

# Dedicated to the trades

In 1966, all in the space of about 10 weeks, Tony Barren got married, finished his Ph.D. in geotechnical engineering, and immigrated to Canada from the U.K. He consulted on mining and tailings dam projects in South America briefly and then in 1967, was offered an instructor's position in the Civil & Structural Department at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).

From then on, there's been no turning back. He continued on his own learning path by consulting on the side up to the mid 1980s when his administrative duties at BCIT became too onerous for a "sideline."

The early 1990s were exciting times for BCIT as its charter was changed which allowed BCIT to grant degree completion programs for a Bachelor of Technology, or B.Tech.

Although Barren maintains that the implementation of the degree completion programs were the fruit of the efforts of a team of people, few would dispute that he was the driving force behind these programs. He had been quietly working behind the scenes to bring degree completion programs to BCIT but it wasn't until 1994, when he was appointed to the position of Associate Dean of Civil Engineering, that the development of those programs gained momentum.



Barren



In 1998, Tony Barren became the Dean of the School of Construction. Up to the early 1990s, BCIT was serving the construction industry well by turning out qualified trades people and technologists. However Barren argued that some important areas of the industry were not being served as well as they could be by post secondary institutions.

Training in construction operations and supervision of large or numerous sites was lacking, as well as opportunities to cultivate business, writing and problem solving skills. Barren's vision for BCIT was to have a full continuum of opportunities for students to enter at the trades level and if they wished, to go

through to technologist or beyond into management without having to leave their full-time jobs.

The degree completion programs are designed to be accessible to working people with some credentials. They are challenging part-time programs for those who want to earn a Bachelor of Technology in Environmental Engineering (first offered in 1996) or a Bachelor of Construction Management (first offered in 1998).

In fact, the first graduates of the Bachelor of Construction Management are still in the system. These are among the first Bachelor of Technology programs approved by the province.





In September of 1999, the first group of students entered into a new Construction Masters Degree program that is being offered in partnership with the University of Bath in the U.K. Bath was chosen to partner with BCIT because it is recognized internationally for its programs in high-level project management.

It is a University of Bath's Masters Degree in Construction Management (M. Sc.) which BCIT administers through distance education.

The Vancouver Regional Construction Association (VRCA), formally the Amalgamated Construction Association (ACA), has been very supportive in the development of these programs as they have an interest in seeing qualified people enter the industry. So impressed with these programs were they, that in the fall of 2000, Barren was awarded the VRCA "Educator of the Year" award.

"Each of these programs takes about eight years to develop and the VRCA and BCIT have been really supportive. I know I am leaving the further development of these programs in good hands," says Barren.

Don't let Barren's modest manner, his P. Eng., or his Ph.D. fool you. In addition to his professional and academic standings, he has also been a dedicated athlete for decades competing and coaching in a variety of sports, mostly marathon running and cross-country skiing. In fact, he was a permanent fixture around events such as the annual BCIT Quintathlon which includes two running legs, swimming, canoeing, and mountain biking. Barren often joked that if anyone ever beat him at the event, he would retire. Last year a C&S student beat him and true to his word, he did.

What's next for Barren? He is very busy rebuilding his house,

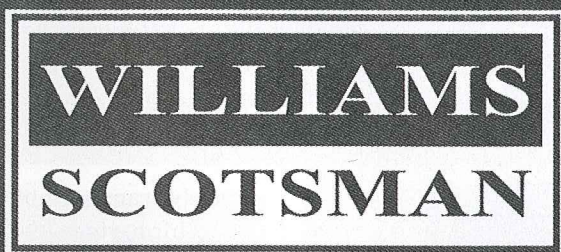
but he is finding that he misses his colleagues.

"When you work every day with the same group of great people for years and years, it's a kind of loss. Everywhere I go I run into C&S grads... there are literally thousands of them out there. I was having lunch somewhere in Mexico when a

C&S grad joined me. Ahhhh, Mexico. Now there's a place that needs a lot of work in education, construction, and engineering."

It's almost a safe bet that he will be spending some of his retirement years learning Spanish while developing educational programs in the south. ♦

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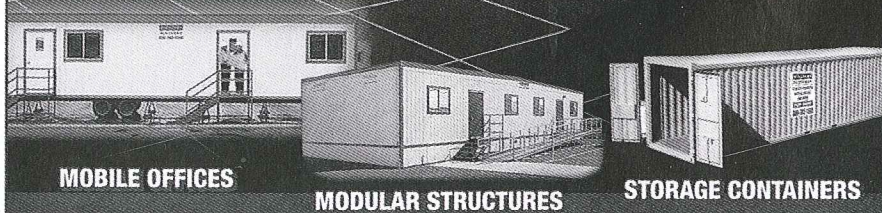
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