

TOP STORIES IN A-Hed



Last in Line, Ms. Vogel Is Glad She I...

1 of 12



Broom Business Cleans Up in Nigeria

2 of 12



Men Behind Manolos Try on Hooves for ...

3 of 12

THE A-HEd | APRIL 28, 2011

The Stakes Are Real in the Yukon as a Modern Gold Rush Is On

Prospectors Must Claim Their Turf on Foot And Keep an Eye Peeled for Grizzlies

Article

Video

Comments (8)

MORE IN THE A-HEd »

Email Print Save This Like Confirm Text

By CHIP CUMMINS



Mining companies in the Yukon are hiring teams of hardy individuals to mark off prospecting claims the old-fashioned way—with wooden stakes. WSJ's Chip Cummins reports on the new gold rush in Canada's Yukon territory.

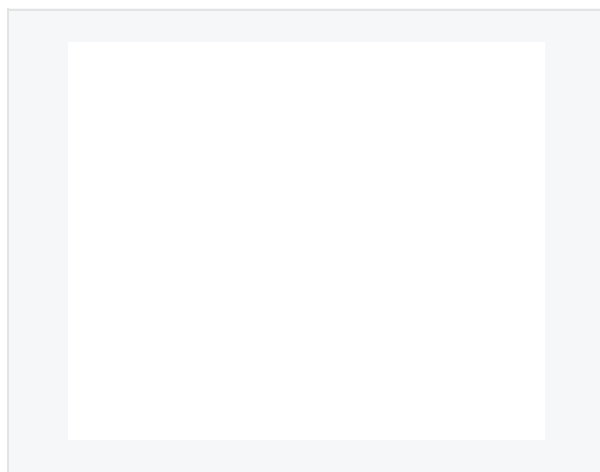
WHITEHORSE, Yukon Territory—Denis Jacob has been staking claims for gold-company clients since 1975. But he's never seen a frenzy quite like the one playing out in the Yukon—Canada's western-most territory and the site, more than 100 years ago, of one of history's greatest gold rushes.

Mr. Jacob is part of a small, secretive band of "stakers," who hike miles at a time across the territory's mountains and forests, hammering wooden stakes into the ground. For years, they've quietly marked off and registered land for mining companies, who then have the right to explore for riches underneath.

As gold prices have soared—setting a new record Wednesday of \$1,516.70 an ounce—stakers have done what they typically don't: They've worked straight through the harrowing Yukon winter. Some recent discoveries of gold here have stoked activity.

"As soon as gold went up, bang, everything changed," says Mr. Jacob, 60 years old. "Staking has become wild, quite wild."

In recent years, companies have been registering about 15,000 claims a year, according to a spokesman for the Yukon government. Almost none of those were made in the winter, he said. Last month alone, however, companies made 18,472 claims—bringing the total for the



Now Available on the iPad® 2.

Get it Now

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL live in the know

Most Popular on Facebook

You need to be logged into Facebook to see your friends' recommendations

U.S. Economy Slows - WSJ.com 1,003 people shared this.

White House Releases Obama Birth Certificate - WSJ.com 8,635 people shared this.

UEFA Europa League Semifinals: How Sporting Braga Climbed a Mountain - WSJ.com 474 people shared this.

Top 50 Fastest-Growing Women-Led Companies - WSJ.com 530 people shared this.

Apple's Steve Jobs Defends iPhone Location Practices - WSJ.com

January-March period to 34,022.



Chip Cummins

High gold prices have kept stakers busy. Robert Clarke stakes a claim near Faro, Yukon.

The Yukon government, unlike much of the rest of the world, requires a miner to stake out his turf on foot; claims are then registered at one of four mining-recorder offices in the territory. It has, over the years since the great gold rush here in the 1890s, published detailed regulations, including guidelines on the size of the stakes.

Most years, stakers take a pause in the Yukon's long, cold winter. Avalanches and temperatures below minus-20 degrees Fahrenheit are just some of the dangers. In spring, there's another worry: grizzly bears.

"The bears are poking their heads up," Mr. Jacob said earlier this month over eggs and coffee at Best Western's Gold Rush Inn here in the Yukon's capital.

Each morning, a crew of about a dozen of his stakers pack snow shoes and an axe. Just after sunrise, they board one of three rented helicopters, which ferry them to remote, snow-blanketed valleys and treeless mountain tops.

They then march off for hours on their own, hammering in stakes and marking trees with an axe, or with flags. The rules are complex, but the work essentially gives their clients the rights to explore underneath the ground they stake.

