

Manitoba Rocks!: mineral education outreach breaking new ground by S. Michaels

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Summary

The Manitoba Geological Survey's mineral-education and community-based outreach program has a long and successful history. The program, entitled 'Manitoba Rocks!', reflects the commitment of the Manitoba Geological Survey (MGS) to continue to actively promote geosciences and to engage and encourage young Manitobans, educators, and the public to learn more about the province's second-largest primary resources industry: minerals and petroleum. Building awareness about these resources remains vital to MGS goals of helping inspire and prepare future generations to consider opportunities in the minerals sector.

Introduction

From 2012 to 2014, the Manitoba Geological Survey's outreach program planned and developed new initiatives to reach students, schools and the public at large, and to expand information outreach to northern and remote communities.

Manitoba Rocks!: Mineral Education 101

Most recently, the Manitoba Geological Survey (MGS) outreach program expanded information outreach electronically by introducing a more comprehensive and interactive Manitoba Rocks! website (<http://www.ManitobaRocks.info>; Figure GS-19-1). Since its launch in October 2013, the website has had more than 51 000 visitors and more than 63 000 views, a 50% increase in traffic compared to the previous year. The site was also promoted Canada-wide via the Canadian Geoscience Education Network (CGEN).

Students and educators alike, both in the north and throughout Manitoba, have expressed appreciation for and interest in the new website, which contains a rich repository of geoscience information that is organized based on age demographics and comprehension level. The first section, Kids Rock!, targets younger children with memory and word games, puzzles, colouring and activity books, and geomysteries. Younger students can learn about the rock cycle, examine a geological time chart, explore facts and legends on topics ranging from nickels and arrowheads to chunks of gold, space rocks, and fossils, and can learn about the Aboriginal perspective on Mother Earth and Turtle Island. The second section of the website, Teens Rock!, is geared toward older students. Teens Rock! houses more than 50 webpages of information offering a more in-depth look at the history of mining

and exploration in Manitoba. Teens can take a video-guided geotour around the province, visit the Legends of Rock section to learn about some of the early explorers, geologists and prospectors whose spirit of adventure helped launch exciting discoveries around Manitoba, or they can explore Opportunity Rocks, a section devoted to information on mining-related careers.

Community-based outreach is central to Manitoba's mineral education program. The program took on a new direction in 2012 with enhanced involvement in northern and remote communities, including career day participation in Norway House, The Pas, and Thompson. Manitoba Rocks! now connects with more than 2000 northern elementary-to-high school students annually at Frontier School Division's 'Norway House Career Day' and the University College of the North's 'Thompson/The Pas Try-a-Trade & Career Expo'. During these career days, northern students have an opportunity to ask questions during both in-class sessions and during trade show activities. These experiences are enhanced by the participation of a MGS geologist and community-liaison representative L. Murphy, who is attuned to Aboriginal land use and cultural values. Murphy, along with outreach co-ordinator S. Michaels, also share in-class presentations about Manitoba geology and encourage students to explore the wealth of information found on the Manitoba Rocks! website. The outreach program has also shared geosciences information with more than 500 students attending the Southwestern Manitoba Oil & Industries tradeshow in Virden and area in October 2014.

The Manitoba Rocks! program has participated in Aboriginal community and business events, most recently the 2014 Northern Association of Community Council's annual general meeting and trade show. In July 2014, the program also partnered with M. Reynolds of the Winnipeg Rock and Minerals Club to run a summer day camp at a Family Resource Centre in Portage la Prairie.

The program's public activity schools tour during the annual Manitoba Mining and Minerals Convention continues to connect with educators in the greater Winnipeg area each year, and draws more than 250 students from Grades 4 to 7 to participate in fun learning activities such as gold-panning and fossil digs. Information about rocks and minerals in Manitoba is enhanced by the participation of the Mineral Society of Manitoba, the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre in Morden, the Manitoba Prospectors





Figure GS-19-1: Screen captures of several sections of the Manitoba Rocks! website (<http://www.ManitobaRocks.info>).

and Developers Association, and in 2014, a national representative from Mining Matters. Teachers receive Manitoba Rocks! information kits with a variety of posters and geosciences learning tools and materials, including geoscience career information from the Mining Industry Human Resources Council and from Mining Matters, as well as the highly informative and colourful geological history poster series produced by the MGS entitled “Cold

Manitoba – the Quaternary” (released as Geoscience Educational Series ES2013-1 to -3). Annual outreach also provides Manitoba Rocks! kits for distribution via the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy’s teacher tours, and geo-backpacks for kids for distribution at the Snow Lake Mining Museum, the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre in Morden, and at Stonewall Quarry Park (Figure GS-19-2). A gold-panning activity is also held at the Children’s



Figure GS-19-2: Geo-backpacks for students and teachers.

Hospital of Winnipeg each year during the Manitoba Mining and Minerals Convention. In addition, approximately 7000 Manitoba Rocks! bookmarks were requested

by schools and distributed to school and public libraries throughout the province since 2013.

Manitoba Rocks! continues to participate in the delivery of a Manitoba Mineral Resources award to a winning student in the Manitoba Schools Science Symposium. The exciting annual science fair showcases the ingenuity of young science students and takes place in late spring around the time of Provincial Mining Week.

Economic considerations

The importance of outreach programming is all about gearing up for the future. The MGS outreach program remains closely interwoven with the province's vital goal of helping future generations to learn more about and prepare for high-paying skilled jobs in the minerals sector, particularly in Manitoba's north. The Manitoba Rocks! outreach program will retain its strategic focus of building awareness by partnering with communities, educators, associations, and industry, and by continuing to engage young Manitobans and the public to explore 'geoscience...for everyone'.