

## **Digging deep into our geotechnical history across Canada**

On June 6, 2017, Stantec celebrated 45 years of putting our infrastructure on solid ground

In our busy lives, we often let certain anniversaries pass us by. But June 6 marks the 45th anniversary of Stantec's Geotechnical Engineering and Materials Testing practice in Canada, and we'd be remiss if we let this one come and go without looking back at how our team has evolved.

### **Where it all began**

In 1972, Hector Jacques (pronounced "Jakes") and Michael Whitford decided to partner and start a geotechnical engineering consulting firm in the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia, called Jacques Whitford. Their first office was situated in the basement of a local radio station (CHNS). The company grew quickly in the first few years with several strategic hires including Dr. Arun Valsangkar from the University of New Brunswick. In 1975, a second office was opened in Saint John, New Brunswick, and was quickly followed by the acquisition of Subsurface Surveys in Fredericton in 1978.

In the early 1980s, the offshore industry was booming in Atlantic Canada and the company decided to take advantage of this emerging market. In partnership with McClelland Engineering out of Houston, Texas, Jacques Whitford targeted the oil and gas as market to expand its services in the fields of geotechnical engineering and environmental services. A Jacques Whitford subsidiary was created in Newfoundland and Labrador called Newfoundland Geosciences with local staff that worked on several high profile offshore projects, such as the Hibernia Oil Field and Petro Canada's White Rose Oil Field.

The company continued to grow in Atlantic Canada with the opening of several offices throughout the 1980s and '90s. From the late 1980s to early 2000s, the company continued to expand westward with office openings in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary. Over time, the success the company experienced in Atlantic Canada was expanded to the rest of Canada. By 2000, the company had expanded into approximately 15 locations across Canada offering geotechnical engineering, environmental remediation, and environmental science services. What started as a partnership of two geotechnical engineers had grown to approximately 280 geotechnical staff and over 1,500 staff in total by 2009.

### **Joining the Stantec family**

When Jacques Whitford was approached by Stantec, the similarities between the two companies was clear. The once small companies were founded in cities outside the regular Canadian metropolises of Toronto or Vancouver. Both companies saw national growth as they expanded their expertise across geographies and sectors. To continue to grow, both companies needed to

join forces. Stantec's acquisition of Jacques Whitford was a perfect fit! In fact, Michael Whitford remains an active employee in our Saint John, New Brunswick, office.

### Looking at the next 45 years

Today, the geotechnical practice has experienced steady growth to the point where we are now working on projects in every province and territory, with over 400 staff operating out of 23 locations across Canada. Although our practice has significantly changed during the past 45 years with the introduction of personal computers and sophisticated laboratory testing, the core of what we do remains unchanged.

It's not often in our industry that we can celebrate a milestone like this one. It's a testament to our people, who continue to work hard and adapt to ever-changing technology and economic climates. I know the members of our geotechnical engineering and material testing practice are very proud and excited to honour the legacy of Hector Jacques and Michael Whitford, and celebrate this important anniversary with all our Stantec colleagues!

Source: <https://www.stantec.com/en/ideas/digging-deep-into-our-geotechnical-history-across-canada> (Stantec)