Mr. Jacob's mining-contracting company, Coureur des Bois Ltd., is one of just a few that specialize in staking, among other services. He doesn't typically identify his clients, who don't want competitors to know what territory they're interested in. Mr. Jacob keeps his company's logo off his trucks, and he passes out maps to his men only at the last minute.

"When we ask, 'where are we going?' he just says, 'we're going east or going west,'" says one of Mr. Jacob's stakers, Benjamin Fromme, 25. "Everything's on the low-down."

The first step in making an exploration claim often involves a clandestine visit to a mining-recorder office. "People come in when no one else is around, take a look at the maps and ask very specific questions," says Janet Bell-MacDonald, mining recorder for Dawson City.



Chip Cummins

Rob Clarke stands by a stack of wooden stakes.

Her inspectors sometimes helicopter into the hills themselves to examine times and dates on the small, metal tags attached to each stake identifying claims.

If there's a dispute between stakers, inspectors pore over photos sent to their office to determine who was on the ground first.

In the faded mining town of Faro, about 300 miles south of the Arctic Circle, Mr. Jacob's three helicopters, along with other aircraft—mostly leased to mining companies—have taken over the local air strip.

Last month, the airport recorded nearly 300 aircraft movements, 10 times as many as the same month last year. In previous winters, air-traffic controller Michel Dupont could go "two weeks without hearing the radio crack."

On a recent morning, staker Tyler Quock, 24, and Robert Clarke, 39, one of Mr. Jacob's long-time crew bosses, piled into a waiting chopper. They had previously dropped stakes, wrapped in bright orange tape, from the helicopter onto mountain terrain. On this sortie, they had to hammer them all into the ground in the right place before they could register them in town.

After dropping off Mr. Quock, the helicopter banked over a ridge and put down Mr. Clarke in a clearing, covered with as much as four feet of snow.



Facebook social plugin

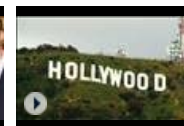
A-Hed Video >



Gold Prices Raise Stakes in the Yukon 2:58



Look Twice -- They're Royal Look-Alikes! 2:56



No Signs to the Hollywood Sign 2:15

More A-heds

[Stakes Are Real in Yukon's Modern Gold Rush](#)

[Last in Line, Ms. Vogel Is Glad She Isn't Queen](#)

[Broom Business Cleans Up in Nigeria](#)

[Men Behind Manolos Try on Hooves for Size](#)

[With Giant Eggs, Broken Dreams](#)

Most Popular >

Read Emailed Video Commented Searches

1. [Who Will Remember Paul Simon?](#)
2. [Obama Seeks to Quell 'Birther' Talk](#)
3. [Karzai Told to Dump U.S.](#)
4. [Jobs Tries to Calm iPhone Imbroglio](#)
5. [The Really Smart Phone](#)

Most Read Articles Feed



ROBERT CLARKE

Using a hand-held global-positioning device and a compass, he ascertained where to hammer in the first stake, and scrawled the date and time on the metal plate. Then he trudged exactly 1,500 feet over the snow to where another stake had been dropped, and hammered it in. He "blazed" the line between the two, cutting notches in trees or tying biodegradable flags around shrubs and tree tops.

"This could be pretty—potentially—quite good ground," he said. He pointed to a mountain in the distance. His teams staked most of it over the past few years, he said.

Using his snowshoes as skis, he slid down a steep embankment onto a frozen stream. He inched over the ice sideways, testing for cracks, before scrambling up the opposite bank, where the chopper was waiting.

The work carries a measure of adventure, and danger. In November 2009, one of Mr. Jacob's men was buried in an avalanche shortly after stepping out of his helicopter. A colleague spotted the antenna of his hand-held radio and managed to dig him out.

A few weeks back, Mr. Jacobs' men started carrying extra gear: two cans of a chemical akin to bear mace, to be sprayed as a last line of defense. They also pack "bear bangers"—pen-sized devices that make a loud noise to frighten the animals away.

Mr. Quock has had three close calls in a year on the job. "I've never been charged by a bear," he says. "But it's still scary as hell, even seeing one from far away."

