

# Frequently Asked Questions on Prospecting

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# Prospecting – Basics

## What is Prospecting?

Prospecting covers a range of activities from fossil collecting for hobbyists to gold panning in the search for economic minerals.

Even though I do not have any background in geology or mining, is prospecting an activity I could pursue as I have a great love of the outdoors?

Anyone with a love of the outdoors can be a prospector.

## Do I need a license to prospect in the province?

A license is not required in order to do grassroots prospecting in the Province.

## Is a permit required to prospect in the province?

It is recommended that a prospector notify the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology (IET) about prospecting activities. Go [here](#) to read the various levels of activity and any permitting requirements for each.

## Are there different requirements for prospecting in Labrador Inuit Lands?

Work within Labrador Inuit Lands also requires a Work Plan Approval by the Nunatsiavut Government. Go [here](#) for more information.

## Is there any formal certification for prospectors?

Yes, there is a “Genuine Prospector” designation: this refers to a prospector who has several years of experience in prospecting either with a company or on his/her own and/or those who have taken the former two-week-long prospector course in either Stephenville or Happy Valley-Goose Bay. This course is no longer offered but a new modular course is being developed that will be offered partly online and partly in the field and laboratory. Go [here](#) for more information.

## What are the benefits of being a Designated Prospector?

A Designated Prospector can stake 30 claims in a calendar year without having to pay the security fee.

## What tools do I need for prospecting?

All you need to be a successful prospector are a rock hammer, hand lens and a GPS (global positioning system) unit. A GPS will accurately tell you where you are to within several metres.

## Am I allowed to pan for gold or visit mineral showings on other prospector's/company's properties?

This should only be done after obtaining permission from the owner(s) of the properties.

**How do I know if someone owns mineral rights to an area?**

Current (live) land tenure status is shown on the interactive GeoScience Atlas on the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology's website [here](#).

**I (think I) have discovered gold and/or base metal mineralization – what should I do next?**

If you think the mineralization is significant, you could stake a [mineral claim](#) over the mineralization. This gives you the exclusive right to explore the area covered by the claim(s). Alternatively, contact people at the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology, such as the Mineral Exploration Consultant Geologist or the Matty Mitchell Resource Room.

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## **Mineral Claims – Mineral Licenses – Claim Maintenance – Assessment Work**

**What is a Mineral Claim?**

A Mineral Claim is a piece of land measuring 500 metres by 500 metres (25 hectares or 62 acres).

**What is a Mineral License?**

A Mineral License is a permit to carry out mineral exploration on mineral claims for which someone holds mineral rights. A mineral license can consist of 1 to up to a maximum of 256 claims; this grouping of claims has to be contiguous. The mineral license gives you exclusive rights to explore for minerals within its boundaries and to apply for a mining lease if you are successful in finding economic mineralization.

**Can anyone stake Mineral Claims in the province?**

Anyone 19 years of age or over, or a company can stake a mineral claim.

**Do I have to have claims in order to prospect?**

No, anyone can prospect on land that is open (i.e., not staked), outside of provincial or federal parks or wilderness areas and other protected habitats.

**How do I stake a claim?**

Mineral claims are staked online by accessing the staking section of the Province's Mineral Rights Administration Portal (MinLAP) [here](#). New clients can register for an account by clicking 'Create an account'. This application process takes about 5 minutes, and it allows you to create an account to stake, submit work reports, request extensions and add additional stakers (if applicable) online. The

cost to stake one claim is \$65, of which \$15 is a recording fee and \$50 is a refundable security deposit. Payment must be made online and with a valid credit card.

#### **How many claims should I stake?**

If the mineralization is confined to one small outcrop, then one claim would be sufficient to cover it. If the mineralization is clearly extensive and can be tracked for several hundred metres, then several claims are required to cover it. The number of claims staked also depends on the size of your pocket book!

