



MIT: Innovative Educational Program

On February 15, McElhanney Geomatics, Professional Land Surveyors in Fort St. John, launched a progressive in-house training program.

It is designed to address recruitment challenges facing the oil patch by advancing existing talent within the company. The concept of a formal school was initiated to meet the needs of an industry in a labour-starved market. At present, the number of graduates from traditional universities and colleges does not meet the demands of a booming surveying sector.

Branch manager Walter Johnson says, “We’re calling this school, partly tongue in cheek, the McElhanney Institute of Technology—MIT—because it will adhere to the standards and requirements of a formal educational institution but is delivered locally, allowing our employees to access education with minimal disruption. Our people already possess valuable skills. This program complements their existing practical experience with formal technical training and offers them more opportunities for career advancement.”

Grant McBurney, retired professional instructor from the College of Geographic Sciences in Nova Scotia, has been hired to develop and deliver the specialized curriculum. McBurney is a Land Surveyor and past-president of the Nova Scotia Land

Surveyors Association. An experienced educator of more than 20 years, he is described by former student and graduate Daniel Dowe as “the best teacher I ever had.”

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For two months McBurney will deliver class and field instruction, with support from McElhanney’s local project supervisors in an on-site classroom. A benefit of this arrangement is that students do not have to relocate for a year or two to attend a conventional surveying program elsewhere.

Says McBurney, “In these days when traditional approaches to education are being questioned, I think it is commendable that the company is

implementing this novel approach to upgrading their employees’ education and doing so in a very short time frame.”

The first intake consists of five students who underwent a formal application process, which included a cover letter, résumé and interview. McBurney calls the small class size “a teacher’s dream.”

McElhanney is proud to be funding this project independent of government assistance and will continue to pay its employees regular wages while they attend class. According to Johnson, “it is important that we appreciate the talents of the staff we have. This school is one way to recognize and encourage their potential.” ▲

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From left: Instructor Grant McBurney and students Andrew Munzel, Mike Doherty, Zach Dowd, Garret Golhof, and Tim Mahood