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Bridging the IT Skills Gap



On January 31st, 2020, WBM Technologies brought together its client and partner community in Saskatoon for their yearly Connection event, a summit that celebrates the impact that ever-changing technologies can have on organizations. This year's event, entitled "The Data-Driven Experience", focused on the opportunities that arise from using data and analytics in business processes.

One of the highlights of the Connection 2020 event was a segment called "Bridging the IT Skills Gap" that illuminated an emerging, yet disturbing, trend in the IT workforce. As technology and data proficiency become essential in every industry, the need for a skilled workforce to understand, implement, and execute decisions on this data becomes equally as vital. However, there currently aren't enough qualified workers to fill these positions. Investing in young people is essential to fill these new jobs, which are numbering in the tens of thousands, and establishing Western Canada as a leader in the technology sector.

Fortunately, WBM Technologies and its partners have taken steps to encourage young people to pursue careers in IT. Highlights from the "Bridging the IT Skills Gap" presentation include:

Presentation of Vincent Massey Science Camp Scholarships

Fostering a love for science and technology from a young age teaches children what is possible with a career in IT. For years, WBM Technologies has provided resources and volunteered with Vincent Massey Community School. From building bicycles and donating jerseys, to hosting an after-school Running and Reading program, WBM Technologies has been committed to positively impacting the lives of these students.

At Connection 2020, an emotional and passionate Cory Bailey, Community Relations Manager at WBM, announced the first-annual winners of the Vincent Massey Science Camp scholarships. “We try and give incentives to the school that they can use to encourage better attendance... we like to give an opportunity to reward some of the kids in the school to incent some of the other ones to be the best versions of themselves,” said Cory, as he presented the awards.

Two students – Alexis Buckley and Kleo Gordon – will get to spend a week at science camp this upcoming summer fostering their love for learning. These two Grade 4 students were chosen for being curious and committed students, and everyone is anticipating how they inspire their classmates in the future. Congratulations to Alexis and Kleo!

Supporting Programs at NAIT

The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) provides post-secondary students with a technology-based education that gives them the skills they need today to excel in the ever-changing careers of tomorrow.

At Connection 2020, WBM featured two NAIT scholarship programs that they’re funding to encourage the learning and growth of those interested in science and technology. The two initiatives announced were:

- Funding to send youth to Digital Media Summer Camps at NAIT. These camps help school-aged children to engage with fields that interest and excite them; students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in topics ranging from web design to animation.
- The WBM Technologies Scholarship, which will be awarded to 2 students in their third year of studies in NAIT’s Bachelor of Applied Information Systems Technology program for the next 5 years. This program provides hands-on training to build careers in Information Systems and Network Management.

NAIT promotes education and development in the technology sector; these two scholarships provide additional opportunities for young people to pursue their interests and see that a career in IT is within reach.

A Spotlight on the University of Saskatchewan Security Team

The U of S Cybersecurity Team is a group of 36 University of Saskatchewan students who have” taken it upon themselves to educate others on the fundamentals of cybersecurity. They’re committed to staying on top of the latest news and developments in this ever-changing field. The only group of their kind in Saskatchewan, the team consistently performs highly in Canada-wide hackathons and encourages other young people to consider careers in cybersecurity.

The U of S took the stage at Connection 2020 to talk about the club and the career opportunities that have come about as a result of being part of this group; some of the team are now part of WBM Technologies. The initiative and knowledge that the U of S Cybersecurity Team serves as an inspiration to young people considering careers in IT.

Other Highlights

Other initiatives featured throughout this segment included:

- The impact of funding new computer labs for Chief Jacob Bearspaw Memorial School; this up-to-date technology has made a difference and encouraged student attendance and engagement;
- The work that Saskatchewan Polytechnic is doing along alongside Microsoft to empower Indigenous youth to pursue careers in IT; and
- The co-op and internships programs offered by TECHNATION in conjunction with the Government of Canada, allowing them to provide funding for technology-related co-ops and internships in Canadian companies.

“The technology industry in Canada continues to blossom and investing in our youth is an important way to encourage this growth and stimulate our workforce. It is exciting to consider some of the paths available for the youth and students of today, supported by the types of programs highlighted on stage here at Connection 2020, but we know that we are just scratching the surface. As always, WBM is firmly committed to nurturing, educating, and providing real opportunities for the next generation of IT leaders in Western Canada. We challenge the IT community of Western Canada to do the same and help bridge this emerging IT skills gap.”

Brett Bailey – Vice President, WBM Technologies