#### **Is there any way for prospectors to save money on staking claims?**

Yes! If you are a “Genuine Prospector”, you are allowed to stake up to 30 claims in a calendar year and only pay the recording fee of \$15 per claim. If more than 30 claims are staked in a year, the prospector has to pay the additional \$50 per claim security deposit. This deposit is refundable when you complete the necessary work and file a report covering the first year work requirements. Go [here](#) for more information.

#### **Once a claim is staked, is there any requirement to do work on it?**

Yes. Every year a certain amount of money, increasing yearly, has to be spent on each claim and documented in an “Assessment Report”. For further information on maintaining claims, please go [here](#).

#### **What is an Assessment Report?**

An assessment report must be completed at the end of every year by the owner of a mineral claim. It comprises a brief description of the work done on the license in the preceding year and a statement of expenses - these are called “assessment credits”. For more information, see the [Prospector Assessment Report Form](#) and the [Guide to filling out the Prospector Assessment Report Form](#).

#### **If I spend more money than necessary on my claims, do I get the money back?**

No, the excess money spent is carried over to the next year’s assessment credits.

#### **Are there any options available if I am unable to complete all or part of the assessment work on my claims?**

Yes. A 12-month extension of time may be applied for. There is no formal application but note that the request for the extension must be received by the Mineral Claims Recorders Office at the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology on or before the anniversary date of the license and be accompanied by a security deposit equal to the amount you are deficient in assessment work. The security deposit is refundable only if you do the required work.

#### **Can I get an extension of time to submit an assessment work report?**

Yes. A 60-day extension to complete an assessment work report is available provided a preliminary

version of the report, together with reason(s) why the completed report cannot be submitted on schedule, is forwarded to the Mineral Claim Recorders Office on or before the Work Report due date.

#### **Can I combine adjoining mineral licenses?**

Yes. This is called Grouping. Mineral licenses can only be grouped if: i) they are held by the one company/individual, ii) the licenses are adjoining and total no more than 256 claims, iii) the first year assessment work report has been filed, and iv) no 12-month extensions exist on any license.

#### **Can I drop some of the claims in a license?**

Yes. This is called a Partial Surrender. Simply notify the Mineral Claim Recorders office by email. Include a map description of the area you wish to retain as well as a sketch (copy of the claim map) that clearly identifies the area of the claims you wish to retain as well as the claims you wish to surrender.

#### **How can I profit from making a mineral discovery?**

If the property has verified mineralization present, then consider making a deal with an exploration company to carry out the work required on your property. This work should be designed to investigate the extent of the mineralization and to assess whether the property/mineralization is economically viable to mine. This deal is called an Option Agreement.

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## **Option Agreements**

#### **What is an Option Agreement?**

An option agreement is similar to a lease. The prospector signs an agreement with a company that allows the company to earn an interest in the prospector's property. In return, the prospector is typically given annual payments and/or shares in the company, as well as a small retained interest, called a Net Smelter Royalty (NSR). Every option agreement is different and has to be negotiated between the company and the prospector and then checked out by each party's lawyers.

#### **Can I sell my property?**

Prospectors do not normally sell their property. The preferred marketing strategy is to option the property to an exploration company. If the company decides not to continue working on the property, it reverts to the prospector.

#### **Do most prospectors option their claims?**

When prospectors have done some work on their claims, they are in a position to decide whether to hold on to the property or cancel it if no mineralization has been found. If some interesting mineralization has been found, more advanced surveys are then required to further develop the

property: this work can be very expensive and near impossible for most prospectors to accomplish both logistically and financially. At this stage, it is best to option the claims to an exploration company, which has the resources to carry out expensive surveys on the property, possibly including drilling.

#### Who can I ask for advice on Option Agreements?

Other prospectors who have successfully optioned properties; lawyers who have experience with these option agreements. In addition, you can check with the Mineral Exploration Consultant Geologist or the Matty Mitchell Room Geologist for guides on negotiating Option deals. Go [here](#) for more information Promotion and Option Agreements.

Are there any fees required when I transfer title of my claim to a company or register an option agreement on my claims?

No.

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## Minerals / Quarries / Rights

If I own the surface rights (say, some land with a cabin on it), do I automatically own the mineral rights?

