Our Journeys:

First Nations Natural Resources Careers

Greetings to our readers. This publication profiles resourceful First Nations post-secondary graduates who have found exciting and fulfilling careers in: **Eco-tourism, Mining, Fisheries, Forestry, Environmental Education, Enforcement, Planning and Firefighting**, within government, small business, industry and organizations in BC.

We hope their stories of determination, use of traditional knowledge & overcoming obstacles will inspire aboriginal young people to stay in school and follow a similar path.

Please see **www.foredbc.org** for a .pdf copy and video footage of some First Nations graduates, with links to:

This publication is freely distributed to: aboriginal education groups, BC Ministry of Education, AANDC (Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada), & other aligned partners. Please share this publication with anyone who may benefit from learning of these aboriginal leaders. Schools may email or photocopy as required.

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Fored BC Society is a registered charity providing sustainability tools, education resources and consulting since 1925. This includes our award-winning sustainability magazine Landscapes. With aboriginal partners, we also provide educational workshops and outreach programs for aboriginal youth.

FORED BC
FOR EDucation about our environment and its natural resources

Restoring Traditional Knowledge

Michelle Walsh's career path started in her childhood in Central BC.

"I've always been passionate about fish and wildlife in general," Michelle said. "My grandma took us fishing for sockeye. A lot of my fondest memories are of her cleaning and smoking fish."

Today, Michelle is a Tribal Fisheries Biologist for the Secwepemc Fisheries Commission. Her work takes her to a variety of places. "A typical day at work depends on what season we're in, since much of what we do revolves around the salmon lifecycle. These days, I picture myself at my computer doing reporting or number crunching interspersed with site visits to community fisheries projects to provide them with technical support in their fishery endeavors," Michelle said. "I also do salmon enumeration (counting) on the spawning grounds, install groundwater gauges, trap juvenile salmon, or restore salmon habitat. A big component in the winter and spring is meeting with fisheries groups and government to review the past salmon season so we can learn lessons to plan the next."

Counting salmon is a vital part of fish management.

Besides continuous learning, Michelle must also translate knowledge. "Distilling some of the fisheries knowledge is also important, for example, technical information about invasive species. I learn as much as I can about it and distribute the information to the communities, so they can know what to do about it. There is endless reading to do: keeping up on scientific papers and knowledge, as well as policy documents."

But what Michelle likes best is fieldwork. "I especially enjoy ... going out to the watershed." She's created new fish habitat pools that enhanced water flow for fish "that were almost non-existent. Then, you see the fish using the habitat that you have improved; that's the most rewarding." That job satisfaction is accompanied by a paycheque that ranges from **$45,000-$60,000 per year**, she said, with some earning **$70,000 plus** in consulting.

Michelle started training to be a fisheries biologist right after her high school graduation, when she enrolled at Simon Fraser University. Then, work beckoned. "I decided to take off one semester a year to do fisheries work, so I had an extra income. It was perfect timing because these field projects were seasonal. It made university more manageable mentally and I gained work experience." She spent some of the autumns doing salmon escapement enumerations—that means she counted the salmon that escaped fisheries and returned to spawn in tributaries of the Fraser. She also "tagged" endangered sturgeon. Tagging is the scientific practice of marking fish to track their movements, activities and population sizes.

At university, Michelle began with basic science courses such as physics, chemistry and biology. However, the more Michelle

studied, the better it got. Later on, she studied subjects like wildlife biology, fish biology and population dynamics. In the end, Michelle graduated with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in ecology.

> "If you can tough out the first couple years, the next two years are more fun."

The most important thing that she learned from university is that, "if you tough out the first couple of years, the next two years are more fun and interesting, and honestly easier! Nobody tells you that but it's true, especially if you break it into smaller chunks, manage time and know there is help when you need it. That got me through school," said Michelle. "Learning how to learn was a really good lesson. I learned if I don't cram, if I do all the lessons, and prepare for tests, it really worked for me."

Those lessons and financial support geared to First Nations helped Michelle complete her studies. "Most schools also have a First Nations study resource room you can use." Her aboriginal culture (Carrier), also helped her succeed. "It taught me that relationships are important in everything you do and having a sense of humour can get you through a lot. Always remembering where you came from is as important as focusing on where you want to go. Even when you are not feeling the best, you can keep trucking and stay on your path. Work hard, and when you look up, you are where you want to be."

