

## Copper Mountain Mining Corporation holds tour for dignitaries



*Regional Director George Hanson looks way up to see the end of the mining pit and beginning of blue sky above Copper Mountain Mine. The mine near Princeton is the first one to open in B.C. for over a decade and a recent tour included mayors and directors from neighbouring districts.*

By [Dierra Maynard - Similkameen Spotlight](#)

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Life has a funny way of coming around full circle. Princeton has been a mining town since way back when and now again in the year 2011, it is a mining town again. The Copper Mountain Mining Corporation has taken control of a mountain full of precious metal near town and is breathing new life into a community and a province that could use some good news about economic recovery and new business from an old source. In fact, the reopening of the mine is so significant it brought in a few good people for a viewing recently that had a whole lot of people talking.

Regional Director Brad Hope hosted Regional Director from Cawston George Hanson, Regional Director from Keremeos/Hedley Elaf Christensen, Mayor of Keremeos and OSRHD Chair Walter Despot, Keremeos Councillor Gary Thielman, Mayor of Princeton and OSRHD Vice-Chair Randy McLean, Mayor of Penticton and RDOS Director Dan Ashton, Mayor of Oliver Pat Hampson, Area F Director Michael Brydon, Assistant Regional Director Princeton Charles Weber, RDOS Vice Chair Tom Chapman and RDOS Manager of Finance Warren Everton with the help of Princeton Councillor and CUMC human resources manager Frank Armitage and CUMC general manager Bill Dodds on a tour of the mine itself. The crew first went into the mine's conference room to gather up their safety gear, receive a warm welcome from mining staff and get a briefing on the tour before loading onto a bus. Then, the group saw up close the impressive mine operation.

The mine is now in production and has been since May 27, 2011. "We are expecting to be at full production sometime later this month," announced Dodds. Two hundred and seventy workers and twenty-nine university students are now employed by Copper Mountain Mining Corporation. The mine has 13 massive trucks hauling up to 240 tonne maximum loads to the processing mill. The mine aspires to haul 35,000 tonnes each day. The trucks are so enormous that the tires cost more than some peoples' cars. They are from anywhere between \$25,000 to \$35,000 each and they last for around 2500 hours/tire. The trucks top speed is 60 km/hr.

The world's largest shovel built by Komatsu drops 45 cu metres of material into the trucks at a time. In 3 to 3 and a half passes a truck is full. The shovel operates with electric motors which are "much cheaper to run," said Mining Engineer Hugh Eisler. The big shovel should load two million tonnes each month during peak performance.

The original discovery of copper on the mountain was made by an unlikely cowboy who went by the name of "Sunset" Brown. Since that discovery in 1884, the mine has metamorphosed many times over. Starting in 1923 as Granby Consolidated Mining, the operation was underground for years. Production ended in 1957 because of the low value of copper at the time and reopened again in 1972. The mine ran until 1985 as Newmont Mine. Then, in 1988 the mine again was up and running. This time it shut down in 1995. With the prices of copper rising and falling and production costs doing the same, copper mining has seen some hard times.

Copper is at over \$4/pound right now and with the growing dependency on technology seen as a growing commodity. The present operation is continually crossing signs of the old operations including some of the dangerous deep pits. The ore is hauled to a huge mill operation where it goes through several stages. It is crushed and sorted as it goes through the crusher, grinding mill, sag mill and separation process. The copper, gold and silver are all sorted with organic chemicals and hauled off for smelting in Japan. Copper Mountain Mining Corporation is 25 per cent owned and operated by Mitsubishi who is committed to taking 100 per cent of the concentrate. Arrow Trucks haul the concentrate to the wharfs where it is loaded into shipping containers destined for Japan.

The water used is recycled. It goes into a tailings pond and is dumped back up to re-use. 17,000 gallons of water/minute are utilized.

With a predicted 17 year life span, optimism continues to grow for B.C.'s economy. The wheels of production are in motion and local businesses are feeling the good honest growing pains of expansion. The Princeton Museum was a recent and appreciative recipient of the mine re-opening with a cheque for \$10,000 given to them for their future. "We want to be a positive presence in Princeton," said Armitage. "Princeton is our community too and we hope to help it become stronger."

There has been over 100 million dollars in immediate spending put into the re-opening. The economic spin-offs have been felt across Princeton and the rest of the province. Fifty per cent of employees came from the Similkameen Valley and the total payroll is anticipated at \$30 million/year. Explosives are brought in from Williams Lake, fuel and steel balls come from Kamloops and Kal Tire has a mining division on site. General Manager Bill Dodds said, "Copper Mountain Mining is committed to supporting local businesses as much as we can. There are billions of tonnes of copper resource here and we will have a tremendous impact on the local economy."