

MEDIA RELEASE

IMI celebrates 10 years of innovation

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Saskatoon, SK (Canada) - Today marks the 10th anniversary of the creation of the International Minerals Innovation Institute – IMII, as a unique industry-led innovation supporting network for Saskatchewan’s minerals industry. IMII was created through a collaborative effort between the provincial government, minerals companies and post-secondary institutions to build innovation capacity for mining generally and the potash and uranium sectors particularly. IMII has stewarded 50 projects worth more than \$20 million in its first 10 years in both education and training and research and development initiatives. These two pillars have been foundational to IMII’s strategy since its creation, and notable successes over the past 10 years include:

- IMII’s first project - an innovative \$1.67 million funding agreement announced in June 2013 to create three new undergraduate mining options in geological, mechanical, and chemical engineering at the University of Saskatchewan.
- Several projects to bring mining-related education and training programs to Saskatchewan’s network of regional colleges in rural and northern Saskatchewan and help develop Indigenous peoples for the industry’s workforce, the largest of which - \$1.84 million, supported the creation of Northlands College Mine School.
- Seven potash-centred research and development projects with the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan which received co-funding from Mitacs, NSERC and/or Western Economic Diversification (now PrairiesCan).
- The development of several research initiatives through events such as Big Data in Mining and North America’s first AIMday™ – AIMday Minerals.

Starting in 2016, IMII expanded its research and development efforts to include the demonstration and deployment of technologies with supply chain companies and dedicated its education and training efforts to support diversity and inclusion in the minerals industry’s workforce. This has resulted in:

- The release of 11 Diversity & Inclusion Challenges, starting in 2017, and the funding of 11 projects worth \$2.2 million.
- IMII’s first Operationalizing Innovations project with a supply chain company in 2017.
- The creation of DEMOday to further incent innovation with suppliers and IMII’s Innovation Award to recognize innovative technologies for a range of innovators in 2018.
- The undertaking of IMII’s first special project – the Digital Mining Transformation Initiative, with its broad membership, which has spun off projects on the future of work and support for SIMSA’s Industrial Concierge.
- Investing in the future workforce through two unique scholarships – iMpowered scholarship and the Mining Futures Award, to increase diversity and inclusion in the minerals industry.
- A \$1.2 million partnership with Mitacs to fund student internships to advance research and development into innovations in Saskatchewan’s minerals industry.
- The \$500,000 Alternative Energy Systems Challenge released in 2020 as an open innovation call for new low-carbon technologies which could be developed and adopted by the minerals industry in the near-term.

“2021 was another year in which IMII strove as an innovation steward to strengthen the Saskatchewan minerals industry's competitiveness and growth through research, development & demonstration and education & training projects,” says Al Shpyth, IMII's Executive Director. “Our diversity & inclusion initiatives will also help the industry build a qualified and representative workforce.”

Building on IMII's vision and values, 2021 saw new education initiatives incorporating digital skills for the future workforce, informative research initiatives, and five new scholarship winners. Highlights include:

- The launching of four new projects as part of its Diversity & Inclusion Challenge program to help increase the representation of Indigenous people and women in the mining and the minerals industry's digital transformation. [IMII Launches New Projects Aimed at Increasing Indigenous People's Representation in the Mining and Minerals Industry](#)
- The development of micro-credentials to provide digital skills training to address the technology shift the mining sector is experiencing with Saskatchewan Polytechnic. [International Minerals Innovation Institute and Saskatchewan Polytechnic announce mining digital upskilling pilot project \(imii.ca\)](#) This pilot project is funded by IMII and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Immigration and Career Training and resulted in the creation of the Surge micro-credentials. [Saskatchewan Polytechnic launches Surge micro-credentials \(imii.ca\)](#)
- \$87,000 awarded to five recipients in the scholarship program. [IMII awards \\$75,000 to four iMpowered Scholarship recipients](#) and [Investing in USask's future leaders of the minerals industry \(imii.ca\)](#)
- Two finalists of the Alternative Energy Systems (AES) Innovation Challenge - ANAX Power and Growing Greener Innovations were selected to proceed to the Innovation Sprint phase and share the \$500,000 prize. [Announcing the Alternative Energy Systems Challenge Finalists \(imii.ca\)](#)
- A two-year pilot project with SIMSA, co-funded by Western Economic Diversification (now PrairiesCan) for an "Industrial Concierge" to provide personalized advice to SIMSA members (SMEs) to support digital innovation, carbon reduction, and ESG initiatives in the supply chain for IMII's minerals industry members. [SIMSA to hire an "Industrial Concierge" \(imii.ca\)](#)

IMII kicked off 2022 by releasing a list of industry technology needs in early January for DEMOday 2022, to be held on April 25th in association with the highly successful Saskatchewan Mining Supply Chain Forum which will be held on April 26th and 27th. [IMII adds new industry innovation needs for DEMOday 2022](#)

“As we embark on our second decade, we look forward to building not only on the success of this past year but on all our years,” says Shpyth. “With the foresight of our founders, and the continued support of our current funding members – BHP, Cameco, Mosaic, Nutrien, Hatley Engineering and Innovation Saskatchewan, I am confident in IMII's role as an innovation steward for Saskatchewan's minerals industry and its ability to take on new projects to enable sustainable innovation and operationalize diversity and inclusion.”

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