"Our ancestors have passed on a lot of knowledge and learned a lot of lessons for us; it's important to take what they have given us and use it. In order to best meet the needs of our communities, I must not only understand Secwepemc culture but also other First Nations with whom we interact," she says. "Some primary goals we are working towards are self-government, for example co-management, and restoring traditional fisheries so that those fisheries are not lost. It is important to always be representing and working towards these goals. I have to keep that in mind in everything I do."

Tact and diplomacy are also crucial to Michelle's job. "You have to be social and approachable. You are interacting with different organizations, community groups and science organizations. Being accessible is important," Michelle said. "If you are meeting or consulting with other fisheries organizations, you have to be strong with your ideas and recommendations without offending people. Knowing when and how to assert yourself, while maintaining positive relations, is important."

While consultation is valuable, she's clear on her main objective, defending the salmon, vital to First Nations' culture. "I love this job because I get to help protect and restore salmon runs which have sustained First Nations peoples for thousands of years. It's an honour to help the fish and to serve First Nations communities too. I take pride in it."

"I love this job because I get to help protect and restore salmon runs which have sustained First Nations peoples for thousands of years."

The Nine Lives Of A Jaguar

Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life, says Brian Koster. And, if you have a thirst for adventure and a joy for learning, what's not to love?

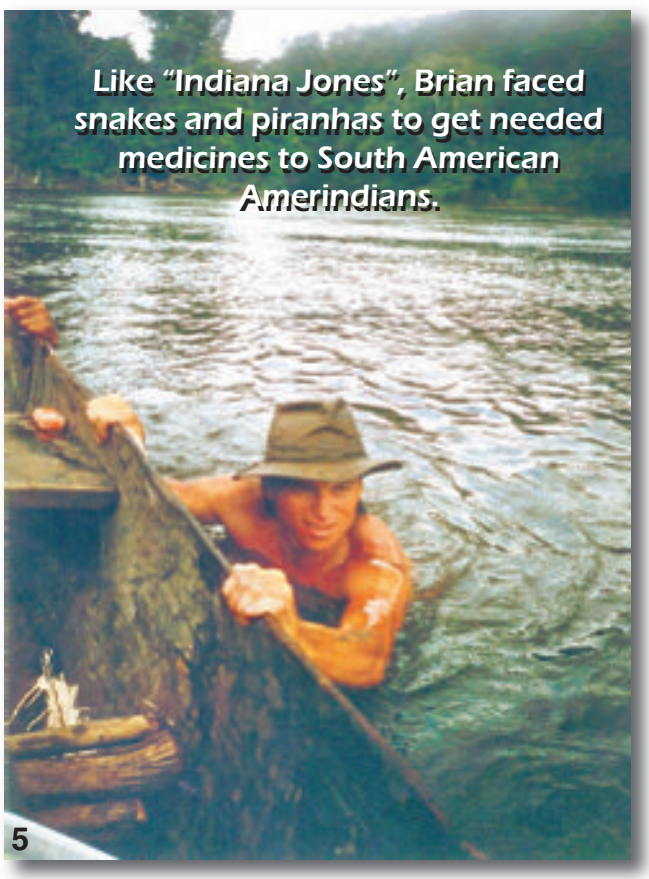
Brian's been a paratrooper, a deep water diver and a forest firefighter. With that knowledge and experience, Brian knows the air, the water and the land at an intimate level. And, it's that knowledge he's gained by taking advantage of opportunities as they came up, knowledge he says he can pass on to other members of his Manitoba Cree nation.

But, he says, it's a path that has taken a long time to travel - once he got past his early career desire to be Batman.

Above all else, he says, the important thing is to make career path choices where you can be happy. An education is important, he says. So is being respectful and accountable for your actions, he adds.

Brian began his work life when he joined the military at age 18. He says his military experience taught him the importance of showing up on time, having a work ethic, learning leadership skills and problem-solving.

"I may have started at the bottom but I had the desire and drive to get to the next level," he says. That ambition saw Brian putting on one of the coveted blue berets of United Nations peacekeepers to be stationed on the troubled Mediterranean island of Cyprus, where he learned to scuba dive. Brian did two tours of duty, one as a front line observer and the second tour as a Regimental Police officer. He later joined the Canadian Airborne Regiment.



Like "Indiana Jones", Brian faced snakes and piranhas to get needed medicines to South American Amerindians.

