



Mining Matters – Making a difference

How one organization is bringing the wonder of Canada's geology and mineral resources to students and educators

By Laura Clinton

A serious labour crunch is looming for the Canadian mining industry, with predicted shortages of tens of thousands of jobs by 2020. A wave of expected retirements and declining student enrolment mean a critical gap could start emerging within the next few years.

Limited awareness and inaccurate perceptions about the industry are critical challenges in terms of attracting workers. The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Mining Matters (Mining Matters) is changing these perceptions by bringing the wonder of Canada's geology and mineral resources to students, educators and the general public.

Mining Matters educates the public, particularly young people, through earth science learning tools in public schools and public outreach activities. It educates youth about Canada's geology and mineral resource endowment, and demonstrates the importance of rocks, minerals, metals and mining in everyday life. It also works to build awareness of employment opportunities in the mineral exploration, mining and environmental sectors.

Mining Matters develops partnerships in education, industry and government to develop new initiatives and produce outreach materials tailored primarily to youth and teachers. These materials include classroom curriculum kits, publications such as educator newsletters and original posters, and a dedicated website (MiningMatters.ca), all of which complement comprehensive teacher and student workshops at industry conferences and youth camps.

TEACHER AIDS

Designed by teachers for teachers, Mining Matters curriculum kits offer relevant, accurate earth science programs, along with hands-on workshops that illustrate their most effective use. The Grade 4

kit, Deeper and Deeper, examines rocks and minerals, investigates their importance in our lives, and explores the benefits and costs of using products made from mined materials.

The Grade 7 kit, Mining Matters II – The Earth’s Crust, explores the theory of plate tectonics, earthquakes, volcanoes, geothermal energy, rocks and minerals, the earth’s resources, soils, and provincial geology. For Grades 10 to 12, Discovering Diamonds uses the study of diamonds to cover elements from every area of earth science and geography — from earthquakes to environment, cratons to chemicals — integrating authentic data and materials provided by members of the diamond industry.

In its early years, Mining Matters offered programs only to Ontario elementary teachers. Now, 17 years later, the team has delivered workshops and provides the curriculum-relevant kits to educators in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Nunavut, the North West Territories, as well as Newfoundland and Labrador, and is currently preparing materials for expansion into Quebec.

Workshops and information sessions at industry conferences, such as CIM Mining for Society and the PDAC Annual Convention, also introduce teachers and students to the mining industry and earth science careers.

GROUNDWORK

Mining Matters’ annual *groundWORK* newsletters aim to help elementary teachers inspire young minds to maintain and further their natural curiosity about earth and earth science, and to help secondary teachers place earth science studies front and centre during the critical years – when students make career choices.

POSTERS

The Mining Makes It Happen poster series illustrates the close relationship the mining industry has with familiar products in everyday life. From Northern Lights to Urban Trails ties a snowmobile to the multitude of metals and minerals that make it a sleek machine. Cutting Edge translates the speed, power and grace of skating into some of the metals and minerals that make this possible. A new poster is also in the works, focusing on “green” energy initiatives and their connection with metals and minerals. These posters serve as excellent learning tools for geography and science programs.

WEBSITE

In 2008, Mining Matters launched miningmatters.ca designed to support diverse teacher, student and industry audiences. The site gives educators access to an array of resources, provides students with in-depth homework help and informs industry members how Mining Matters helps students and educators, and enlightens them on how to contribute funds and resources.

ABORIGINAL OUTREACH

Aboriginal peoples are being increasingly

recognized by Canadian resource companies for their important role in land and resources management. Mining Matters works to build on this recognition by giving educators of Aboriginal youth, through workshops tailored to northern locales, the tools to develop student knowledge about the minerals industry and highlight the many job opportunities available.

Mining Matters offers Aboriginal youth a unique Aboriginal Youth Outreach camp program that introduces youth to practical geological and mineral exploration activities, including prospecting, claim staking and

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mapping, as well as the use of GPS technology and environmental geochemistry. They also connect the youth with industry professionals so they can learn firsthand about the many job opportunities available in the minerals industry. From just one camp at the First Nations Natural Resource Youth Employment Program in 2008, the program has expanded to ten camps in 2011.

STUDENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Mining Matters engages youth in workshops and hands-on learning activities at conferences, science centres, science clubs and rock and mineral shows where students learn about geosciences, as well as exploration, mining, processing, sustainability, products and fabrication, education and new frontiers. At conferences, young people learn from exhibitors how modern technology is being applied to the discovery of mineral resources, explore available career opportunities, and learn about the industry’s social responsibility to the environment and communities.

With the help of publications, curriculum resources, workshops and camp programs, Mining Matters educates youth and the public about the importance of earth science and Canada’s mineral resources. In doing so, it promotes understanding and interest in the future of the mineral exploration and mining industries. ●

Laura Clinton is the manager of financial affairs and fund development at PDAC Mining Matters and is a permanent guest on OSSGA's Education Committee. For more information on this and other OSSGA partnerships, please contact OSSGA environment & education manager Cynthia Robinson at (905) 507-0711 ext. 6 or crobinson@ossiga.com.



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