

companies that couldn't make a go of it.

"To succeed in jade, you have to have a hands-on approach," he says. "I was successful at picking up failed mining companies and developing them."

His parents also had their hands on the business. Makepeace hired his mom as camp cook and his dad to drive a truck.

Chinese tariffs muddy waters

Recently, gloom has darkened B.C.'s jade boom. Last year, China sharply increased its tariff on nephrite jade imports.

It amounts to a flat tax of \$30 per kilogram, regardless of the quality or price of the jade imported.

Jade West's buyers can absorb the tariff on jewelry-grade jade but can't for the lower grades. As a result, orders for the lower grades — which account for the bulk of Jade West's production — have stalled and jade is piling up in B.C.

Makepeace speculates that the tariff was applied because Canadian nephrite has encroached on the market for Burmese jadeite. But he has no proof.

"We do not understand the logistics of the tariff as China has over 100,000 workers who make their livelihood from jade carving and there is little supply available in China itself."

JADE FACTS

Jade history is a mix of fact and folklore. In one tale, when Mongols invaded China, dragons saddened by the deaths wept tears that turned to jade after touching the earth.

- B.C. has the world's largest supply of nephrite jade.
- Nephrite is found at about 50 sites in the province. Richmond-based Jade West Group's three mines are near Dease Lake and Takla Landing.
- The short mining-prospecting season begins in June and lasts about 60 days.
- Jade West estimates it has at least 40 years of mine life at its mines.
- Jade boulders are weathered brown, grey or white, which conceals the green nephrite core.

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