

Engaging the Next Generation Through Play: Partnerships, Funding, and Games!

BY NICOLE TARDIF, PROGRAM COORDINATOR, GOODMAN SCHOOL OF MINES AT LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY



It's common knowledge that the natural resources industry is in desperate need of talent, and for years members of the industry have been wondering how to meet the demand. Several not-for-profit organizations, such as Mining Matters, the Mining Association of Canada, and the Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR) – to name a few – are generating fantastic resources to train as well as promote the industry as modern, safe, and environmentally and socially responsible – a great sector to find rewarding career choices. In addition, post-secondary institutions are working tirelessly to attract and retain students in their programs. However, outdated perceptions of the mining industry are lingering and interest in mining among youth isn't changing quickly enough.

Post-secondary institutions and local community associations such as the Canadian Institute of Mining (CIM), Women in Mining, and Mining Week (annually, during the second week of May) are often the ones that organize fun and interactive events to showcase the industry to students. However, there still seems to be a gap in industry support for such initiatives. While we are all trying to achieve the same goal, our efforts would have a greater impact if we came together and combined our energies. In this way, we could successfully reach young talent by leveraging our strengths to show our excitement for the future of mining in Canada.

A great example of collaboration and partnership is the successful implementation of the MineOpportunity



Last year, more than 500 students gathered in various cities to participate in this fun and unique interactive game. Photos courtesy of the Goodman School of Mines at Laurentian University.

Games in Northern Ontario. Last year, more than 500 students gathered in various cities to participate in this fun and unique interactive game that allowed them to explore programs and careers in the mineral resource industry.

Students, teachers, and school board trustees rave about the game format, which allows students, in small groups, to actively engage with academic and industry professionals to learn about company operations, industry careers, and to interact with equipment and tools. Throughout the game, students were directed to company booths, websites developed by provincial and federal non-profit organizations that have produced excellent promotional videos, quizzes, and posters, and they interacted with college facilities and staff

to learn about available programs that will train them for careers.

The game is played in person and requires students to collaborate, interact, research, and count “money” to become the “wealthiest” team. Teams start with a set budget and play the volunteer-led board game to increase their income by building mines, finding answers to industry-related questions, and completing hands-on tasks.

The MineOpportunity game has been around for almost two decades. I originally developed it in 2005 to educate first year geology students about careers in mining. Since then, it has been re-purposed for a high school student audience and is played regularly in Sudbury, Ontario. The game has brought awareness to over 4,000 local



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English and French high school and post-secondary students about new technologies, careers, and local companies that operate and service the mineral resources industry. It remains a popular annual high school competition organized by a local community group called Modern Mining & Technology

Sudbury, which has long-standing relationships with Laurentian University, Collège Boréal, Cambrian College, Vale, Glencore, and other local companies and governments that support the event.

The key to the continued success of the MineOpportunity games is the support it

receives from partners. Funding is needed to support game development, such as time, materials, travel, and prizes. Most importantly, a large number of volunteers from the community (businesses, local government, post-secondary institutions, and local high schools) are needed to participate in the promotion and execution of the event.

More recently, a new partnership (Laurentian University and MineConnect) and a slight modification to the game (Automotive and Mobility Edition) prompted the activity to generate more partnerships and to travel outside of the Sudbury region to North Bay, Timmins, and Thunder Bay. Between June 2023 and January 2024, the game was played to promote careers in both industries under the theme "Electrifying the Future: From the Earth to the Automobile."

Funding to support the new version of the game was made possible through the Regional Future Workforce Program, a provincial grant awarded to the Goodman School of Mines at Laurentian University by the Ontario Vehicle and Innovation Network (OVIN) and the Ontario Centre of Innovation

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Students actively engage with academic and industry professionals to learn about company operations, industry careers, and to interact with equipment and tools.

(OCI), and through local sponsors. Without this funding and local support, it would not be possible to offer such a dynamic and successful program.

The partnership between the Goodman School of Mines at Laurentian University and MineConnect – Northern Ontario's Mining Supply and Services Association – is also a crucial element in the overwhelming success of the latest Automobile and Mobility Edition of the MineOpportunity Game. The two organizations worked together, modifying the game for delivery in a new environment, reaching out to new school boards, and attracting new post-secondary schools, along with industry partners and sponsors to support the contest.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with the Goodman School of Mines and Northern Ontario businesses and organizations to help showcase the multitude of career opportunities that exist within the mining sector. This is a fun and unique way for our members to get involved in shifting misperceptions about the industry while engaging with local youth," said MineConnect Executive Director Marla Tremblay.

The project generated a total of 44 new partnerships, including with local colleges in North Bay (Canadore), Timmins (Northern), and Thunder Bay (Confederation), where the games were held. Local economic development offices and a CIM committee (North Bay) helped build local connections and support.

Numerous local businesses (e.g. Agnico Eagle, Miller Technology, Dumas, Norcat, Coté Gold, CSL Environmental, and Warrior Supplies, to name a few) donated their time to set up a table during the games to interact with the students, and some provided financial support.

All this to say, enough with the large groups and talking heads. Students are craving a little healthy competition against other schools and the opportunity to win prizes, all while learning about the modern mining industry that exists in their own backyard. Outreach activities like

MineOpportunity are proof that we can be successful in engaging young minds. The successful recipe relies on collaborative partnerships between post-secondary institutions, resource industry companies, non-profit organizations, and local governments contributing some time and resources – it all comes together to make a huge impact.

Here's what I recommend – contact your local community group that is trying to promote career opportunities and INVEST! I promise that by working together across industries we will be able to prove that everyone can find a career to support the future of our mineral resources industry.

For more information about the "Electrifying the Future Program" and the Goodman School of Mines at Laurentian University, please visit www.electrifyingthefuture.ca. For more information about MineConnect, please visit www.mineconnect.com.

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