No. Mineral rights are a separate matter, and can only be obtained by online staking.

#### What do mineral rights refer to?

Mineral rights are given to the person who has staked a mineral claim on a property. These rights allow the person to conduct work on the claim, develop any mineral deposit, such as gold, base metals etc., or to option / lease that property to a mineral exploration company.

#### Do I get surface rights when I stake a claim?

No. Permission from surface rights holders in the area of your claims must first be obtained before exploration can begin.

#### If I own the land, do I own the quarry rights?

No. Individuals have to make an application for a permit to open or lease a quarry.

#### Do I get quarry (aggregate) rights when I stake a claim?

No. Rights to quarry materials are obtained under the Quarry Materials Act 1998. For further information on quarry rights, contact the Manager of Quarry Materials (709-729-6447).



**Do I get Petroleum rights when I stake a claim?**

No. Petroleum Rights are acquired through a bid process under The Petroleum and Natural Gas Act.

**Do Mineral Rights take precedence over Quarry Rights or vice versa?**

No. The owners of the Mineral Rights and the Quarry Rights have to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement.

**What materials are included in the term “Minerals”?**

The term Mineral refers to any naturally occurring inorganic substance and includes gold, base metals, coal etc. and materials contained in mine tailings.

**What materials are included in the term “Quarry Material”?**

Quarry Materials are substances used in their natural form for road works, civil construction or agricultural purposes and include clay, sand, gravel, rock, soil, limestone, peat and slag.

**What is “Dimension Stone”?**

Dimension Stone is different from “Minerals” and “Quarry Materials” as defined above and includes slate, marble, granite and other rocks used as dimension stone for flooring, countertops, building facades etc.

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## **Geochemistry - Assays**

**What is an assay?**

An assay refers to a method to analyze or reveal what substances are present in a sample whether it be rock, soil, water, etc. An assay, also referred to as an analysis, also gives the amount of those substances in the sample.

**How big does a sample have to be?**

A rock sample is typically about 2 – 4 pounds or double your fist size.

**Does the government do assays for prospectors?**

No: but see below under Government Assistance.

**Are there private assay labs in the province?**

Yes. Eastern Analytical Ltd. is an assay lab in Springdale and is generally used by Mineral Exploration Companies and Prospectors throughout the province. The address is:

Eastern Analytical Ltd.  
PO Box 187  
403 Little Bay Road  
Springdale, NL, A0J 1T0  
E-Mail: [easternanalytical@nf.aibn.com](mailto:easternanalytical@nf.aibn.com)

#### **How much does it cost to get an assay done?**

Preparation (crushing/pulverizing) costs for a regular sample are about \$10 (all samples have to be prepared in this fashion). Assay costs vary with the type of analysis requested, e.g. to get 34 elements plus gold analysed in a sample (package is called “ICP 34 plus Au”) costs about \$46.

#### **How long does it take to get the results?**

Depending on the time of year and the number of companies using the lab, the turn-around time for assays can vary from 2 to 6 weeks (approximate).

#### **Who can I call to help me with interpreting the assay results?**

You can contact the geologist at the Matty Mitchell Room or the Mineral Exploration Consultant Geologist. All information is confidential for 3 years. Go [here](#) for more information.

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## **Prospecting – Nuts and Bolts (Rocks and Minerals!)**

#### **What is mineralization?**

“Mineralization” refers to the presence of minerals (which contain metals of economic importance) in a rock. These metals include Gold, Copper, Cobalt, Lead, Zinc, Nickel, Molybdenum, Iron etc.

#### **What is Economic Mineralization?**

Mineralization becomes economic when there is a sufficient quantity of it in one place that it can be mined economically.

#### **Do economic minerals have to be visible in a rock to make them ore grade?**

No. Gold for example, may not be visible in some economic gold deposits.

