

The challenges of training and retaining technicians in Canada's north



PHOTO COURTESY OF GOVERNMENT OF YUKON/RICH WHEATER

Hiking on Outlook Plateau above Silver City, Yukon Canada



PHOTO COURTESY GOVERNMENT OF YUKON

Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, the hosting venue for Rendez-vous 2019 in Whitehorse

WHEN ONE VISITS Canada's northernmost regions, there are things that you expect to discover. You anticipate wilderness and wildlife, extreme temperatures, and vast landscapes. What you might not plan on is the cultural landscape, the richness of the arts and presentation industry, and the technology and facilities available in these far-removed places. In fact, some of the most culturally significant work in Canada is produced daily in areas north of the 60th parallel, and this work cannot thrive without access to the best-skilled and best-equipped spaces in the country.

“ Yukoners and visitors spend cold winter nights in art centres, galleries, and at gala events, while our conference industry burgeons and grows . . . ”

For much of the year, my home in the Yukon Territory is dominated by darkness and frigid temperatures. Yukoners and visitors spend cold winter nights in art centres, galleries, and at gala events, while our conference industry burgeons and grows into a thriving



Dakhká Khwáan Dancers



Klondike Kate and her dancers at Diamond Tooth Gertie's

economic driver. In all of these places, and at all of the events that fill our nights and bring visitors throughout the year, we have technicians. They are pushing road cases, aiming lights, mixing audio, running video, managing stages, designing sets, creating costumes, and more. The Yukon boasts just under 40,000 residents, but also has several professional theatre and dance companies, new cultural centres coming online every year, and performance spaces for touring shows and local performances of all scopes and genres. Every weekend in the summer is populated by festivals, with the three largest operating with a national profile and international scope. The fall and winter are aggressively filling with conferences and conventions of folks excited to see the aurora, or try their hands at dog-sledding.

In all of this, the need for trained and skilled technicians feels like it is spiralling faster than the industry can support. Tech shortages are

typical, with skilled technicians moving to the territory for brief stints and then leaving far before qualified replacements can be found.

Nationally, the industry is facing another critical challenge as it becomes more and more apparent that inclusivity has not been the focus of trade recruitment, with the result that even in remote regions, where the population of indigenous people is over 25%, there are few, if any, emerging technicians of aboriginal-descent.

“ [Moving the] annual training conference to Whitehorse . . . address[es] three key issues: lack of skilled technicians in the north, limited access to technical training in the north, and the recruitment of First Nation emerging technicians. ”



Media server training at Rendez-vous 2014



Audio console training at Rendez-vous 2014

Facilitated, in part, by the success of its annual EXPO-SCÈNE show in Montréal, CITT/ICTS approached stakeholders in the north about the possibility of moving their annual training conference to Whitehorse, Yukon in 2019. The hope for this move was to address three key issues: lack of skilled technicians in the north, limited access to technical training in the north, and the recruitment of First Nation emerging technicians.

With the support of the National Board of Directors, the National Coordinator, Monique

Corbeil, approached the Whitehorse Host Committee about establishing an event in the North that would provide introductory, intermediate, and advanced technical training to technicians from across Canada, while providing spaces to Yukon residents who want to know more about the professional roles available to technicians both in the north and throughout the country. The result of this work has been the development of a conference program that will provide this training to approximately 100 Yukon residents, and will also provide an exchange of skills

and the sharing of ideas around traditional practices, heritage cultural techniques, safer spaces, and how to incorporate reconciliation practices into theatre and performance spaces across Canada.

The Yukon invites you to attend CITT/ICTS Rendez-vous in Whitehorse from August 12 – 18, 2019, so that you can see the program in action. More information can be found on our website at www.citt.org. ■



Angela Drainville

joined CITT/ICTS in 2014 and brings a wealth of experience as the new President.

A live event producer, marketer, and health and safety professional, Angela works for Outcrop Communications, a Pan-Territorial marketing and event agency. She is the producer and artistic director of the Atlin Arts & Music Festival and has served as the president of Music Yukon, Yukon Educational Theatre, and serves on the Board of the Canadian Arts Presenting Association CAPACOA.

CITT/ICTS Rendez-vous 2019 Annual Conference and Trade Show

Whitehorse, YT, Canada

August 12 – 18, 2019

Pre-Conference Workshops: August 12 – 13

Opening Night: August 13

Conference: August 14 – 16

Trade Show: August 15 – 16

Post-Conference Workshops: August 17 – 18

The conference offers three days of education sessions, workshops, backstage tours, trade show, social events, and networking opportunities.

For more information about CITT/ICTS Rendez-vous 2019, including delegate registration, schedule of events, travel and accommodations, etc. visit: www.citt.org/annual_conference.html