

OPPORTUNITY NORTH

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Your Window On Northern Saskatchewan
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IMII helps fund mining education and research

Al Shpyth named new executive director.

The IMII (International Minerals Innovation Institute) has a new executive director. Al Shpyth took the position as of Jan. 1, 2016.

Education and research

Established in 2012 and based in Saskatoon, IMII is a unique industry-government-post-secondary education and research institution partnership, jointly funded by industry and government. The Institute helps develop industry-driven education and training programs to meet labour force needs in the sector, and conducts industry-driven research and development in the areas of workplace health and safety, environmental sustainability, social license, policy research, exploration, mining, processing and the economics of commodities, to ensure the continued growth of the industry.

"Mining is one of three economic engines driving the provincial economy. Its success depends on the availability of innovative people and technologies," says Shpyth. "By building on the province's education and training capacity, and focusing its research and development activities around mining and the minerals industry, IMII can help its members increase the economic contribution mining makes to Saskatchewan, and help strengthen the "social license" the industry has built over the years for its projects and operations".

Active in the north

Why should the north care about IMII? The institute is very involved in northern projects.

In 2013 and 2014, the organization contributed \$1.84 million to the **Northlands College Mine School**, to enable construction, acquire new equipment such as simulators, and start refurbishing laboratories for enhanced teaching with state-of-the-art methods. In 2014, 24 mine school students graduated from underground miner, radiation technician and diamond driller courses.

"We helped facilitate a relationship between the Mine School and Saskatchewan Polytechnic (SaskPoly) around mining, and we will continue that," says Shpyth. "They both report synergies and a good working relationship".

The Mine School now has equipment

simulators that people from the south come to take advantage of.

Last fall, a company geologist from Calgary-based Abasca Resources Inc. spent two months working with mine school students on labs, field schools and curriculum analysis. He also logged core at the provincial PreCambrian Geological Laboratory in La Ronge.

IMII is working with the mine school, Keewatin Career Development Corporation (KCDC) and the Saskatchewan Geological Survey to facilitate ongoing use of the provincial laboratory by mine school students as part of their education.

Also last fall, IMII helped fund a 10-day program to teach east side residents how to sample mineral claims in the Pikoo diamond play north of Deschambault. This is an opportunity for First Nations businesses to gain shares in mineral properties in traditional territories.

Through a partnership between the Northlands Mine School, GD Exploration (geologist Gary Dunn) and Woodland Cree Enterprises, assistant Drew Dorion taught three trainees (Angus G. Sewap, Rodney Ratt and Seth Sewap) how to take and store mineral samples.

Other mining initiatives

In October, IMII held a workshop on the greater involvement of aboriginal communities in the minerals industry. A northern employee from Cameco was involved. Further workshops are expected to help bridge the gap between students and potential employees.

IMII is also involved in mining-related programs at other community colleges.

"We're working to find the next generation of innovation to get involved in," says Shpyth.

IMII coordinated a research team to study safety cultures in mining, which applies directly to northern operations. IMII funding allowed the U of S College of Engineering to hire three new faculty members to deliver new mining-related courses such as mineral pro-

cessing and hydrometallurgy, industrial mineral processing, mine ventilation, mine design, designing hydraulic circuits, and drilling, blasting and excavation. They have also established a director position at Saskatchewan Polytechnic to develop a comprehensive training program to meet mineral industry needs.



Al Shpyth

Meet Al Shpyth

Al Shpyth has worked in government and the mining industry over the years. He spent five years with the provincial government, and 15 years with Uranerz and Cameco, as well as five years as an environmental consultant with Ecometrix while completing a master's degree in Environmental Law and Policy with the Vermont Law School.

He also has a B.A from the U of S, as well as a master's in Environmental Studies from York University.

Al has supported mining operations and projects in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the United States and Central Asia. He started his new position January 1, replacing the retiring Engin Özberk.

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