

an optometrist about specialized medical equipment or find yourself in a barn speaking with a farmer about a tractor. It keeps my work interesting."

Westcott herself needs no further sales pitch on Business Administration.

"It's very practical. Business math is something you always use. The course on personal selling was great; nine years later I'm taking a course that covers the same concepts, so there's merit in what I learned back then."

"When you look at the roster of Business Administration alumni, you realize how distinguished a group it is and how much they have accomplished in business."

A competitive curler for the past 20 years (she has been the lead on Kristy Jenion's team since 2001), Westcott has faced the best in World Curling Tour events and the Manitoba provincial championship. She appreciates the flexibility of her employer as she has pursued excellence in this equally demanding arena. Whether the challenge is on the curling rink, in the class, or at the front of a boardroom, Westcott believes certain common habits can improve your game.

"Studying, planning, and practice. And knowing how to work as part of a team. That was a big part of Business Administration and that's how real businesses work too."

National Leasing's team is stronger thanks to employees whose careers got a major boost from the training they received through Red River College. As exceptional organizations able to deliver what their constituents need, two leaders in Manitoba business and education have cemented a mutually beneficial relationship.



Raunora Westcott
National Leasing
Sales Representative

"There is a strong connection between National Leasing and Red River College," says Janet Goddard. "We are very proud of it and there is still room for it to grow."

About National Leasing

Established over 30 years ago and headquartered in Winnipeg, Manitoba, National Leasing is a privately held, 100% Canadian owned company with representation in every major city in Canada.

The company is a leader in commercial equipment leasing and is recognized as the largest Canadian lessor in small to mid-size transactions, with a lease portfolio in excess of \$500 million. It currently has over 260 employees across the country, and administers more than 50,000 lease agreements.

National Leasing has been designated one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies for thirteen consecutive years, and has also been named to *Manitoba Business Magazine's* rankings of the Top 100 Companies and 50 Fastest Growing Companies in Manitoba. It is the only leasing company in Canada to be ISO 9001:2000 certified.

By Randy Matthes
Photos by Karen Harrington, National Leasing



NATIONAL LEASING

RED RIVER COLLEGE GRADS EQUIPPED TO SUCCEED AT NATIONAL LEASING

One of Canada's 50 best managed companies needs no convincing that hiring Red River College graduates belongs in the category of best practices.

"They arrive business ready," says Janet Goddard, Vice President, Human Resources for Winnipeg-based National Leasing. "There's no formal education for the leasing industry, so we have our own internal training programs. There's not a big gap between what RRC graduates bring and what our company requires."

In a company where RRC graduates abound (by Goddard's count there are 52 among 268 National Leasing employees Canada wide), at least three alumni are proving the truth in those words.

Teacher, Student, Leader, Mentor

Juanita Fraser completed the Computer Analyst/Programmer (CA/P) program in 2002, electing to finish the challenging two-year program in 18 months courtesy of a fast-track option. A six-month work term with National Leasing led to a job offer.

Fraser discovered the company affords information technology professionals good opportunities to build their careers.



Juanita Fraser
Manager of Information
Technology, Sales and Credit

"I started off supporting in-house computer applications for lease management and financial transactions," explains Fraser. "I began taking on increasingly bigger projects over time, stepping away from straight programming and becoming more of a lead analyst."

In late August, sitting down to chat one noon hour at National Leasing's headquarters, Fraser was getting ready for a new role: Manager of Information Technology, Sales and Credit, a post responsible for up to eight staff, project management, and

presentations at strategic seminars. The CA/P program prepared her for these roles in many different ways, Fraser confirms.

"It's a strong foundation. Not only in that I have continued to use specific applications like PowerBuilder, but in the accounting and programming principles, in the team projects, and in the assignment deadlines."

"Information technology moves at a fast pace. Companies have a lot of in-house applications and they need to keep up with the market.

The demands of the program are realistic compared to the working world."

Fraser came to the CA/P program with five years' experience as a teacher overseas and in a Winnipeg elementary school. While her aptitude for information technology is apparent, she also retains the motivation of a good teacher. Under the direction of RRC instructor Laurie Cutrone, Fraser brought her knowledge to a College-sponsored Technology Exploration Camp earlier this year as a teacher's assistant. The event was aimed at providing young people with exposure to information technology as a career path.

Two other women in National Leasing's IT group — both CA/P grads — participated in the week-long event, Fraser points out.

That these graduates freely return their time to such College initiatives reflects well on the individuals, Janet Goddard says. However their participation also illustrates the importance of connectivity between business and education.

National Leasing has long been a co-op employer for the CA/P program, regularly taking in students for work placements (and hiring the most recent four). The company also sponsors a \$2,000 bursary for students in the first year of the program. Real investment, though, is more than simply a financial arrangement.

"If you want to understand who the students are and what they seek in a career, you have to be where they are. We want them to know about our company. We hope positive word-of-mouth about our company eventually returns to National Leasing in the form of well trained, motivated graduates eager to work for us."

Fraser must surely agree with that equation.

"The program's hiring rate, its good reputation, and the fast-track program were all compelling for me. It would be an excellent program whether someone was just out of high school or a mature student."

Managing for Success

Vlad Vassilchenko already held university degrees in computer science from his native Kazakhstan when he arrived in Canada seven years ago. He was already honing his programming skills working for private- and public-sector organizations before he joined National Leasing in 2006.

However, he credits the knowledge he formalized in RRC's Project Management program with helping him step into a leadership role earlier this year, developing the IT applications National Leasing relies on to manage a half billion dollar lease portfolio.

"My background is in programming and I have a lot of experience in it. I hadn't considered management as something for me. I knew certain things through experience, but the program helped me organize what I knew. Now I apply it."

Vassilchenko directs a team of up to four programmer/analysts working on various IT projects. He's responsible for assigning tasks, preparing estimates, ensuring clear communication, resolving issues, meeting project deadlines, and reporting to higher management on project status.

Vassilchenko sees a lot of value in the Project Management program, which he completed in spring 2006. In particular, he appreciates how instructors seemed able to supply a real world example "for any situation". Ultimately the

program gave him insight into the breadth of his abilities.

"I can explain my ideas, be a mentor and help colleagues accomplish their work, and organize complex projects," he says, adding that he has recommended the program's fundamentals course to many friends and colleagues working in the information technology field.

He allows at least one extra benefit from the program in his personal life.

"The communications course gave me tactics I use with my five-year old son."

Closing the Deal

It might seem like sales come down to dollars and cents. National Leasing Sales Representative Raunora Westcott knows otherwise.

"I love the personal side of sales. I work to understand the true needs of customers, and build business relationships with them. One of the treats of my job is just walking in the doors of some amazing companies and learning more about them."

Westcott joined National Leasing in 1998, a fresh Business Administration graduate who majored in marketing. After working in administrative positions, Westcott moved toward her natural interest, sales, which is also a field pursued by both of her parents.

Since 2005, she has been responsible for accounts within health-care, one of National Leasing's four key equipment-financing sectors (the others are general business, agriculture, and golf & turf). Westcott covers a territory that includes parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

"A great thing in my position is the variety of organizations we deal with. You can be talking to