Leaving the military while doing desert warfare training, he built on that scuba diving education and experience when he returned to North America. He then studied commercial deep-sea diving. Brian took various jobs as a diver, cleaning up contaminated waste, working on hydro electrical dams and salvaging a sunken barge from New York's East River. The salary range for a commercial diver was between **$18,000 to $35,000 a year.** That amount is determined by work history, quality and attitude. With experience, that pay can range from **$60,000 to $100,000**. "Being specialized, like an underwater welder, the pay is higher," he said. However, he cautioned, "There are many dangers to being a commercial deep-sea diver. I always enjoyed the excitement."

That search for excitement led him to his next career. While working as a divemaster on a fish farm, he read about a career on firefighting crews. "I walked into a (government) forestry office in Victo-

ria and 15 minutes later, I had a (firefighting) job," he says.

Now, he's a Forest Protection Officer, directing firefighting crews for the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. "One minute, I can be in front of my computer. The next minute, I can be directing crews and aircraft." Or, within minutes, he can be packing to be deployed to another part of Canada or the world. That's what happened in 2009 when Brian found himself facing deadly, raging forest fires in Australia.

Meeting new friends in Australia while helping extinguish their fires.

It's not just for work that Brian travels, though. He's taken his skills and his thirst for adventure and turned them into a way to help others. For six years, he scrounged medical supplies, negotiated with governments and militaries and recruited volunteers to help vaccinate the Waiwai Amerindians on the Essequibo River deep in the South American country of Guyana.

The work meant traveling 650 miles by army truck, on foot and by dugout canoe, encountering anaconda snakes, piranhas and wild boar. "I wanted to challenge myself," he says. "I wanted to see if I could lead my own expedition."

In doing so, he and his team managed to vaccinate an entire village against measles in one day while taking part in village life. Brian says the experiences and careers he's had have given him a life of versatility and excitement. "I enjoy the friendship, the bonding. That lasts for years," he says. "You can have a pretty good lifestyle."

But, he says, you have to prepare a base to get

to where you need to be. “If anything, finish Grade 12. Find a job like forest firefighting...or a job that exposes you to people your age. If you’ve got a focus and interest, follow it. You might end up refocusing. Just go for it. I don’t think you should limit yourself to one career.”

And, he says, the experiences and knowledge you acquire are things you can take back to your reserve. “It can benefit from your knowledge,” he says. “Even if you work towards your career goal, whatever job you take along the way, take from it what you can as it will enable you to get the money and experience to move you to the next level towards your goal. Follow your path. Your path may change along the way but that’s OK.” You might start at a wage of almost **$19 an hour** as a firefighter, he said, then become a crew leader at **over $22 an hour**. Moving up the ranks to Senior Forest Protection Officer, you’d earn **$33.59 per hour** and **as high as $106,000 annually** as a Fire Centre Manager, plus all medical, dental and other benefits on top.

They nicknamed him Jag, short for jaguar, the big, silent cat.

Besides the financial incentive, there’s a fun side to his work too. Brian’s experience in the forest allows him to move through it silently, often to the shock of his co-workers. They nicknamed him Jag, short for jaguar, the big, silent cat. A jaguar mask hangs on his office wall, a gift from co-workers. “They always thought I was sneaking around. I could just suddenly walk up behind them.” That’s how Brian walks through his life. Quietly, secure in the knowledge that he’s following the right path. It’s given him happiness, knowledge he can pass on and the ability to help others.

And that’s a good life.

Brian’s outdoor office and fire crew he mentors.

A Whale Of A Career

Common sense and education are what will help young First Nations people looking at careers in the resource sector ensure that those resources will be there for future generations, says Port Hardy fisherman and fishing charter operator Trevor Okimaw.

Trevor, who's half Cree and half Carrier, is descended from a long family line of guides. That history reaches back to the early 1900's, when his great-great-grandfather, the son of famed Carrier Chief Kwah, was a successful hunting and fishing guide in the Fort St. James area. Trevor's also worked in both forestry mills and the fisheries industry.

Looking a sperm whale in the eye, all in a day's work for Trevor, a fishing charter operator.

About 15 years ago, he accepted an invitation to go sport fishing near Kitimat. He was hooked on fishing guiding. His curiousity led him to a yacht that was part of another guiding operation, charging international clients $1,500 a day for a coho fishing trip. They were invited aboard the yacht and it got Trevor to thinking.

