



CanNorth moves into new "green" building

CanNorth Environmental has a new home where they have plenty of room to spread out and expand.

The company, 100%-owned by Kitsaki Management L.P., the business arm of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, has grown from four staff in 2001 to 46 today. CEO Peter Vanriel has steered the company to its present successful position.

After growing into, then out of, their former space on Robin Crescent in Saskatoon, last fall they moved to their new custom-built 12,000 square foot facility on Wheeler Street in Saskatoon's north end. With additional levels, the available floor space is 17,500 square feet.

Besides more space for staff, they also needed more warehouse and freezer space. This they now have, in a well-designed building that incorporates green technology in several ways.

Kelly Wells, another of the original four

employees and now manager of the aquatic division, took Opportunity North on a tour of the building.

She explained that the company has grown from exclusively aquatic biology to incorporate several areas of expertise, including terrestrial biology, hydrology, archaeology/heritage, and a geomatics (GIS) section. Each has its own space in the building, which is laid out to be adaptable to changing requirements.

Green building

The building is planned to be as green as possible, to support their ISO 14001 environmental management designation.

The glass-walled offices are protected by vinyl for visibility and a little privacy, but instead of flat vinyl panels, the graphics include trees and fish.

The walls are made from environmentally-friendly DIRT (Do It Right This

Time) panels, which are movable and green in that they are made from recycled blue jeans! Some are faced with photos from the company's field operations; others can be faced with whiteboard for planning sessions.

Still on the green side: the power plugs in the parking lot adjust the current according to windchill and temperature, to ensure no power is wasted in good weather. There is also an extensive recycling system. Paper towel in the washrooms is replaced by very efficient Dyson Blade air hand dryers.

CanNorth is very proud of its warehouse, where side-by-sides and ATVs can be stacked on special shelves along the walls to save space. The best part: a large walk-in freezer for samples, which replaces many, many chest-type deep freezers and allows staff to find samples easily.

All but a couple of offices have a window view of the Silver Spring golf course.

And the main door is on the east side of the building, away from prevailing winds.

International standards

CanNorth has been ISO 9001-compliant for quality management since 2009. They achieved ISO 14001 for environmental management in 2011, and in 2013 became compliant for OHSAS 18001 in the health and safety area. In 2011 they won a Saskatchewan ABEX (business excellence) award.

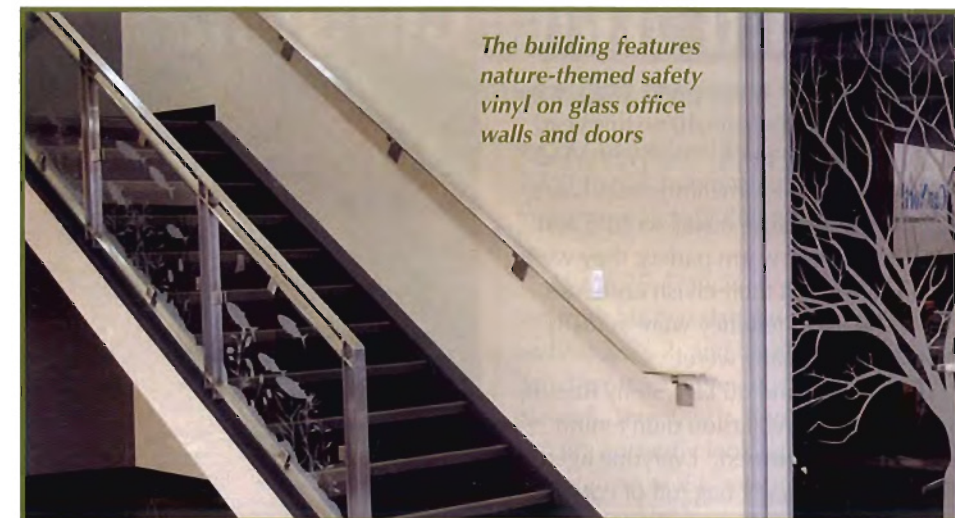


Biologist Kelly Wells with preserved fish samples

What's coming up?

