Yukon University | Continuing Studies
Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining

CNIM update

September 2026

YukonU.ca/CNIM

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CNIM Update - September 2026

Heavy Equipment Technician

The Fall 2026 Heavy Equipment Technician (HET) Pre-Apprenticeship Program has launched with a full cohort. Students have completed equipment-specific standard operating procedures and safety orientations and are now beginning hands-on shop training. The cohort also includes two dual-credit high school students.

Mack Smith has taken over as lead instructor, and CNIM is excited to continue strengthening and expanding the program to meet Yukon's growing demand for skilled Heavy Equipment Technicians. CNIM is also planning to offer Level 1 technical training in the spring and preparing for upcoming curriculum updates that reflect the evolving HET trade structure, including off-road and truck and transport pathways.

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Heavy Equipment Operator Training

The Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) Training Program continued to demonstrate strong progress during the reporting period by expanding access to practical, employment-focused training across Yukon communities.

A total of five open-enrollment courses were delivered, including two Mini Excavator Operator courses and two Skid Steer Operator courses in Whitehorse, as well as one Skid Steer Operator course in Mayo. These courses provided participants with hands-on experience while developing foundational equipment operating skills, safety awareness, and confidence.

During July and August, the program also delivered the full scope of Heavy Equipment Operator training for RRDC Workforce Development. A total of 28 participants registered, with 22 certificates of completion issued.

Training included Skid Steer Operator, Mini Excavator Operator, Common Core, and 140 Excavator Simulator and in-cab training. The combination of classroom instruction, simulator training, and practical equipment operation provided participants with a broad range of technical and workplace skills.

Participants developed competencies in safe equipment operation, daily inspections, hazard identification, equipment controls, operating techniques, basic maintenance, and workplace safety responsibilities. The hands-on and simulator-based learning environment allowed participants to gain practical experience while building confidence and improving their readiness for employment in the heavy equipment and construction sectors.

Overall, the program continues to make a positive contribution to workforce development and community-based training in Yukon. Moving forward, the program will continue to expand community training opportunities, incorporate simulator and in-cab instruction, and strengthen partnerships that support pathways to employment, certification, and further industry training. The program remains focused on developing a skilled, confident, and safety-focused workforce.

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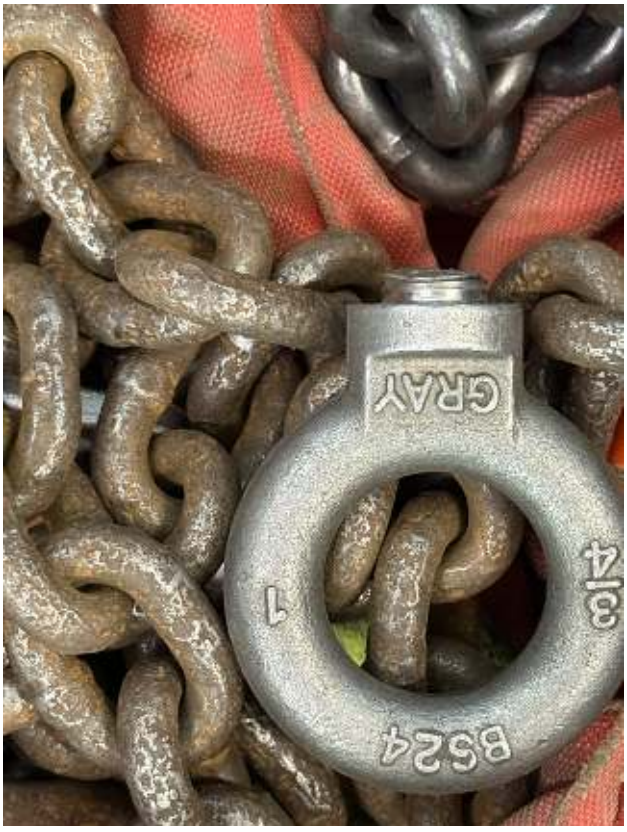
Safety and Industrial Training

From June 1 to August 31, YukonU delivered Industrial Safety Training across several Yukon communities and workplace settings. During June and into mid-July, drone training was delivered in Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Old Crow, expanding access to practical safety training for drone operations in both community and field environments.

