

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK IN NORTHERN CANADA
THIS SUMMER?

Students are always looking for new and interesting summer jobs. Last summer, I had the good fortune of finding a job which provided a unique northern experience, working in Wood Buffalo National Park near Fort Smith, N.W.T. The Park is one of the world's largest, straddling the Province of Alberta, Northwest Territories border and covering an area of 44,000 km². It offers a diverse landscape with meandering rivers, bogs, forests, lakes and meadows and also includes some very unique gypsum karst features such as salt plains, sink holes and underground caves. The Park is the largest National Park in North America and one of the largest in the world; it is the home of the rare buffalo and the rare and endangered whooping crane. It is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Before I tell you about my project, let me tell you how it was possible to visit northern Canada last summer. At UNB we have a recently formed Northern Canadian Studies Committee that coordinates teaching and researching efforts in northern studies, arranges for speakers on northern topics and, at a national level, interacts with the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies. The University has always had some association with the North, particularly through Surveying Engineering, which at one time was involved with mapping the Arctic Islands and the former Muskeg Research Institute, which studies transportation problems associated with northern landscapes. Over the years, graduate students have been trained, courses have been given and several conferences have been held with emphasized northern subjects. This new committee received funds from the Northern Scientific Training Program of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa, so that the two students in the summer of 1983 and the seven students in the summer of 1984 could work with professors who had on-going northern research programs.

I should mention that there is a wide range of subjects that might be studied in the North. Why not check with your supervisor or department chairman to find out if any of your professors are interested in northern studies? As I have already mentioned, Surveying Engineering has a number of professors who have worked in northern Canada including Dr. W. Faig, Dr. R. B. Langley, and Dr. D. Wells. Biologists Dr. J.M. Terhune and Dr. R.W. Wein have been involved in studies in the western arctic. Dr. I.R. Methven of Forest Resources is interested in northern forestry studies. In the Faculty of Arts Dr. R.H. Cockburn, Department of English, is examining the contribution of early northern explorers; Dr. E.R. Forbes and Dr. B.L. Vigod of the History Department are also interested in the North from a historical point-of-view; Dr. W.C. Van den Hoonard, Department of Sociology has conducted research in Iceland for a number of years. This is by no means a complete list of faculty who are interested in northern work, but it at least provides a range of disciplines involved.

No matter what your field of interest, there is much to be gained in working in a different part of your country. You will learn of the tremendous size and potential of our nation. You may have the opportunity of working with Inuit and Dene peoples. You will be exposed to issues concerning Canadians from a very different and eye opening perspective. By developing an understanding of the culture you can learn more about your own. You will see differences in basic things that you have taken for granted or assumed to be the same everywhere.

I am certain that each of our experiences are somewhat different. This summer Leitha Reed, a 1984 graduate from the Faculty of Education (supervised by Dr. G. Whiteford), was given a travel grant because she wished to prepare a teaching module on a northern community that could be used by student teachers at UNB. She selected Fort Smith, N.W.T. as her subject because it has a population composed of Cree, Slavey and Chippewyan Indian groups,

and also southern Canadians who have moved into the North in recent years. Leitha interviewed these groups, studied the educational system and explored the geography of the general area. In her own words, she had a "fantastic summer" and the experience led her to accepting a teaching position on an Indian Reservation in Manitoba.

Susan Nichols, a Ph.D. candidate from the Surveying Engineering Department supervised by Dr. John McLaughlin, visited Yellowknife, N.W.T. and Ottawa to gather information on the existing land information systems in the N.W.T. Cost effective systems are necessary to index and make accessible land-related information. Such information is necessary for many northern land managers.

In 1983, Margaret Perry, a graduate student in Sociology (supervised by Dr. Van den Hoonard), travelled to Fort Smith and initiated a study to discover attitudes of the social groups to forest fires which sweep through the northern forest every summer. Margaret permanently moved to Fort Smith in the spring of 1984 where she was to continue her sociological study for a M.A. degree. We deeply regret that during the summer of 1984 she developed cancer and passed away on September 26 at the age of 23. To those in our northern group who knew her, her death has left us with a deep feeling of loss. We hope her work will be continued by other students.

The group of four students, of which I was a member, contributed to a five year research effort to support fire management in Wood Buffalo National Park. Glenn Keays, an undergraduate biologist in 1983, conducted an Honours Biology study of the effects of fire on tree seedling establishment and in 1984 he returned to the same site to further his research as a M.Sc. graduate supervised by Dr. Wein. New undergraduate students this year (supervised by Dr. Wein and Dr. Methven) included Desiree Stockermans, a fifth year Forestry student, Karen Moerman, a fourth year biology student and myself. Each of us was given a specific area of fire ecology which was part of the overall program. Studies included the potential of fire-spread through crowns of jack pine trees, studies on the revegetation of recently burned areas and studies on fire history and examined through fire scars on tree trunks.

What did I learn from the summer? Wow, how do you condense four tremendously exciting months into a few sentences? Being involved in research, I had the chance to question and apply the theories learned in class on sampling methods and proper data collecting techniques. I was able to determine past fire occurrence, movement, severity and frequency by examining clues left in the trees themselves. I learned how to identify many wild plants, animals and birds, and had a chance to observe animal behaviour. As a rule, the buffalo do not come out for tourists, and it's not a good idea to try to capture a close-up of baby bears with mama bear around. In small towns such as Fort Smith, I found that the northerners treated us very warmly and in sharing a cabin with 6 people, there is seldom a dull moment. Yes, working in the North provided a very stimulating learning environment.

If you are interested in northern studies, I urge you to watch for northern news on TV or in the newspapers, watch for announcements about speakers who will be addressing northern issues on campus, and talk to your faculty advisor or department chairman to find out who is working in the North. If you are a senior undergraduate or graduate student who would like to travel to the North next summer, develop a research proposal and make an application at the UNB Northern Canadian Studies Committee. Hurry, the deadline is December 7, 1984. I am certain that the Chairman of our committee, Dr. R.W. Wein, will be happy to discuss opportunities with you. He can be contacted at 453-4509 or at the Fire Science Centre (Room 3, Head Hall).