

NORTH VANCOUVER FIRM BUILDS 'SPORTS CAR' OF SUBMERSIBLES

***People from all over the world are coming to BCIT to learn how to drive
Nuytco Research Ltd.'s personal submarine***

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Marine scientist from around the world are coming to North Vancouver to learn how to drive a nifty little personal submarine that has been described as the sports car of submersibles.

The latest graduates of a pilot-training course offered by submarine developer Nuytco Research Ltd. And the British Columbia Institute of Technology at its Pacific Marine Training Institute campus in North Vancouver, came from the U.S., Mexico, Belize, Cuba and Guatemala.

"We had a whole flock of people here from all over the place," said Nuytco's Phil Nuytten.

Nuytco's newest subsea vehicle is DeepWorker 2000, a highly maneuverable one-person vehicle that can operate for several hours at depths of up to 2,000 feet.

It has been chose for an exploration program of marine sanctuaries worldwide by the National Geographic Society and U.S. government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

This year's expedition to the Gulf of Mexico departs April 23 from Key West, Fla. Where DeepWorker 2000 and Nuytco staff will board the NOAA research ship McArthur, along with an international team of scientists and oceanographers who have been through pilot training in North Vancouver.

"We have contracted to provide subs and technicians for the expedition," Nuytten said. "It's a five-year project now in its fourth year and it looks like it will be expanded for an additional five years."

"Scientists who are part of Sustainable Seas Expeditions will pilot DeepWorker 2000 to photodocument the natural history of each sanctuary's plants and marine life."

"What they discover and record in the mission logs will help build the first permanent marine monitoring network in the marine sanctuary's plants and educate the public on the many wonders within these protected areas." NOAA says.

For BCIT, the association with Nuytco Research will likely lead to a new course in submersible technology.

"We hope that this is something that is going to be ongoing for the institute," said Andrew Walls, manager of business and program development for BCIT's Ocean Centre of Excellence.

"One of my jobs here is to develop industrial partnerships doing non-traditional training and this is an example of moving forward on that."

Walls said training the aquanauts involved classroom instruction as well as training dives in DeepWorker from the Pacific Marine Training Institute dock on the North Vancouver waterfront.

"As far as we know, this is a unique program, there is nobody else doing this," Walls said. "It was a good opportunity for us, because we could fill a niche that otherwise hadn't been filled. Certainly, we have the facilities to do it. The market isn't large, but because it's worldwide and you've got the only game in town, you have a lot of potential customers.

"It's a big field and there's a lot of research and development going on. As an institution, we need to be involved in these kinds of things."

Nuytten said he used to conduct pilot training at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute in Monterey, Ca., but looked for somewhere to do it in Canada. Partnering with BCIT was a perfect fit because the Ocean Centre for Excellence is only two blocks from Nuytco Research headquarters.

"Teaching people how to pilot a submarine is very hands-on training," Nuytten said. "If we are going to teach people from around the world, it makes sense to do it right here where the submarines are built."

According to Sustainable Seas Expeditions, the 2000 exploration team conducted more than 100 dives in DeepWorker 2000.