Trevor, who grew up far from the ocean, in Williams Lake, acknowledges there are some financial and other challenges to being in the fishing industry. The work is seasonal, mainly summers. Sometimes, you catch nothing because the fishery may be closed by the government to protect that species. **Average hourly wage in the fisheries industry was $17** in 2007, from the provincial government's *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*. But, he adds, "there are good things to it. There's a whole other world out there that hardly anyone knows exists . . . the whales, the birds, the sharks that you see," he says. "To look a sperm whale in the eye and know he's looking at you. There's nothing that describes that feeling."

Trevor is now going into his fourth season of chartering. He says he's had to draw on all his skills, as well as knowledge he picked up doing the resource officer training course at Malaspina College (now Vancouver Island University). At that point, he was on long-term disability and could no longer grade lumber in mills.

He was also struggling with the math until a teacher pointed out to him that if he could grade lumber, which involved math, he could grasp the other stuff. "Laws of fractions from grading apply to algebra," he laughs. And, the course challenged him. "It made me realize I could do things even though other people said I wouldn't be able to," he says.


An entertainment ability is an essential skill set.

Now, he's got a website up and running with the help of a designer, and has produced his own promotional pamphlets using his computer skills. He started making PowerPoint presentations for school and then progressed in that software suite to the pamphlets.

"What you do now, affects 30 years from now."

But, he says, it's giving clients the service they want that's paying off. "It's doubling almost every year basically through word of mouth," he explains. That's because Trevor combines his skills with common sense to help clients find the fish they want to catch. "If you are acutely aware of what you are doing and pay attention to small details, that's what will allow you to catch fish repeatedly," Trevor says. It's a major investment but he has the support of his family and is willing to work other jobs to supplement the fishing and guiding as the business grows to a profitable stage. "When you are chartering, you almost have to produce fish on demand," he says. "Salmon fishing is long periods of boredom mixed with brief periods of chaos."

And, it's not just fishing skills, he brings to guiding. "You need to have an entertainment factor," he says. "There are so many different hats you have to wear in a day when you're a charter boat operator."

And that's where more education has come in handy. Trevor has had to learn a lot of technology, such as depth sounders, radar units and 3D ocean-bottom graphing programs. "To be a good fisherman, you have to know how to look at your electronics," he explains. "You have to know how to read what you are seeing on them." With technological improvements, that means continuous learning. "You have to build on the skills you already have."

If young people on reserve choose a resource-based career, he said they must have the desire to reach their goals as well as a strong moral backing.

However, he says, they have to think about the effects of their use of the resource. "They have to look to the future," he says. "They have to think about their grandchildren. What you do now affects 30 years from now."
But, asked what makes it all worthwhile, Trevor cradles his coffee in his hands at his kitchen table and laughs. "I enjoy watching people catch fish. It's the smile they get - especially at the end of the day when they look at all the fish they have caught."

Giving Nature A Voice

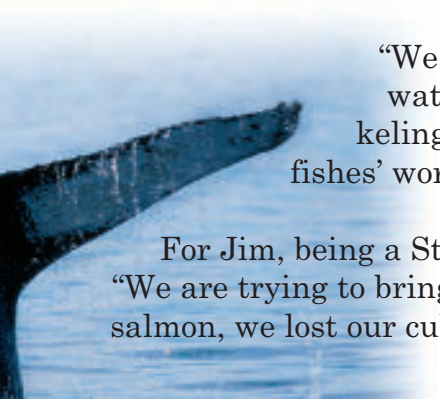
Jim Clarricoates' work is much more than just a job.

"I feel that I am going to church when I go to work," he said. "I chose this job because it is out in the field. It is a quiet place to work, and it is spiritually enhancing for you."

Jim is a Stewardship Technician for the Canadian Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission, a partnership between the Secwepemc and the Ktunaxa Nations. To an outside observer, Jim's job seems a lot like a wilderness adventure experience. What others might call

Jim, on right, gets paid for fun, travel & beautiful scenery, he says.

fishing, kayaking, or rafting, Jim calls a typical day at the office. "It's a lot of fun, travel and beautiful scenery. It's strange to be paid for something that you would do for fun."



"We spend about ten hours a day out in the field. We spend a lot of time by the water. We do a lot of boat work, wading and angling. We also do a lot of snorkeling. That's one of the funnest (*sic*) parts. That is when you get to step into the fishes' world and see it how they see it."