#### **What would be good indications that a rock might contain mineralization?**

Some ore minerals may be easily visible in rocks, for example, gold in quartz. Minerals such as pyrite, chalcopyrite or galena are easily recognizable in rocks. Another obvious indicator of mineralization in a rock is what is referred to as staining. “Stains” occur when certain ore minerals such as those containing copper, react in the presence of water and air to form thin films of new minerals on the surface of the

rock. These new mineral stains are commonly very brightly coloured. Some examples include malachite (bright green), azurite (bright blue) – both copper stains; uranophane (bright yellow) – uranium; erythrite (pink) – cobalt.

### What is a gossan?

A gossan is a heavily oxidized, very rusty rock. It is the prospector's friend because it indicates the presence of mineralization and is easy to identify! A gossan is produced when massive to semi-massive sulphides are exposed to weathering (water and air) and the metals are leached out and the iron combines with water to form limonite/rust.

### In Newfoundland and Labrador, what are the key ore minerals?

Key ore minerals in NL include the sulphides: pyrite, chalcopyrite, chalcocite, galena, sphalerite, molybdenite, stibnite and the oxides: magnetite and hematite. Note that on the island, gold is commonly visible particularly in quartz veins.

### How can I best learn to identify the common ore minerals?

The Matty Mitchell Room has a large collection of rocks and minerals commonly found in rocks in NL. Feel free to come and browse the collection. Also check out the various guides to different types of mineralization in NL, available for prospectors [here](#) under Deposit Models.

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## Prospector Support

### I have found some mineralization, what is my next step?

Let's assume that you have staked the property. First, you might try to establish the grade of mineralization by taking (if not already done) rock samples called grab samples. At the same time, you would try to trace the extent of the mineralization by prospecting along the trend of the zone (if this can be established). If the rock exposure is poor, you may want to take soil, stream or till samples. If these samples test positive, take a sufficient number that you define an anomaly in the material (i.e., soil) being sampled. Stronger soil anomalies might then become a target for trenching to expose the bedrock under the soil or till. Seek advice on what to do next.

### What equipment do I need to take soil samples?

A soil auger and the appropriate sample bag (which can be purchased from Eastern Analytical, Springdale laboratory) are the only tools you need for soil sampling. Augers are available on loan from the Matty Mitchell Room. Equipment can also be easily purchased online.

### **Is there any other equipment available?**

Yes, the plastic rock sample bags, Kraft soil/stream or lake sediment paper bags can also be acquired from Eastern Analytical (Springdale laboratory). The lake sediment samplers and plastic gold pans are available for loan from the Matty Mitchell Resource Room. Personnel looking after the prospector assistance grants program at the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology also have some easy-to-use geophysical equipment available for loan. Contact [bradway@gov.nl.ca](mailto:bradway@gov.nl.ca) for more information.

### **How secretive should I be about my new discovery?**

It's best to keep quiet about your discovery until you have it staked!

### **How should I proceed with promoting my property?**

Talk to the geologist at the Matty Mitchell Room at or the Mineral Exploration Consultant Geologist. Begin your search by going [here](#) under Promotions and Option Agreements.

### **How can I connect with the right people in exploration companies?**

There are several ways to go about this:

- Check out the list of companies working in Newfoundland and Labrador [here](#)
- Attend trade shows to network with the exploration companies' representatives
- Talk to the geologist at the Matty Mitchell Room or the Mineral Exploration Consultant Geologist.

### **Where can I learn more about Prospecting?**

Visit the [Matty Mitchell Prospectors Resource Room](#), First Floor, Department of Industry, Energy and Technology at 50 Elizabeth Avenue, St. John's, NL; email [matty@gov.nl.ca](mailto:matty@gov.nl.ca) or call 709-729-2120. There is also a multitude of resources online.

### **What is the "Matty Mitchell Room"?**

The Matty Mitchell Prospectors Resource Room is an office in the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology (IET) dedicated to helping prospectors in all aspects of their work. It is a private/public partnership sponsored by the IET and the local mining industry association, Mining Industry NL (MINL).

### **Are there other "Prospector Resource Rooms" around the province?**

No. The "Matty Mitchell Room" is the only dedicated prospector resource room in the province.

