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Albian SANDS

*For Immediate Release
February 15, 2002*

Another "First in Canada"

Industry/Education partnership brings multimillion-dollar heavy haul simulation equipment to Fort McMurray

Albian Sands Energy, Suncor Energy, Syncrude Canada Ltd. and Keyano College have collaborated on a unique initiative that will result in safer, faster and more economical training for current and potential mine equipment operators, and unprecedented training opportunities for the College's Mine Operations program students.

Under the \$1.9 million partnership agreement, three truck simulators, one shovel simulator and eight truck and shovel training consoles will be added to the mine training simulator inventory. Each industry partner invested about \$650,000 into the partnership for equipment, training consoles, software and administrative costs. Keyano College will serve as the primary training facility and administer training schedules over a five-year operating agreement. Under the terms of the agreement, partners will share equally in simulator training time. Any remaining time will be made available to contractors that provide heavy haul services for the oilsands industry.

The first two simulators, a Caterpillar 797 haul truck and Bucyrus 495BII electric shovel, arrived at the Keyano College Suncor Energy Industrial Campus in November. The simulator equipment measures eight feet wide, 30 feet long and 12 feet high and is valued at over \$350,000. Training coordinators from the oilsands companies and Keyano College have been busy familiarizing themselves with the technology and designing training scenarios to meet the needs of their current and potential workforce. Additional simulators, consoles and software will arrive in the future.

The mining truck simulator provides a safe, cost efficient and risk-free way for operators to train on very specialized equipment in a full range of work site and weather conditions, combining sights, sound and movement through virtual reality. The simulator guides the operator in every aspect of heavy haul operation safety and productivity, including driving in adverse weather conditions, reversing under a shovel, dumping, and avoiding obstacles.

"The simulators test and train prospective operators and retrain existing operators in less time, at less cost and with greater all-around safety and reliability than any real time in-vehicle method," said Keyano College Dean of Trades and Heavy Industrial Fred Atkins.

College President Doug MacRae said he was thrilled with training opportunities presented to students through the partnership.

"Access to this calibre of training equipment provides Keyano Mine Operations program students with unparalleled, hands-on learning opportunities. Students receive training in conditions identical to those they will experience on the job site; it just couldn't get any better, for the students, as potential employees, and for the employers who hire them," said MacRae.

The search for simulator technology began in 1999 and Immersive Technology from Perth, Australia evolved as the best option.

"The simulator will assist Albian Sands, Suncor, Syncrude and Keyano College to ensure operators are highly skilled in all aspects of heavy equipment operations," said McDougall. "We can introduce new operators to the basics and provide refresher courses for experienced drivers. The operators gain experience without the risk involved in a real life situation."

"This is a prime example of how local oilsands industry operators can work together for long-term savings," said Wayne LeBrun, Mine Training Administrator at Syncrude Canada Ltd. "Rather than taking vehicles out of commission for training purposes, employees and students can get hands-on training in a truck that simulates a multitude of conditions."

Albian Sands General Manager of Safety and Mining Jeff Stibbard says the positive benefits resulting from the collaboration are realized by mine operators, equipment suppliers and training providers. He noted a number of industry equipment suppliers who contributed to the simulator project.

"Fining (Canada) and Bucyrus International demonstrated outstanding commitment to ensuring the accessibility of this high tech training tool to students and oil sands industry employees," said Stibbard. "This type of collaboration goes beyond industry standards in the areas of safety, productivity, efficiency and training, and ultimately enables mine team members to consistently achieve outstanding results from day one," he added.

A media conference was held on February 15 to showcase the simulator potential and highlight the outstanding enhancements to safety, productivity and cost efficiencies that will result from the partnership.

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