

## **“Insuring success – and growth”**

By Skana Gee

Macdonald Chisholm Trask (MCT) Insurance does not believe in dumbing down what it does so well.

“What we do is complicated – it takes expertise,” says Chris Bavis, the company’s Director of Marketing and Communications. “Across North America, insurance has very much become a commodity, and people are bombarded with information about the cheapest and easiest insurance.

“The reality is, it’s not easy. If you had to look at your own car policy and figure out what the legal terms meant, in the event of an accident ... well, there’s a reason you have an insurance broker. And we still have competitive rates, but the reality is, when something goes wrong, you want professional help.”

That – along with the core values of integrity, learning, teamwork and pride – is what people get from MCT, a long-standing Nova Scotia-based company that has grown by leaps and bounds in the past decade.

Founded more than 60 years ago, the company launched a strategy of growth through acquisitions about a decade ago. Its biggest catch, more than tripling MCT’s size, was landing L.G. Trask Insurance in 2004.

Yarmouth-based Trask gave MCT geographic reach on the South Shore of the province, while Macdonald Chisholm (founded in Kentville) has several offices in the Annapolis Valley. Other mergers have taken the company into New Brunswick and Newfoundland, making it one of Atlantic Canada’s largest insurance brokerages with more than 140 insurance professionals in 19 offices, from Barrington to Bathurst and Moncton to St. John’s.

The “driving force” behind the company since 2001 has been President, CEO and majority owner Mike Brien, who works out of the Bedford office, says Bavis. “We’ve grown organically – there’s a great spirit when it comes to reorganizing or regenerating businesses that have been around a long time and have really firm roots,” he adds.

MCT specializes in personal, commercial and marine insurance as well as industry-specific insurance programs and financial products. All with a personal touch.

“We’re very focused on the grassroots. We’re predominantly in rural areas, and we’re a company that very much believes in having that footprint in the community. And I think that’s been a real key to our continued success – we are part of the fabric of those communities,” says Bavis.

Another priority that contributes to MCT's success is a focus on learning. The company pays for, and supports staff, in acquiring professional industry accreditations. "Our education budget is actually bigger than my marketing budget," says Bavis, with a chuckle. "And it certainly makes a difference in what we do."

While the national average for similar-sized businesses appears to be about 38 per cent in terms of employees with additional professional designations, MCT boasts more than 75 per cent who have acquired or are earning those designations.

For Deirdre McLean, 24, that commitment to bettering employees is of paramount importance.

"We are encouraged and supported in our educational pursuits, and this positive focus allows us to give something back to our clients," says McLean, an account executive in the Commercial Department. "They are the ones who reap the direct benefits from our skilled professional team."

Since joining the firm in 2004, McLean has obtained the Canadian Accredited Insurance Broker (C.A.I.B.) Designation, and the Canadian Risk Management (C.R.M.) Designation, both of which were fully funded by MCT.

"Our team is comprised of passionate individuals who are hungry for knowledge and eager to advance within the insurance industry," she says. "I believe MCT is perfectly positioned to be a valuable partner to the businesses emerging in Nova Scotia, and we are excited to support them in the efforts for growth."

MCT's focus on learning was partly responsible for the fact it made the top-20 list of companies to work for in Atlantic Canada – determined by Progress Magazine – both in 2007 and 2008.

And it's not just MCT's own employees who are being educated. The company's MCT Learning Foundation offers \$10,000 annually in bursaries and awards to high school, community college, and university students.

For more information, visit [www.mcti.ca](http://www.mcti.ca)