

Cisco Networking Academy Students Ride The Wave Of Success

More are winners in Skills Canada Networking Competition in 2006



Post-Secondary winners from left to right: Paul Ellis, PE (Silver), Tommy Boucher, QC (Gold), Chris MacDonell, ON (Bronze)

Everybody starts in the same place at the Skills Canada networking competition. Yet, in the end, it is the Cisco Networking Academy Program students who stand in the winner's circle most often.

To attend Skills Canada 2006 in Halifax, participants

had to win their provincial Skills competition in either the secondary or post-secondary category.

All winners receive significant prizes, but the gold-medal winner in the post-secondary category, **Tommy Boucher**, will also represent Canada at WorldSkills 2007 in Numazu City, Japan. Held every other year, and attracting more than 700 contestants from 45 countries/regions, WorldSkills 2009 will be in Calgary, Alberta.

From the northern part of Québec, Boucher had never been farther than Québec City prior to the provincial Skills competition. Then he was able to go to Halifax for the

nationals. "I am nervous, but happy," he says, about now being able to go to Japan.

While attending Cégep Limoilou in Québec City, Boucher started his own company. "That probably helped me to practice during my courses and my work and prepared me well for both competitions," he feels. While his own company hosts web sites on the internet, Boucher would like to work with a bigger company which is doing networking on a larger scale.

Boucher's instructor, Jean-François Savard, says he likes to participate in the competition because it is a great experience, win or lose, for the students. "The girl who went two years ago didn't finish in the top three, but she used it on her resumé and got a job because of it," he says. It also gives Savard an opportunity to see how other colleges teach the same programs.

Holland College on Prince Edward Island has a tradition of participating in Skills Canada and won silver in this year's post-secondary competition. **Paul Ellis** took Networking Academy semesters in high school and continued with them in college. He also participated in Skills Canada, at the nationals, in high school. "My exposure to the national competition is what prompted

"As soon as I won, I felt a lot more confident about the things I do. I'm still taken aback by what winning at the national level means."

- Justin Fitzsimmons, Secondary School Gold Medal Winner

National Winners:

	Secondary School Division		Post-Secondary Division	
Medal	Name	Academy	Name	Academy
Gold	Justin Fitzsimmons	Waterloo Collegiate Institute, ON	Tommy Boucher	Cégep Limoilou, QC
Silver	Jason Geron	R.F. Staples High School, AB	Paul Ellis	Holland College, PE
Bronze	Rees Ewonchuk	Miles Macdonell Collegiate, MB	Chris MacDonell	Cambrian College, ON

While the students are the stars of Skills Canada the competition would not be possible without our strong supporting cast who give invaluable help behind the scenes or provide much needed support. Cisco would like to thank our partners, **Panduit**, **Fluke**, **CompTIA** and **Cisco Press** for their generous contributions of prizes. Skills Canada benefited greatly from the instructors who kindly volunteered their time on the various technical committees. A special thank you goes to the folks at **Nova Scotia Community College** for their assistance locally.

Success Story



Secondary school winners from left to right: **Jason Geron, AB** (Bronze), **Justin Fitzsimmons, ON** (Gold), **Ressa Ewonchuk, MB** (Silver)

me to take it in college,” he says.

Rob Blanchard is the instructor at Holland College. He says they have been sending students to the national Skills competition for about six years. “It’s a really good morale booster.

Once they get to the nationals, it’s a

great place to network with other students in the same trade.”

Blanchard says the Academy program prepares the students well for the competition. It uses Cisco equipment so the students are familiar with it. “Other companies don’t have any kind of training set up for their products,” he says.

While Holland College has appeared often at the national competition, **Cambrian College**, from Sudbury, Ontario, made its first appearance and won bronze. Student **Chris MacDonell** says, “I didn’t know anything about networking, but we have excellent instructors and get great support from them.” MacDonell is currently doing global network support for Inco Ltd.

One of Cambrian’s instructors, Bob Vachon, says they teach both Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) and Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA). He likes being able to see how they stack up against other colleges across the country.

Vachon sees many advantages to being a Cisco Networking Academy. “It is the quality of the curriculum. We have access to unbelievable amounts of information, the assessment helps students prepare for industry certification and students like the curriculum and the layout.”

Winning gold at Skills Canada can change a student. **Justin Fitzsimmons**, from **Waterloo**

Collegiate Institute (WCI), in Ontario, will attest to that. “As soon as I won, I felt a lot more confident about the things I do. I’m still taken aback by what winning at the national level means.”

He is almost finished his Networking Academy program and will then take his certification, so his prizes of the CCNA prep library and \$750 certificate from Fluke Networks Canada will come in handy.

WCI is no stranger to winning. The gold medal winner in the secondary competition in 2005 also attended the school. Ion Damian, a teacher at WCI, says they have always developed strong trouble-shooting skills. “We started by refurbishing computers for a place that takes donated ones. We had 200-300 computers going in and out. That gives excellent hands-on experience.”

Each skill at Skills Canada has a committee that sets and oversees the test. One of the five members for the IT Network Support Group, **Jan Sirek** of **Cisco Systems Canada Co.**, says they try in a test to cover a broad range of disciplines that would be appropriate for a secondary or post-secondary student. “To make a good competition, we need to have a test that covers all the bases of the different technologies they would be exposed to in the classroom and industry,” he explains.

Sirek says they are always adding new challenges to the test. They update it by putting new questions in the written parts and including new technologies. “Wireless was added in this year, so a student who might have been there last year would have been required to know this year how to use wireless and this wasn’t on previously,” he says.

Success comes in many forms, but requires a firm base of knowledge. The Cisco Networking Academy Program provides IT students with an important part of that foundation.