

# Groundbreaker

The Official Publication of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association

LONG TERM INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

## WHAT IT SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Steven Fletcher, Ron Lemieux,  
Shari Decter Hirst and others weigh in



Winter roads and  
COR™ training

Nor-Win Construction –  
a COR™ certified  
company

Heavy Construction

# EXPO

BUILDING **WORKFORCE**  
**EXCELLENCE**

Details on MHCA's 2nd annual education conference inside

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# WINTER ROADS SAFETY

Safety training and COR™ certification improves safety in the north

BY HEATHER HUDSON

It's cold work if you can get it.

Near the end of every year, northern Manitoba contracting crews swing into full gear to construct winter roads out of ice and snow.

Deep in the bush, across swamps, over rocks, around trees and in the face of other natural obstacles, they're carving out roads that don't exist any other time of the year.

All this work is to prepare for the steady flow of traffic that will move annual supplies like fuel, building materials and other necessities from southern Manitoba to communities nestled deep in the north. When you consider that it costs \$50 to fly a single tire from Winnipeg to St. Theresa Point, you can understand that these roads are critical throughways.

"They're out there every day working on those winter roads so they will be ready for the beginning of January. They're only temporary – last year there was only a six-week window where they could be used safely. It's important that they get it right," says Greg Huff, safety advisor for the Northern Region of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association's (MHCA) WORKSAFELY™ Program.

With conditions and a sense of urgency like that, safety is paramount. Huff travels up beyond the 54th parallel regularly to train the mainly Aboriginal contracting crews populating the 2,500 kilometres of roads that crisscross some of the coldest regions in the country.

Though Huff and his team conduct training on WHMIS, Transportation of Dangerous Goods, first aid and more, it's the Manitoba Winter Road System Certification course that is most dire at this time of year, particularly for the crews that are in remote northern regions.

Nor-Win Construction Company Ltd. is one of the many northern companies that take training seriously. The organization is made up of ten Aboriginal reserves that have come together under the Nor-Win name. These individual reserves do any number of construction jobs throughout the year, including landscaping, excavation and road building; as well, they undertake the constructing of the winter roads that reach their reserves.

"These are people who build winter roads all the time. They look after safety and are owned and operated by individual bands and they do



Winter roads training held at the South Beach Casino in conjunction with MIT and Nor-Win Construction Company Ltd.



The class that participated in the winter roads training session, held by MIT and Nor-Win Construction, for this season

“We teach winter safety. We tell them things like how to measure and use ice thicknesses and floatation devices... things like how heavy vehicles will float in the water, how the vehicles will sink and what they should be thinking of should this occur.”



– Greg Huff, Safety Advisor, Northern Region, WORKSAFELY™ Program, MHCA

a good job of it. Of the ten bands, five are COR™ certified and the others are working on it,” says Huff.

The five certified bands are Bloodvein, Berens River, Poplar River, St. Theresa Point and Hollow Water. Other COR™ certified northern bands that operate in the north, but are not part of Nor-Win, are from Pukatawagan, York Landing, Ilford (War Lake), God’s Lake, God’s River and Oxford House.

The Manitoba Winter Road System Certification course teaches participants how to stay safe in winter conditions.

“We teach winter safety. We tell them things like how to measure and use ice thicknesses and floatation devices and show them movies developed by the University of Manitoba and Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation,” Huff says. “The media demonstrate things like how heavy vehicles will float in the water, how the vehicles will sink and what they should be thinking of should this occur.”

Huff says reaching some of the more remote northern communities can be tricky. He tries to hold courses in a central location like Thompson,

but he also flies into northern locations to offer the five-day certification course.

Though conditions differ, construction crews in the north get the same training that is offered in southern Manitoba. The Manitoba Winter Roads System Certification course is part of MHCA’s contract with Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation to ensure that Aboriginal communities in the north receive the same training and certification as workers in the south.

“The WORKSAFELY™ program is both excited and honoured to have the ability to work with the Aboriginal and First Nation communities and contractors to deliver this training every year prior to the cold weather setting in,” says Glen Black, director of WORKSAFELY™ education and training for MHCA.

“Greg has got an incredible rapport with our northern communities and clients, in particular the Aboriginal communities. He is both recognized as a subject matter expert in the winter roads construction area but also as an instructor and trainer whom the First Nation and Aboriginal contractors respect and hold in high regard for delivering high-quality education and training to them.” **M**