Wayne Schmidt delivered two cohorts each of Rigging and Hoisting and Crane Operator training for the Yukon Government Highway and Public Works Branch HET Shop. In July, YukonU also delivered WHMIS, TDG (Transportation of Dangerous Goods), and Fall Protection training to the Canadian Junior Rangers, providing participants with essential workplace and field safety knowledge.

YukonU further supported community workforce development by travelling to Ross River to deliver an Industrial Safety course for the Ross River Dena Council (RRDC) Work Readiness Program. Overall, the June–August period demonstrated YukonU's broad reach in providing practical industrial safety training to government employees, youth, and community-based work readiness participants across Yukon.



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Commercial Driver Training

Throughout the summer, the CNIM team worked closely with the Haines Junction community to offer Class 3 Driver Training, starting with an Air Brake Endorsement course through to Class 3 In-Cab sessions. 5 students passed the Air Brake Endorsement course and assessment. Students then advanced to Class 3 Theory and Simulator courses. 5 students completed the simulator training, most of whom then moved to In-Cab sessions.

As the Haines Junction- based Class 3 courses were underway, Cargo Securement and Heavy Trailer Training courses were held in Whitehorse for various YG employees. This training will continue into October, with over 30 students participating to date.

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Commercial Driving - RRDC Workforce Development

- Class 7 Theory Training Aug 3-7, 2026
- Class 5 Simulator Training Aug 10-12, 2026
- Air Brake Endorsement and Class 3 Theory courses set for October 2026
- Class 3 Simulator Training and Class 3 In-Cab planning for November and December 2026

While CNIM and the campus team intended to offer an Air Brake Endorsement course to be followed by Class 3 Training, plans changed. Instead, training began with a Class 7 theory course with Class 5 driving simulations**.** Commercial Driving courses will follow in October through December 2026, targeting Class 3 and 1 licenses.

CNIM ran Class 7 Theory and Class 5 Simulator courses at the beginning of August. All 7 students completed the theory course and ***3 students passed their Class 7 written assessments.***

Earth Sciences

Earth Sciences faculty traveled to St. John's, Newfoundland, in May to attend the annual Geological Association of Canada–Mineralogical Association of Canada (GAC-MAC) conference, where they delivered three presentations—two posters and one oral presentation—highlighting their current research.

YukonU Earth Sciences and the Yukon Geological Survey will co-host next year's GAC-MAC conference in Whitehorse. Chad Morgan will co-chair the event, with Joel Cubley serving as the short-course lead. Planning will continue throughout the upcoming academic year, with preparations ramping up as the conference approaches.

Samolczyk, Cubley, and external collaborators conducted fieldwork in the Whitehorse Copper Belt this summer as part of their 2026–2029 NRC-funded research project. The project investigates the role of natural wetland systems in attenuating metals near mine sites and examines how these systems interact with local aquifers.

As part of this project, Samolczyk began a Ph.D. program under the supervision of Dr. Matt Lindsay at the University of Saskatchewan. She will remain actively involved in teaching within the Earth Sciences program, while taking on a reduced course load to accommodate her doctoral studies.

Summer fieldwork included surficial sediment sampling and drone surveys. Earth Sciences undergraduate student Jesse Latoski has also been hired as an ongoing research assistant to support fieldwork and sample processing in the laboratory.

Samolczyk and Cubley have partnered with Core Geoscience Services to support a Mitacs student, Dankya Thorburn, in Fall 2026. Dankya will be assessing the effects of temperature on metal leaching and if current Mine Environment Neutral Drainage (MEND) testing guidelines accurately characterize metal release in northern environments.

Earth Sciences

The Yukon Virtual Geology project traveled to Snowline Gold's Rogue Project in July to collect content for this year's virtual field experience. Cubley, Samolczyk, and Project Officer Quinn Worthington documented Snowline geologists and staff working both in the field and in camp, with the goal of providing the public with an in-depth look at a modern mineral exploration camp. We extend our sincere thanks to the Snowline team for their support in making this experience possible!

Yukon Virtual Geology team on site at Snowline Gold's Rogue Project.

