

### Caretaker for Indian "space"

# Student chops, ferries in Schreiber project

By SUE COOPER

Four years ago, a small rock-strewn island about six miles northeast of Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron became the site of a unique experiment.

Called the Schreiber Island Project, it was designed to provide a "space" where young Indians could come to live for six weeks to learn

more about themselves, rediscover their culture and participate in such art disciplines as painting, sculpture, film and music.

Today, proof of the project's success can be found in the enthusiasm it has created among its Indian participants, in the interest it has generated within the Ontario government, and in the warmth with which

those who have worked on the island, such as Calumet student Sean Cassaday, tell of their experience.

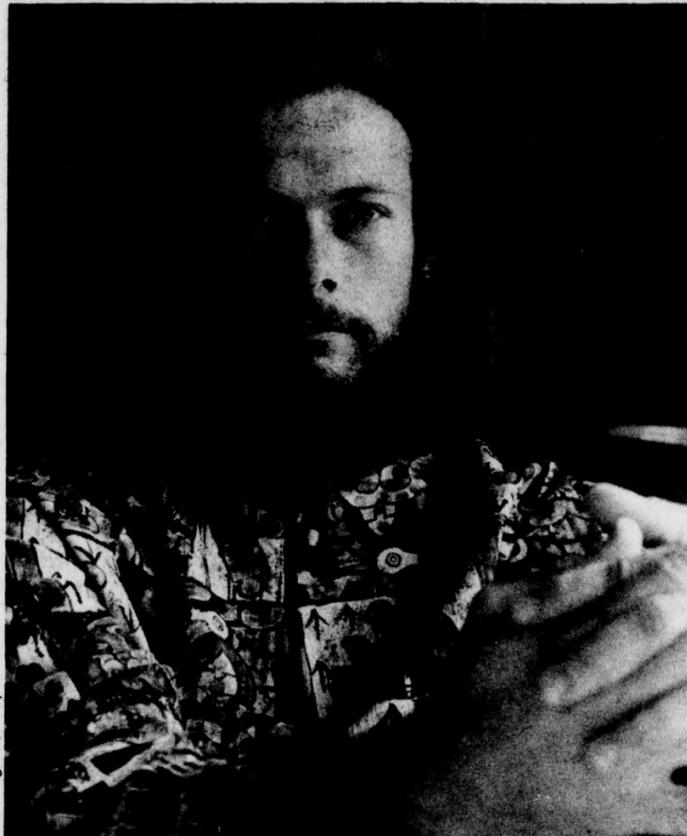
Sean's opportunity to work on Schreiber this summer came as a result of the two years John Mays (Calumet student liaison officer) and Ian Sowton (Master) spent engineering a program whereby Calumet would offer one of its students to a community organization such as the Manitou Arts Foundation (which sponsors the Schreiber project) paying their salary from college funds.

Says Sean, "The concept is to 'free up' a student from the usual summer job, give him a chance to experience something really new, and at the same time furnish the organization with help they may have not otherwise been able to afford".

After a successful interview with Tom Peltier, president of the NAF and the man with whom Sean would be working and living in close conjunction for the rest of the summer, he set about his first task — helping to edit 12 hours of film footage which had been shot the previous summer.

Under the direction of Yves Sauvageau, cameraman for the filming, three films emerged from the Bellevue Pathe Studios in Toronto. These were previewed for various organizations and government offices "in the hope that they could use them as educational aids." (They are still under consideration.)

The trilogy consisted of a documentary telling the story of Schreiber Island, a film on one of the



Calumet student Sean Cassaday

music classes, and a drama dealing with stereotyping of the Indian, with the various parts written by the young Indian actors and actresses.

Shortly after the editing, Sean left Toronto to begin a different kind of existence, living in one of the square cedar cabins built in 1900 by an American timberman. He started work immediately as a kind of caretaker.

"I did everything from cutting firewood to running the boat between the island and Little Current (on Manitoulin) to get supplies or to ferry people back and forth across the channel."

Since the Manitou Arts Foundation decided not to run the usual arts program this year, there were no regularly scheduled classes, although a steady stream of visitors to the island continued throughout the summer.

One group of non-Indians from the Longview boys school near Toronto used Schreiber as a kind of base camp for canoe tripping. To be up north on a totally isolated island was in some cases a frightening experi-

ence for these boys who, in Sean's words, "had great street skills, but as far as getting around in the outdoors was concerned had no skills at all."

Towards the end of their stay, these same boys had learned to build their own fires, cook and ration their food, handle a canoe in the choppy waters on the channel and generally take care of themselves in the wild.

Other visitors to the island included Indians from Wikiwemkong (Wiki for short) many of whom Sean got to know as friends "like I'd met them somewhere else."

The opportunity to share similar experiences may be extended to others besides Sean if the government increases its grant to the Manitou Arts Foundation.

"I hope," says Sean, "that Calumet will be able to create the same sort of job this summer, and it would be nice if the other colleges could get into the same thing."

"As far as I am concerned the Schreiber project was a complete success."



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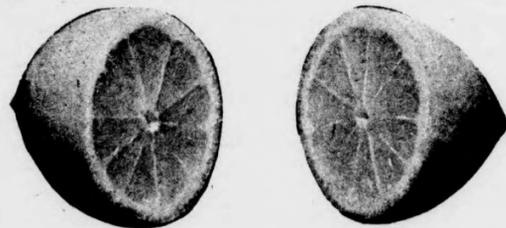
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