

Delta company poised for pipeline opportunities

Northwind owner likes every part of his business

by Erika Sherk
Northern News Services
Inuvik

Kurt Wainman, 36, grew up knowing the growl of a Kenworth truck engine.

His father was a truck driver and by the age of 16, Wainman had joined the ranks.

"I was a truck driver, owned my own truck," he said with a slow smile, "Ended up with lots of trucks."

Today Wainman is the owner of Northwind Industries, a company with around 85 employees at peak season.

Even though he's in charge of it all, he hasn't lost his excitement for the operation, he said.

"I still drive truck, I still run equipment," he said. "I'm a hands-on kind of guy. I organize, delegate, operate."

He said he has the perfect job for him.

"What's my favourite part? All of it," he laughed.

"I used to have to do admin stuff too, but now I've hired people to do the boring stuff in the office. I still get the exercise and fresh air."

If he had to get picky and choose one part of the job that makes him happiest, it would be the time he spends with his employees, he said.

"I like working with my guys, passing on the knowledge," said Wainman.

Of his employees – about 60 full-time and an extra 25 in the winter – 90 per cent are aboriginal, he said, adding it's about a 50-50 split of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit.

The firm hauls all sorts of loads throughout the North, he said, though gravel, equipment, and water are the most common items to find on his trucks.

The potential Mackenzie Gas Project was a big factor in his creation of the company 10 years ago, he said.

"In the beginning, you're excited, you read about it every day," he said. "Now we just work until it starts going forward."

He is optimistic that it will.

"I still hope it happens, I believe it's going to go," he said.

He admits he has given up reading about it for the time being.

"I quit following the pipeline (negotiations) because it just seems to be a bunch of drama queens right now," said Wainman.

The pipeline will mean "huge" benefits for companies such as his when it arrives, he said.

Meanwhile he has the benefit of having family close by.

Wainman's 16-year-old daughter, Jenna McDonald, works with him in the summer.

Will she eventually join her dad's company full-time? "No," she said.

When asked if he wants her to follow in his footsteps,

Wainman answers with a proud Dad kind of response.

"She can do better, much better," he said.

Kurt Wainman started his company at the age of 26. He loves it all, he said, especially since hiring people to do the administration work.

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