

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brunswick miners get a fresh start in 2010

Recognition of prior learning gives laid-off employees a new lease on life

March 20, 2009 – SIAST's expertise in learning assessment will help some New Brunswick workers qualify for jobs in new fields when their mine closes next year. The Brunswick zinc and lead mines operated by Xstrata in Bathurst, New Brunswick, are scheduled to close in 2010, putting 800 employees out of work.

SIAST will train New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) faculty to develop assessments for advanced placement in Underground Mining and Process Operations college programs. This will give up to 250 of those laid-off workers an opportunity at a second career thanks to the collaboration with The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the Mining Industry Human Resource Council (MiHR).

With more than 1,000 successful prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) applications from students in every area, SIAST, a nationally-recognized expert in PLAR, was the obvious choice to collaborate on this project.

"This initiative applies PLAR directly within industry, providing employees with recognition for the skills, knowledge and abilities they have acquired in the workplace," says Grant MacTavish, SIAST's coordinator of recognition of prior learning (RPL). "It will also certify them with formal recognition which will help them make smooth employment transitions."

The project represents a Pan Canadian partnership between industry and Canadian colleges. Drawing from the SIAST/Northlands College Underground Mining CORE certificate program and the Process Operations program at Aurora College in the North West Territories, this group is working toward aligning the skills and knowledge these employees already possess to the learning outcomes required to successfully complete each course. This process allows workers to prove their knowledge and get certified, or recognize their common skills that are transferable to a new field and will allow them to confidently search for work in advance of the 2010 mine closure.

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. More than 13,000 students are registered in SIAST programs, which touch every sector of the economy; additionally, the organization draws almost 32,000 individual course registrations. It operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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