MORE IN THE A-HEAD »

Email Printer Friendly Order Reprints

Share: Facebook Twitter LinkedIn StumbleUpon Dribbble RSS

Like Send You like In the Yukon, Stakers See a Frenzy as Gold Prices Soar - WSJ.com · Admin Page · Insights · Error

SPONSORED LINKS

Invest in Silver Goldline

Silver Delivered to Your Door. Free Investor Kit. Since 1960. Goldline.com/Silver

Top Gold Mining Stocks

3 Easy ways to Profit from Gold's Rise without Buying One Ounce. www.WyattResearchGold.com

15 Reason to buy Gold

Luke Burgess gold expert lists 15 reasons you should buy gold WealthDaily.com/Gold_Report

UTOG: Montana Black Gold

Is the 300% GAIN in last 3 months a taste of the oil wealth to come? www.AmericanEnergyReport.com

Add a Comment

JOURNAL COMMUNITY

We welcome your thoughtful comments. Please comply with our Community rules. All comments will display your real name.

Want to participate in the discussion?

REGISTER FOR FREE

Or log in or become a subscriber now for complete Journal access.

Track replies to my comment

Go to Comments tab

CLEAR

POST

Share articles and post your comments on Facebook | What's this?

Login with Facebook

Related and Recommended

Elsewhere on the Web

Content from Sponsors What's This?



Is 'Nudging' Really Enough?



Who Will Remember Paul Simon?

WSJ BLOGS

A Branding Blow for Michael Vick

Messages a Man Sends With a Work Bag

Orderly Toddlers? Try Uniforms

Ralph Lauren's Vintage Sports Cars

The Best Boxer in NFL History

Video: Mother of LeBron James Arrested

Dearth of Princely Doubles Makes for Uncommon Commoner

Buffalo Wild Wings Guarding Against NFL

Cutting Allergy Shots

Video: Why More Folks Under 70 Are Getting New Knees

BENZINGA.COM

Highwoods Declares Quarterly Dividends, Annual Dividend of \$1.70 Per Share (HIW)

BENZINGA.COM

Is Buying a House a Dream of the Past? (TOL)

FOOL.COM

Is Fidelity In Trouble?

BENZINGA.COM

Whole Foods Sued Over Trade Practices Involving Vegetables - Bloomberg

FOOL.COM

How Young Investors Can Get Richer

BENZINGA.COM

Amazon Kindle Customers Now Able to Loan from 11k Libraries (AMZN)

BENZINGA.COM

Will Netflix Have A Real Competitor Now? (NFLX, DISH)

Powered by OneSpot

WSJ.com Expand your access to WSJ.com

It only takes a moment

Click here to unlock your FREE access to more newsletters, alerts and key analysis

CLICK HERE

Editors' Picks



Leprosy Linked to Armadillos



Here Comes Baby, There Goes the Marriage



Stakes Are Real in Yukon's Modern Gold Rush



Royal Wedding's Far-Flung Audience



Weather Journal: Expecting Heavy Rain, Watching for Tornadoes

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

WSJ.com Account:

- My Account
- Subscriber Billing Info

Create an Account:

- Register for Free

About:

- News Licensing
- Reprints
- Advertising
- Advertise Locally
- Conferences

WSJ.com:

- Site Map
- Home
- World
- U.S.
- New York

Tools & Formats:

- Today's Paper
- Video Center
- Graphics
- Columns
- Blogs

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Digital Network

- WSJ.com
- Marketwatch.com
- Barrons.com

- [Subscribe to WSJ.com](#)
- [Sign up for WSJ Professional](#)

Help & Information Center:

- [Help](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Global Support](#)
- [New on WSJ.com](#)
- [Take a Tour](#)
- [Print Subscriber Services](#)

- [About Dow Jones](#)
- [Privacy Policy - Updated](#)
- [Subscriber Agreement & Terms of Use - Updated](#)
- [Copyright Policy](#)
- [Jobs at WSJ.com](#)

- [Business](#)
- [Markets](#)
- [Market Data](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Life & Culture](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Small Business](#)
- [Student Journal](#)
- [Corrections](#)

- [Topics](#)
- [Guides](#)
- [Alerts](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [Tablet Edition](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Journal Community](#)
- [WSJ on Twitter](#)
- [WSJ on Facebook](#)
- [WSJ on Foursquare](#)
- [My Journal](#)
- [Portfolio](#)
- [WSJ Digital Downloads](#)

- [SmartMoney.com](#)
- [AllThingsD.com](#)
- [FINS: Finance, IT jobs, Sales jobs](#)
- [BigCharts.com](#)
- [Virtual Stock Exchange](#)
- [WSJ Radio](#)
- [Professor Journal](#)
- [WSJ U.S. Edition](#)
- [WSJ Asia Edition](#)
- [WSJ Europe Edition](#)
- [WSJ India Page](#)
- Foreign Language Editions:
 - [WSJ Chinese](#)
 - [WSJ Japanese](#)
 - [WSJ Portuguese](#)
 - [WSJ Spanish](#)



Copyright ©2011 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved