



FUTURES

Yukon Mine Training Association Newsletter

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High-Tech Training Comes To The Yukon

The driver's seat shakes as the loader rolls down the embankment. An instructor watches as the driver looks carefully out at the busy worksite around her. Through the windows she can see other pieces of equipment, puddles and gravel piles. This driver could be at a mine site anywhere in the Yukon.

Actually, this student is taking advantage of the latest in high-tech training tools for industrial workers – the heavy equipment operation simulator. All the work site elements she's seeing are being projected onto a surround screen, and the driver's seat is inside a metal container far from any work site.

The Yukon Mine Training Association (YMTA) is responsible for bringing this high-tech training to the Yukon, and is offering a series of courses using the simulator.

"This 20-day training program provides a safe way to develop basic skills that are readily

transferable to the workplace," said YMTA training coordinator Jennifer Russell. "It also teaches safety and emergency response skills that can't be rehearsed in any other way," she added.

The machine cab simulator uses video screens and machine-specific driving controls to recreate work site challenges for the students, as experienced instructors coach them on proper driving techniques. Students learn how to handle a brake failure, a fire on board the machine, and machine tip-overs – skills that could save lives in the field. The safety component is especially valuable for new operators, allowing them to learn work site skills without risking injury, and without damaging expensive equipment.

"This series of courses is designed to ensure that new operators gain experience and valuable and potentially life saving skills. Experienced operators

can perfect the skills they have," said YMTA executive director Tracy Thomas.

YMTA will take the simulator to Dawson City next to teach skills relevant in the placer mining industry.



For more information about simulator training, email info@ymta.org or telephone (867) 633-6463.



Prospecting 101: Exploring New Methods of Capacity Building

Who better to initiate development on traditional territories than the people who live, work, and know the land? It was with this in mind that Liard First Nation worked with YMTA to offer a course from the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Introduction to Exploration and Prospecting to provide community members with an overview of the exploration and prospecting industry.

10 participants were needed for the course to proceed, but interest was so high that in the end there were over 20 participants. A local instructor was needed; someone who could help instruct the course, then teach it in other parts of the Yukon.

“YMTA is always looking for ways to develop trainers in the Yukon, so we used this opportunity to have Bill LeBarge shadow the BCIT instructor,” said YMTA training manager Dean MacKay. “Bill is a geologist with Yukon Geological survey and a Ta’an Kwa’chan member who had indicated

an interest in teaching this course. He was the clear choice when we were looking for someone to shadow the instructor,” added MacKay.

Yukon-based LeBarge will now be able to deliver the course in other parts of the Territory. The training and his international research work with the Yukon Geological survey make him an ideal instructor on prospecting in the Yukon.

“The Yukon is rich in mineral resources and studying prospecting gives local people an idea of how the industry works as well as giving them a clearer picture of the local landscape,” said LeBarge.

With a growing number of people learning about prospecting and exploration, First Nations communities are well-equipped to seize the opportunities industry brings to the Yukon.

For information on upcoming courses, please check the YMTA website www.yukonminetraining.com.



Bringing It All Back Home

Kory Sawrenko studied heavy equipment operating with the goal of working in the mining industry.

“There’s a demand for it up here, and I decided to go down south and take a three month course that would give me some kind of certificate to get in at the mines in the Yukon,” he said.

To help make Sawrenko’s dream a reality, YMTA partnered with Kwanlin Dun to provide funding for him to take a Mining Operations course in Fort McMurray and offered through the Keyano College.

“I’m born and raised here, and my dad’s side is here. I’m from the Yukon, it’s

home and I didn’t have any intentions of making a career in Fort McMurray. I wanted to live [in the Yukon],” said Sawrenko.

“We want the Yukon to have a reputation as a place where industry will find skilled workers to make projects a reality,” said YMTA executive director Tracy Thomas. “Kory Sawrenko’s success in the Keyano College program and his return to the Yukon provides an opportunity for him to use his skills in many workplaces. He can also be a role model and mentor for other Yukon workers,” she added.

Sawrenko feels confident in the skills he learned in Fort McMurray. The

training schedule in the course was rigorous; students spent two weeks with each machine building roads and ditches in sand, gravel, snow and rain.

“In the morning we’d do a bit of book work, learning how to place the blade in different situations, then we’d do a walk-around. During the afternoon we’d be working on different projects. We started off in a sand pit because it’s soft and you can get a feel for the controls, and then they would move you to other materials to

practice,” he said. “We got training in different situations like building ditches and building roads.”

Experienced instructors shared their skills with the students; nonetheless there were some unexpected challenges such as working in snowy, muddy conditions at the onset of winter.

“My group was working right when the seasons changed, so we got all kinds of different material to train in – snow and mud as well as nice dry roads. It was good practice for the Yukon,” said Sawrenko with a laugh.

24-year old Sawrenko feels sure that he has chosen the right career path. He is eager about the opportunities that heavy equipment operating will bring him.

“There’s a lot of power in those machines. You can push trees or scrape the road down. It’s pretty sweet,” he said enthusiastically.

Sawrenko is focused on working in mining, but he also wants to be prepared for any other work that comes his way. He is considering training for a class one driver’s license to add to the class five and class three licenses he already holds.

Whatever the future brings, Sawrenko is grateful to the organizations that worked together to provide the funding he needed to continue his education.

“I couldn’t have done it without funding from YMTA and Kwanlin Dun First Nation,” he said.



Wage Subsidy Program Offers Opportunities

Learning by doing is the philosophy behind YMTA's First Nations Wage Subsidy Program. Industry hires the First Nation employee and then enters them into the wage subsidy program. While the trainees learn new skills on the job, YMTA funds part of their salary. Trainees gain transferable skills, and YMTA helps offset some of the costs of training. Since the program began, it has trained rock-truck drivers, office assistants, and heavy equipment operators.

Look who's training through the Wage Subsidy Program right now:

- Minto Explorations Ltd. is training an environmental technician to carry out on-site monitoring programs.
- Yukon Zinc is training an office administrator who will learn the diverse duties of administration in a mining camp.
- North American Tungsten is training two junior assayers in the lab as well as through correspondence courses to upgrade their chemistry and math.
- K1 Mining is training one person in the many skills that are required of a placer miner, such as welding, equipment operation and safety courses.
- Golder and Associates is taking on two new employees and training them as environmental technicians.

For more information email info@ymta.org, or telephone (867) 633-6463.

YMTA Funded Programs

YMTA has partnered with First Nations and industry to support training opportunities across the Territory.



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YMTA Partner: Daylu Dena Council

Training courses are available for First Nations students from Lower Post and Liard First Nation. Courses include: Hydrogen Sulphide, Industrial Safety, Rigging and Hoisting Certification.

From YMTA:

In Dawson City, from April 20 – May 14 YMTA will present the Heavy Equipment Operator Simulator Training Program. This session will focus on the operators working in the placer mining industry. The simulator will also be a feature at the Gold Show.

YMTA Partners: Taku River Tlingit First Nation, Teslin Tlingit Council, and Carcross/Tagish First Nation

The Guiding Circles Career Counseling Workshops are suitable for career counselors working in First Nations Communities. The workshop brings together career concepts and Aboriginal perspectives for holistic career assessment.

YMTA Partner: Minto Explorations Ltd.

A training program for current and potential supervisors at the Minto Mine site, which will include a cross-cultural component to benefit mine employees and local communities.