delivered technical and financial support with the Université Laval participating scientifically.



Letter of Intent signed by Maggie Emudluk (Makivik), Sammy Koneak (Nayumivik Land Holding), Christopher Groves and Darren L. Smith for Commerce Resources Corp. on May 15, 2019. © Commerce Resources Corp.



Commerce Resources' Rare Earths Elements and planned for hydro-metallurgy facility off the eastern St Lawrence, positions it for sales and easy shipping globally. This prospect is in addition to its associated potential co-products fluorspar and niobium to come on market. Ultimately, the success of this production must include Nunavik's public in the spirit of the May 15, 2019 Letter-of-Intent. [ASB](#)



Kuujuummiut Ben Saunders and Jason Saunders adjusting to their work in Rare Earths.