

[PLATO Testing Announces Miramichi Office, Funding](#)

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by [Huddle Staff](#)



MIRAMICHI–PQA Testing announced today the grand opening of their PLATO Testing office in Miramichi and \$250,000 worth of funding from the Frank McKenna Miramichi Technology Fund.

The announcement was made at the grand opening of the new Miramichi office. PQA and [PLATO](#) founder Keith McIntosh says the location was chosen because it is central for a number of Aboriginal communities.

“Part of the initiative of PLATO is to be able to set up testing centres on or close to First Nations (communities),” McIntosh said. “we’re already running two classes in Vancouver this winter and we’ll be setting up an office in that area and hopefully in discussion with places like Kahnawake in Quebec and Alberta and Saskatchewan.”

“We set up offices wherever the people are because part of the barrier to First Nations folks getting into the workforce is they want to be close to their communities... we think it’ll help make a difference. All those factors say we need to be setting up in Miramichi because that’s where the people are that are going to be working with us.”

McIntosh said there are currently 36 First Nations people working for PLATO in Fredericton, Miramichi and Moncton. He says he’s received a great deal of positive feedback from both participants in the program as well as established PQA employees.

PLATO is working towards creating an organization of 1000 Aboriginal software testers. McIntosh says they hope to have 250 testers employed in New Brunswick alone in the next three years.

“What’s holding us back right now is really just our own ability to organize,” McIntosh said. “We have more applications and more communities asking us to do it. We have more applicants that want to take the course than we can handle and get through.”

PLATO and PQA are receiving \$250,000 in funding from the Frank McKenna Miramichi Technology Fund in the form of a repayable loan. McIntosh says that while the fund usually comes in the form of equity investment, the goal of PLATO is to be owned by Aboriginal people so an agreement was made for a loan to be given rather than an equity purchase. He says the funding will be used to run the next course, hire another teacher and go towards sales and marketing to drum up business to support future endeavours.

“It’s a business idea that makes business sense and will be profitable ... With any business, cash is always key. You’ve got to be able to make sure you don’t outgrow your ability to support it,” McIntosh said. “I think it’s a really important initiative ... This is an opportunity out there to make a bit of a difference.”