

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A GEOSCIENTIST-IN-TRAINING

Meet Joanna West, GIT



Tell us something about yourself?

I'm a Trinidadian geology graduate from the University of Toronto, where I also studied Physical Geography and Environmental Management. It wasn't until I had my first field school experience that I took the full dive in to doing a geology specialist degree. Funny part is that I was never actually much of an outdoor adventure person, but I was (and still am) so interested in the science and topics in geology and geography that I learned to love it as I gained more travelling and field experience. A few years ago you probably could not have convinced me to sleep in a tent.

I'm also currently exposed to the more human aspect of the industry through my current job, as an Aboriginal Education and Outreach Program Assistant with Mining Matters. This position has afforded me the opportunity to travel to many remote communities in northern Ontario, interact with First Nations people and visit operating mines.

Geoscience aside, I have a passion for photography (not pro) and fitness, which happen to fit in really well in my adventures.

How did you first hear about APGO?

I do believe it was through an information session at the University of Toronto. That session really showed me the importance of being part of a professional organisation and the significance of being a licensed professional in Ontario.

How long have you been a member of APGO?

I joined in 2014.

What made you decide to pursue a career in geoscience?

I had always wanted to be a flight attendant; get paid to travel the world. Then I took my first physical geography class in secondary school, and that was it. As I was exposed to more elements of geoscience, I was even more fascinated by it. That fascination has never left. I decided that this is something I would want to do as a career. It may take me to temperature extremes, long lab hours, nerve-wracking presentations and never-ending reports, but they are all part of, what I consider, the greatest career field on earth. There are so many options, so many branches, so many new interests and so much cutting-edge technology and research. On top of that, you get to travel the world.



While you were a student member, what factors influenced your decision to become a geoscientist-in-training?

From the first day that I joined the APGO, my goal was to obtain my P.Geo. It still is. As a student member, I knew that being a GIT would be the next stage. I had downloaded the education requirements list early on, and planned my last university years such that I could meet the requirements while fulfilling my degree requirements. There were many times when it was not easy, and I would question if pushing myself towards this was worth it. It 100% was!

I also attended many APGO networking events and other geoscience/industry events and sessions. Meeting more and more professionals, hearing about their experiences and their path to where they are now only fuelled my love for geoscience. It convinced me more than ever to stay on my path to become a P. Geo.

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In your experience, how does being a GIT helped you in your journey to becoming a professional geoscientist?

To state the obvious, when it comes to networking and introductions, GIT carries more significance than geology graduate. You are instantly recognized as someone who has taken the next step to becoming a professional. In my view, being a professional geoscientist is not just about how many hours you have spent in the lab and/or field, but how well you have built your network, how well you can convey information and communicate with others and even how well you can positively influence those upcoming in the field. Those aspects of the journey have definitely been enhanced as a GIT, not to mention that I was able to participate in APGO's mentoring program that recently took place.



You participated in APGO events and recently in APGO’s mentoring program. Do you find these helpful? In what way?

I actually cannot describe how much the events have helped. Meeting more and more professionals, hearing about their experiences and their path to where they are now only fuelled my love for geoscience, and convinced me more than ever to stay on my path to become a P. Geo. Regularly attending student networking events especially helped to enhance my communication and networking skills, and I am a lot more confident in speaking to people and introducing myself. The events have also opened the door to a world of connections, from P.Geos to geoscience student colleagues.

The mentoring program was a great opportunity to both learn from and gain an insight into what it means to be a professional geoscientist. My mentor was fantastic, and we spoke once a week via Skype on a variety of topics, including but not limited to geochemistry, various aspects of the mining industry, NI 43-101 and even professional habits and practices. Man, he just had the world of knowledge and case examples and I am very grateful for our interaction. The flexibility of the mentoring sessions also allowed us to plan around and accommodate for any changes in our regular schedules.

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Knowing what you know now, what would you tell students who are considering a career in geoscience?

Go for it, but plan and prepare from early on in your university career. If you are going for the GIT designation (which hopefully you will do), get the education requirements early on to keep yourself on track. Network, network, network. Attend those networking events put on by the APGO. Attend those CIM luncheons and TGDG talks. Participate in the annual PDAC Convention and have your business cards ready. It turns out talking about rocks and understanding their story are not the only communication skills you need! Don’t be afraid to ask for advice or guidance with regards to careers and geoscience topics. Your professors are a great resource and so are the P.Geo.’s and GITs that you will meet. **APGO**