Second-year Earth Sciences students returned to the university in late August, kicking off the academic year with a two-week field course in the Whitehorse area. The course focused on bedrock mapping and developing essential field skills, while also providing students with valuable exposure to the mineral exploration industry through field and core facility training with Gladiator Metals. Students will return to the classroom on September 1st!

Earth Sciences

Earth Sciences continued

Introductory field school (GEOL107) students working on bedrock mapping near Grey Mountain (August 2026).

YukonU Earth Sciences alumnus Chris Penner (L), now a junior geologist with Gladiator Metals, discussing drill programs with current students, Whitehorse Copper belt.

Wetlands research team collecting thermal survey data from a glacial meltwater channel near Mt. Sima subdivision.

Summer field assistant Jesse Latoski conducting surficial sampling, Whitehorse Copper belt

Environmental Monitoring Certificate

In June, Environmental Monitoring students undertook training in Faro for the ENVM 097 course focusing on monitoring of contaminated sites. This included a tour and hands on training at the Faro Mine Remediation Project, and with the support of Ensero Solutions' site monitoring team. Groundwater monitoring and water treatment featured prominently in the training.

Students inspect a new Meteorological Monitoring station at the Faro Mine Remediation Project

July's ENVM 096 course took the Environmental Monitoring students to Casino Mine for 2 days of training in surface water monitoring with Casino Mining Corp's staff and contractors. Students were also able to tour the site and receiving environment and discuss a range of project specific monitoring initiatives. The students then travelled to Snowline Gold's Rogue Project for 3 days of terrestrial ecosystem classification training with their contractor EDI. This included in depth training in soil, vegetation, and terrain classification skills.

Students train in surface water monitoring techniques with Casino Mining Corp staff and contractors from Stantec

Environmental Monitoring Certificate

Students learning to classify terrestrial ecosystems with Snowline Gold's contractor staff from EDI

The planned August ENVM098 Reclamation and Restoration course was postponed due to low student enrollment. A number of current cohort students have secured summer environmental monitoring employment that interfered with these planned training dates.

Coming up, the ENVM 094 course in Aquatic Monitoring will be delivered at Fish Lake and Klukshu areas for current cohort students, and program staff are currently working to enroll new cohort students for an October 1, 2026 start.

Environmental Monitoring Certificate

Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board (YWSCB) Projects

Crane Certification

CNIM continues to develop crane training and certification pathways under the guidance and financial support of the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board (YWSCB). This project will investigate opportunities to host Fulford Certification for Level A crane certification workshops, which will be valid for life, with no expiry date. As of the date of this report, since January 2023, CNIM's Industrial Safety Instructor, Wayne Schmidt, has provided crane training to 224 students in the Yukon who are now eligible for certification.

First Line Supervisor Certification Program Review, Improvement and Stream Expansion

CNIM, under contract with the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board (YWSCB), is developing two new supervisor certification streams: Mill Operations Supervisor and Maintenance Supervisor, and will review and enhance the current Mine Supervisor Program content. CNIM works with Etienne Tardif of Outliers Mining Solutions (Canada) Inc. for this project. The enhanced First Line Supervisor Certification Program will continue to be available through Yukon University's online Moodle platform.

Blaster Training and Certification

Over the next two years, CNIM will develop blaster training and certification pathways for the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board (YWSCB). CNIM continues the project with a blaster training and certification development committee meeting in Fall 2026.

Potential New Program:

There is a growing need in the Yukon for a comprehensive Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) training model that extends beyond short-term, equipment-specific courses. While these short courses provide valuable introductory skills and exposure to heavy equipment operation, their limited duration does not allow sufficient time to develop technical competency, workplace behaviours, safety awareness, and overall employment readiness.

At the request of the President's Advisory Committee for First Nation Initiatives (PACFNI), the CNIM team is investigating opportunities to transition the current HEO training model into a 12-week Work Readiness Program. This approach would provide participants with the time, structured training, and support necessary to develop a stronger foundation for entering the heavy equipment and construction sectors. The proposed model would integrate equipment operation with workplace safety, employability skills, worksite expectations, and hands-on experience, better preparing participants for sustainable employment and future apprenticeship or industry training opportunities.

New CNIM Staff

CNIM welcomes KC Mooney as CNIM's new term Coordinator for Commercial Driving and ENVM Programming.