Although CanNorth has grown tenfold since 2001, it is still considered a small company in the Canadian context. "We are trying to grow out of province, into Alberta and British Columbia," says Wells. "We've been doing a lot of marketing this year at trade shows, conferences and so on," she said. There are thoughts of expanding into more areas of expertise as well.

Now in their new building, they are in the midst of recreating their image, with a new website, new brochures and so on. Stay tuned for that.



The building features nature-themed safety vinyl on glass office walls and doors

Band member Shawn Roberts now an environmental scientist with band-owned company

Shawn Roberts of La Ronge is the first Lac La Ronge Indian Band member to become a qualified environmental scientist with a band-owned company. Shawn recently earned a degree in environmental science at the University of Saskatchewan, and has been hired by CanNorth Environmental Services.

Shawn grew up in La Ronge, son of Henry and the late Jessie Roberts. He has two sisters, Flora and Ronaldia.

He left Churchill High School a couple of classes short of a diploma, but he had already been accepted for the chem tech class at Northlands College.

He then worked at Claude Resources' Seabee mine for two years, using some of his chem tech experience. "I did some environmental sampling there, because they didn't have an environmental department," he says. He also operated the water treatment plant, treated the reclaim water, and monitored groundwater and the sewer and water system.

Then it was off to Rabbit Lake, where he spent eight years in the environment department, testing water, urine, process samples and final product samples.

After 10 years in the workforce, he finally completed his grade 12 diploma.

"It's different for everyone, but I found working for a while was really valuable to help me maintain a balance and to improve myself," he says.

With his grade 12 complete, he signed up as an extension student through NORPAC, then took Lakeland College's two-year Environmental Monitoring and

Protection Program. He received scholarships from AREVA to help him with this program. During this time he spent a couple of summers at Kev Lake as a summer student, the first year in the lab and the second as an environmental tech.

Then, in 2012, he started his degree program at the University of Saskatchewan. "Environmental science involves other disciplines such as physics, chemistry, aquatics, compliance and more, meaning it's quite versatile," says Shawn.

"I was contracted by CanNorth in the summers, and they gave me first pick of field trips. I went to Hanson Lake for 10 days, and two weeks later I was at Rio Tinto's Roughrider project for two weeks. When those tasks were finished, they called me for odd jobs like removing blueberry stems for study, counting birds' eggs and so on".

Finishing his degree took him three semesters, about a year and a half, helped by a Cameco scholarship. During that time, he took a part-time position with CanNorth. "I was offered a job back at Rabbit Lake, but it was only temporary so I turned it down," he said.

After graduation, CanNorth offered him a permanent job as a Junior Aquatic Biologist. In spite of the aquatic designation, so far his job mostly entails project-specific monitoring of terrestrial birds and animals, or vegetation sampling. He has also been

monitoring construction on the St. Louis bridge as the contractor builds up ice thickness in order to get equipment on to install the bridge span. "I have to make sure they are not spilling contaminants or dirt into the river," he says.

He is involved in doing baseline studies, which can include spring and fall spawning surveys, aquatic health assessments, studying fish communities and doing stream assessments," he says.

How did he achieve success? "It was a combination of a lot of things; the support of my family was very important". Shawn has a 15-year-old daughter, who

stays with him and attends high school in Saskatoon, and a 19-year-old son who lives with Henry. "I also had an advantage because of my experience - chemistry, physics and math are easy for me," he says.

Shawn seems to have found his niche. "As long as I'm working here, I have no plans to go back to school. However, if that ever changes, I could go back and do a Master's program," he says.

"Education is very important - I could have made more money working at the mines, but I would have been at a mine site for half my life. This is better for my home life". He advises young students to always strive to be better.



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