### **Is there a prospecting association?**

Yes. Prospectors in the province can become members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prospectors Association (NLPA). Their website can be viewed [here](#)

### **What other kind of support is available?**

The most important alternate support is the local mining industry association, Mining Industry NL

(MINL). Their website can be viewed [here](#).

Prospectors can join MINL for a minimal fee (\$25). MINL helps prospectors promote their properties, partly by funding prospectors to go to national/international conventions such as the PDAC in Toronto and the Roundup in Vancouver.

#### **Does the government offer prospector training courses?**

Yes. The Prospectors Assistance Program (part of the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology's Mineral Incentive Program), as of June 2021, is updating the annual 2 week long Prospectors Course (formerly held in Stephenville at College of the North Atlantic). The course will be providing professional instruction and other resources in a modular course in basic prospecting skills. The course will be available online for the theory part and will be open to everyone. The course will also have an in-person laboratory and field section.

#### **How much does the prospector training course cost?**

TBA

#### **Can I get financial assistance for the prospector training course?**

Local exploration companies have frequently sponsored people in the past. In Labrador, the Inuit / Innu / Metis have helped fund their members to do the course in Happy Valley/Goose Bay.

#### **Are there any other prospector training courses offered around the province?**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Prospectors Association (NLPA) is currently working on a program of short course offerings (evenings, half days, weekends etc.). Check out their website <http://nlprospectors.org/> regularly as updates on these new offerings are continuously being made.

#### **Does the provincial government offer any financial assistance to individual prospectors?**

Yes. The Prospectors Assistance Program (PAP) is a provincially funded program, which provides direct financial support to individuals through grants. Please visit this [website](#) for more information on the financial assistance program and the guidelines, which govern the program. Contact the Mineral Incentive Geologist at 1-855-729-6448 or [bradway@gov.nl.ca](mailto:bradway@gov.nl.ca) for all inquiries regarding the PAP.

#### **I have collected some interesting rock and mineral samples from my area. Where can I send them to be identified?**

You can either bring them into the "Matty Mitchell Prospectors Resource Room" in person or send them in by mail (see address below). Samples can also be sent to the Exploration Consultant Geologist at the same address.

#### **I live in a remote area of the province: who can I call to help me with questions about my property?**

Call the Exploration Consultant Geologist or the Geologist at the Matty Mitchell Resource Room.

**What is the best place to access information about the mineral resources of NL?**

The best source of information is the online GeoScience Atlas, which can be viewed [here](#).

This website contains a huge repository of geological, geochemical and geophysical information based on more than 100 years of mineral exploration and mining in the province.

**Where can I obtain air photos, topo maps and forest access road maps locally?**

The Air Photo Library (Crown Lands Division) at the Howley Building on Higgins Line in St. John's should be able to provide you with these necessities.

**Can I obtain prospecting gear and supplies along with field guidebooks locally in the province?**

There are several sites online from which you can acquire anything you need in the prospecting line; e.g., [BAP Equipment Ltd.](#) In addition, local surveyor stores such as Cansel Wade and OnGrade NL Inc. can supply some of the necessary supplies prospectors require.

**Are there any major or junior mining companies (exploration) with local offices?**

Most mining and exploration companies are based in Vancouver and Toronto, but some junior exploration companies do have local offices. Go to the department's online Mineral Exploration Company listing [here](#) for addresses and contact information.

**Will exploration companies assay samples for prospectors?**

Sometimes, mineral exploration companies will pay for the cost of assays for a prospector; in return for which, the company gets the "right of first refusal" on optioning the property.

**Is an area that has had past mining activity still a good place to explore?**

Yes. A good example of this would be the Buchans area. Mining finished there in 1984 and now another company is in the process of developing a mining plan to bring it back into production.

**What are the first steps in deciding how to select an area to go prospecting in?**

Accessibility. You have to be able to walk or drive to it; and favorable geology, preferably with known mineral occurrences.