For Jim, being a Stewardship Technician benefits both the fish and his own Ktunaxa Nation. "We are trying to bring fish back, to bring First Nations into the radar screen. When we lost the salmon, we lost our culture. When we bring back the salmon, we bring back those celebrations,"

Jim said. “That’s important for the technicians. We speak for those who don’t have voices. We work for the protection of the fish and their natural habitat.”

A big part of Jim’s job is implanting radio transmitters into fish and tracking each fish as it moves through its habitat. “We have an outdoor operating room when we are implanting radio tags. We are a mobile MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) unit, pretty much. Rain or shine, light or dark, we are on the job. Tracking goes through the whole year. We follow where those fish go. Most streams have forestry roads beside them; other times we go on rafting trips or do aerial tracking by helicopter. During spawning, those fish can do a lot of traveling.”

Jim’s job bridges the gap between the worlds of scientific and First Nations knowledge. “I enjoy the transfer of knowledge between community, stewardship groups, and biologists. We try to bring aboriginal **knowledge so government will use both traditional and scientific knowledge.”**

His other target audience includes youths, passing that knowledge down to the next generation. “Part of my role as technician is to speak to schools. That fits well into my work. I do that whenever I can.”

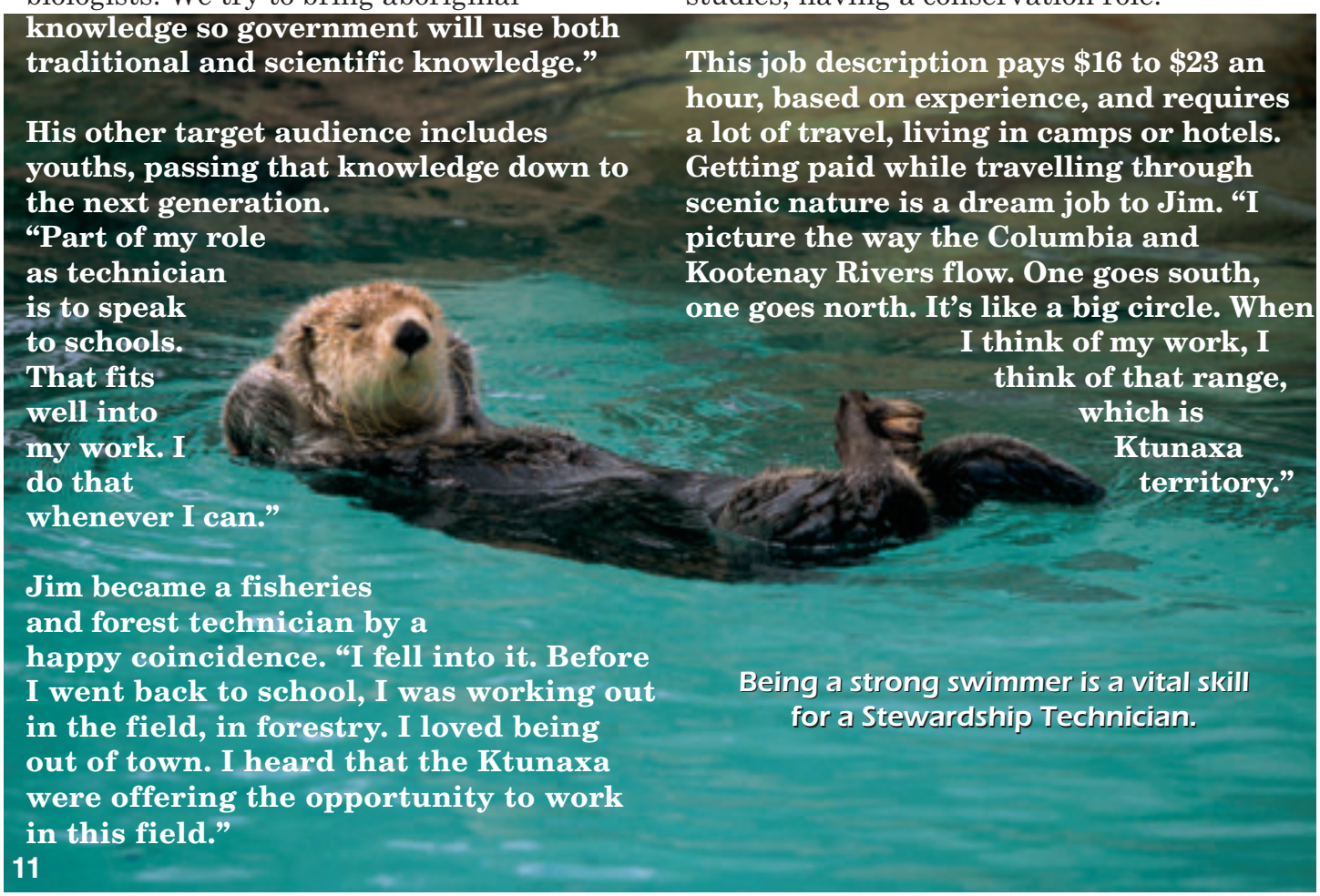
Jim became a fisheries and forest technician by a happy coincidence. “I fell into it. Before I went back to school, I was working out in the field, in forestry. I loved being out of town. I heard that the Ktunaxa were offering the opportunity to work in this field.”

