

Staking and sampling: Students say Yellowknife prospecting course rocks

'They have the whole summer to go out and bash some rocks, and put what they've learned into practice'

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Students from the June 2018 Prospectors Training Course put their staking and sample skills to use (Joanne Stassen/CBC)

Location, location, location. That mantra is not just for realtors, it's also been drilled into the brains of students who took a two-day prospecting course in Yellowknife this past week.

Fifteen students came from communities across the Northwest Territories, including Whati, Gameti, Lutselk'e Fort Good Hope and Tulita.

Friday, they got some practice staking and taking samples at a TerraX claim just outside of Yellowknife.

Jessica Bjorkman, who taught the course, is a 20-year prospecting veteran.

"Things really come alive when people get to see them in the field and it's much easier to imagine what's going on when you have a visual," she said.



Sharon Corneille, from Fort Simpson, douses herself with bug spray — an absolute essential for any prospector. (Joanne Stassen/CBC)

As students wound their way through bog, swarms of mosquitoes and around patches of blooming cranberry bushes, their instructors reminded them of what they had learned in the classroom: stay curious, keep your eyes open for changes in the rock formation, and when you take a sample — make sure you get the location down right.



Lisa Marie Zoe holds up a sample she took out on a TerraX claim near Ranney Hill, outside Yellowknife. (Joanee Stassen/CBC)

Cathy Nahanni from Fort Simpson, N.W.T. said she wanted to know what kind of people prospect.

"I found out that a lot of Indigenous people were in this course. And I'm very pleased to see that, because I know now that I'm not the only one."



Cathy Nahanni, from Fort Simpson, says she's always been curious about rocks and minerals. (Joanne Stassen/CBC)

She said she wants to share what she's learned with people at home.

It's also a way for her to be out on her traditional Dehcho Territory.

"And I'm certain that a lot of young people that are here in this course have the same thing in mind," she said.



Lynda Lennie from Tulita was one of five women who got the chance to put their pickaxes to work on Friday. (Joanne Stassen/CBC)

Nearly half of the participants in the class were women, but that's not unusual, according to Hilary Jones, of the Mine Training Society.

This week's courses mark the fourth time the Mine Training Society has offered the course — in a partnership with Aurora College, the Department of Industry Tourism and Investment, and mining company TerraX — which is developing a gold project outside of Yellowknife.



Keith Cottam, from Fort Good Hope, uses flagging tape to mark the spot where he took a sample. (Joanne Stassen/CBC)

But this is the first time it's been offered in the spring.

"This way they have the whole summer to go out and bash some rocks, and put what they've learned into practice. " Jones said.



Lisa Marie Zoe ties some flagging tape to a tree, to mark another sample location. (Joanne Stassen/CBC)

That's exactly what Lloyd Baton intends to do when he gets back to Deline.

He said some elders and friends in Deline have been talking about the mineral potential around Great Bear Lake.

He has plans to take his family out on a boat for a couple of weeks for a little hunting, fishing and prospecting.

"Looking forward to it. I'd like to stake my own claim, work my own claim."



Jessica Bjorkman and Lloyd Baton check out a map on the way out to Ranney Hill. (Joanne Stassen/CBC)

Bjorkman said past students have also optioned claims to TerraX.

"Just having people just email me and say I've staked claims, and taken a few samples, what should I do next? It's so encouraging to see people out looking at rock."

Another 20 prospective prospectors from Yellowknife went through the training over the weekend.