**Where can I obtain a rock and mineral collection (set)? Does the provincial government provide these to new prospectors?**

The Department does have a rock/mineral kit but it is only for distribution to schools. The only place to get rock and/or mineral kits is by going online, e.g. <http://geology.com/store/collections/mineral-kit.shtml> and on eBay.

**Is there a local government geologist whom I can call on to look at the rocks on my claim?**

The Geological Survey has geologists who work in various areas of the province. Call the Mineral Exploration Consultant Geologist, who can direct you to the geologist in your area.

**If I discuss my assay results or other results of my prospecting activities with a government geologist, will they be treated confidentially?**

All government employees sign confidentiality agreements regarding knowledge they acquire at work – this includes information from prospectors.

**Newfoundland and Labrador has had a long history of mining. Is there really much potential left for new mineral discoveries in the province?**

Less than 5% of the province has exposed rock. This means that most of the bedrock in the province is covered by bog, forest, soil, glacial debris or a mixture of these materials. Much detective work must be done to uncover hidden mineralization. Each year, prospectors still make new mineral discoveries. In addition, until recently there were relatively few companies and prospectors exploring the province, compared to more established mining jurisdictions such as Ontario and Quebec.

**Is it worth staking historic mineral occurrences?**

Any mineral occurrence might be the first clue to a larger deposit either at depth, or under cover nearby. Every prospector brings a different approach and abilities to each property. Your unique approach may be the successful one!

**Does the government keep records of previous exploration work in the province?**

All reports are kept by the Department of Natural Resources. These are known as GeoFiles and can be accessed [here](#).

**Are there certain times of the year when prospecting will be restricted?**

Yes. When permits are applied for in certain areas, issues such as caribou calving, salmon spawning, etc. -may arise and need to be assessed.

**Are there any other restrictions on prospecting with respect to time of the year or area of interest?**

Prospecting is not allowed in public parks, wilderness areas etc. When staking claims online, such areas called Exempt Mineral Lands (“EML”) will be off limits to staking. Also, beware of water resources for local communities – claim staking may be restricted in such areas.

**Are there any differences in prospecting “does and don’ts” in Labrador?**

When prospecting in Labrador be aware of Inuit and Innu lands restrictions.

### Do prospectors form partnerships?

Sometimes, two or more prospectors who know each other well form a partnership. The agreement can be registered with the Mineral Claims Recorder.

### Do prospectors form companies?

Yes. Several experienced prospectors have graduated from merely prospecting to being the CEO's of publicly traded junior exploration companies. Examples include the Stares brothers and Kevin Keats from Benton (Metals Creek Resources, Golden Dory Resources).

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## CONTACTS

Contact	Position	Phone	Email
Pat O'Neill	Resource Room Geologist	709 729 2120	<a href="mailto:matty@gov.nl.ca">matty@gov.nl.ca</a>
Carolina Valverde	Exploration Consultant	709 729 6651	<a href="mailto:cvalverdecardenas@gov.nl.ca">cvalverdecardenas@gov.nl.ca</a>
Justin Lake	Mineral Rights	709 729 6437	<a href="mailto:justinlake@gov.nl.ca">justinlake@gov.nl.ca</a>
Brad Way	Prospector's Grants	855 729 6448	<a href="mailto:bradway@gov.nl.ca">bradway@gov.nl.ca</a>

Department of Industry Energy and Technology	<a href="https://www.gov.nl.ca/iet/">https://www.gov.nl.ca/iet/</a>
Prospector's Resources	<a href="https://www.gov.nl.ca/iet/mines/pro prospector/">https://www.gov.nl.ca/iet/mines/pro prospector/</a>
Matty Mitchell Resource Room	<a href="https://www.gov.nl.ca/iet/mines/pro prospector/matty-mitchell/">https://www.gov.nl.ca/iet/mines/pro prospector/matty-mitchell/</a>
GeoScience Resource Atlas	<a href="http://gis.geosurv.gov.nl.ca/">http://gis.geosurv.gov.nl.ca/</a>

Surface Mail	Matty Mitchell Prospectors Resource Room First Floor, Natural Resource Building PO Box 8700 50 Elizabeth Avenue, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6
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