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Janod

CONTRACTORS

A BUSINESS BUILT
ON SOLID ROCK





We've all seen the yellow signs, warning drivers about fallen or falling rocks on the road ahead. Of course, these road signs are helpful for avoiding accidents, but preventing rocks from falling in the first place is even better. Prevention is exactly what Janod Contractors does.

Québec-based Janod is rock stabilization company that was founded in 1968, by Douglas Journeaux. Earlier in its day, the company's primary operation was soft earth tunnelling, but when Douglas was introduced to rock slope stabilization in the 1970s, he jumped at the chance to incorporate it into the company's offerings.





Today, rock stabilization represents 100 per cent of the business, a decision that was made by Douglas's son, Daniel Journeaux, who has now owned the company for 15 years. "When the ownership transferred, my father asked me if I was going to continue to do soft earth tunnelling, I said no," Daniel explains. "I wanted to focus all of our efforts onto one area to service the mining, highway and railway industries." Specialising was a risky decision, but it's one that has led to the Janod's success. "My father said I wouldn't be able to make a living by specializing in rock stabilization," Daniel recalls. "And he was right. Had I continued doing work in the east coast only, I wouldn't have lasted, because the seasons are so short." But Daniel was determined to see his plan through.

He looked into moving to western Canada to gain a few extra months of work. In the end, what

his research found were better techniques and equipment to do a higher-quality job. Daniel also discovered that the rock stabilization technology in the United States was surprisingly behind the times. "We saw it as an opportunity to break in to the U.S. marketplace," Daniel says. "It took us a year to give presentations to explain what could be done. We had to educate our clients, but it helped us propel the rock stabilization industry in the United States."

A sturdy industry

It used to be the general consensus that falling rocks were an act of God, that there wasn't much we could do about it. Fortunately for Janod, our society has advanced to a place where humans take matters into our own hands.

"The industry is more proactive now," says Daniel. "We don't take chances anymore. Builders and, in particular, departments of transportation have no choice but to contend with these slopes in advance, before they release the properties. The biggest change in the industry has been the knowledge that this work can be done and done safely; there is no job that's impossible to do."





Due to the nature of rock slope stabilization, safety and skills are key factors in the growing industry. Along with state-of-the-art equipment, Janod requires highly trained technicians with an intimate knowledge of both geology and the influence of climatic conditions on exposed rock structures. Oh, and these technicians must be proficient rock climbers. As Janod puts it, the weak of heart need not apply.

Just what does this sort of work entail? “It could be that a slope may only require scaling, when we repel down the slope using steel bars and air bags to knock the rocks off to the bot-

tom,” explains Daniel. “It’s rare, but sometimes it’s all that’s needed. If further stabilization is required, we use shotcrete, bolts, netting, rock fall barriers and other materials. We have done a lot of residential and commercial work where bringing the rock down is not an option—when buildings have to be protected or when the slope is too massive or dangerous, for example—so we have to find ways of keeping it in place. The work is particular to each slope.”

Branching out

As a Canadian company, Janod has done plenty

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of work in the country, particularly in its home province of Québec. “We have done quite a bit of work in Old Québec City, where there have been quite a few tough locations,” says Daniel. “Janod has also completed several projects for Ontario Power Generation (OPG) in the past five years, and we’re finalising a project with them this year. Most recently, Québec Iron and Titanium (QIT) called us back. They were one of our old clients we used to have 15 years ago. We did some scaling for them and they were surprised by the amount of rock we brought down. We weren’t. They had someone else doing the

work for the last 15 years, and I guess you get what you pay for.”

Even though Janod has big contracts with major Canadian clients, these days, the company is doing most of its work south of the border. Since breaking into the U.S. market, Janod’s business has exploded. In fact, the company now does approximately 95 percent of its business in the mountainous states, with an office and warehouse in Honolulu, Hawaii, as well as Champlain, New York. “We just won Contractor of the Year in Washington State for a project we did in 2008,” Daniel beams.

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From Canada to the United States, Janod is heading the right direction for more business with international clients. The next stop: Asia. “We have been invited into China following the 2008 earthquakes in the Sichuan province,” Daniel says, “and we’re still in talks with their government about how to make this work. The amount of devastation there is unbelievable. They have literally billions of dollars worth of work just in rock stabilization.”

In the next five years, Daniel sees Janod as one of the top international firms in the rock stabilization field. “To get there, we need to get involved with some complex, global-scale projects and show that we can complete them successfully.” How far along is Janod in its goal? “I think things are moving along well,” Daniel smiles. From an outside perspective, it certainly looks that way. **CBJ**

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