Jim did one year of high school upgrading, then three years of Integrated Resource Management at the College of the Rockies in Cranbrook. Jim’s studies included courses in forestry and fisheries: statistics, biology, forest road construction, forest regeneration surveys, field fisheries techniques, and fish habitat assessment surveys.

“We speak for those who don’t have voices.”

Being a Stewardship Technician calls for a certain type of person.”You’ve got to be physically active, enjoy outdoor work, working with small groups and be a strong swimmer,” Jim said. “In some cases, you have to be diplomatic, especially on the river when you are mistaken for Department of Fisheries and Oceans enforcement. You have to explain you are First Nations doing environmental studies, having a conservation role.”

This job description pays $16 to $23 an hour, based on experience, and requires a lot of travel, living in camps or hotels. Getting paid while travelling through scenic nature is a dream job to Jim. “I picture the way the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers flow. One goes south, one goes north. It’s like a big circle. When I think of my work, I think of that range, which is Ktunaxa territory.”



Being a strong swimmer is a vital skill for a Stewardship Technician.

She Bears All For Work

For forestry graduate Carleigh Smart, education should never be held in a classroom.

"There is less personal space in a classroom than there is in a prison," she says when revealing her reasoning behind such a statement. "To me, the best learning is outside. I think we have a lot to learn from Mother Nature."

So committed to the idea is she that volunteering for Maple Ridge Environmental School (MRES) was a no brainer.

For 18 months steady, Carleigh took part in their programming she describes as "place-based" imaginative ecological education, which involves outdoor learning about the history, culture and environment of the local community. "I think any academic subject could be taught outside."

She hopes to one day open a similar institution to MRES in the Interior of BC, closer to her childhood roots. "I would love to pilot something like that in the Interior," says 26-year-old Carleigh who was born and raised in Vernon but now lives in Maple Ridge with her husband, a wildlife biologist and eight-month-old baby girl named Lucy.

When asked how she decided what her career path would be, Carleigh explains her lengthy decision-making process recognized that the outdoors was always a big factor. She maintained that passion for the outdoors, even though she's had some serious and scary nature encounters.

When working as a silviculturist, managing tree growth in Nakusp, BC one summer, Carleigh says she confronted a grizzly bear that became aggressive, curious "and didn't back down. He followed me and proceeded to do what they call a "bluff charge" (pretending to attack). I thought for sure my life was over."

Even two bear encounters didn't scare Carleigh off her career.

And if that was not enough, the following week, she came face to face with a black bear. "That experience wasn't quite as bad though," recalls Carleigh.

Neither incident scared her off the outdoors, however. She still believes strongly in protection of endangered animals, including bears, and plants.

While working on her Faculty of Forestry

Outdoor classrooms, such as local parks, are best, says Carleigh.

bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Conservation at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Carleigh had the opportunity to do some of her studies overseas. She spent one of her third-year, six-month semesters in Sweden. Besides absorbing the language at a very basic level, she says she was able to appreciate their structured way of studying. She felt this style was highly conducive to learning. "They have what they call a "Fika break" that they incorporate into each day. It's an opportunity to review what you have learned that day."

Defined as a social institution in Sweden, a Fika break is usually a coffee break and can be used as a noun or verb interchangeably. The Swedish culture holds Fikas in high regard, says Carleigh.

After Carleigh graduated from UBC in 2008, she says she knew she had more to accomplish in her educational journey.

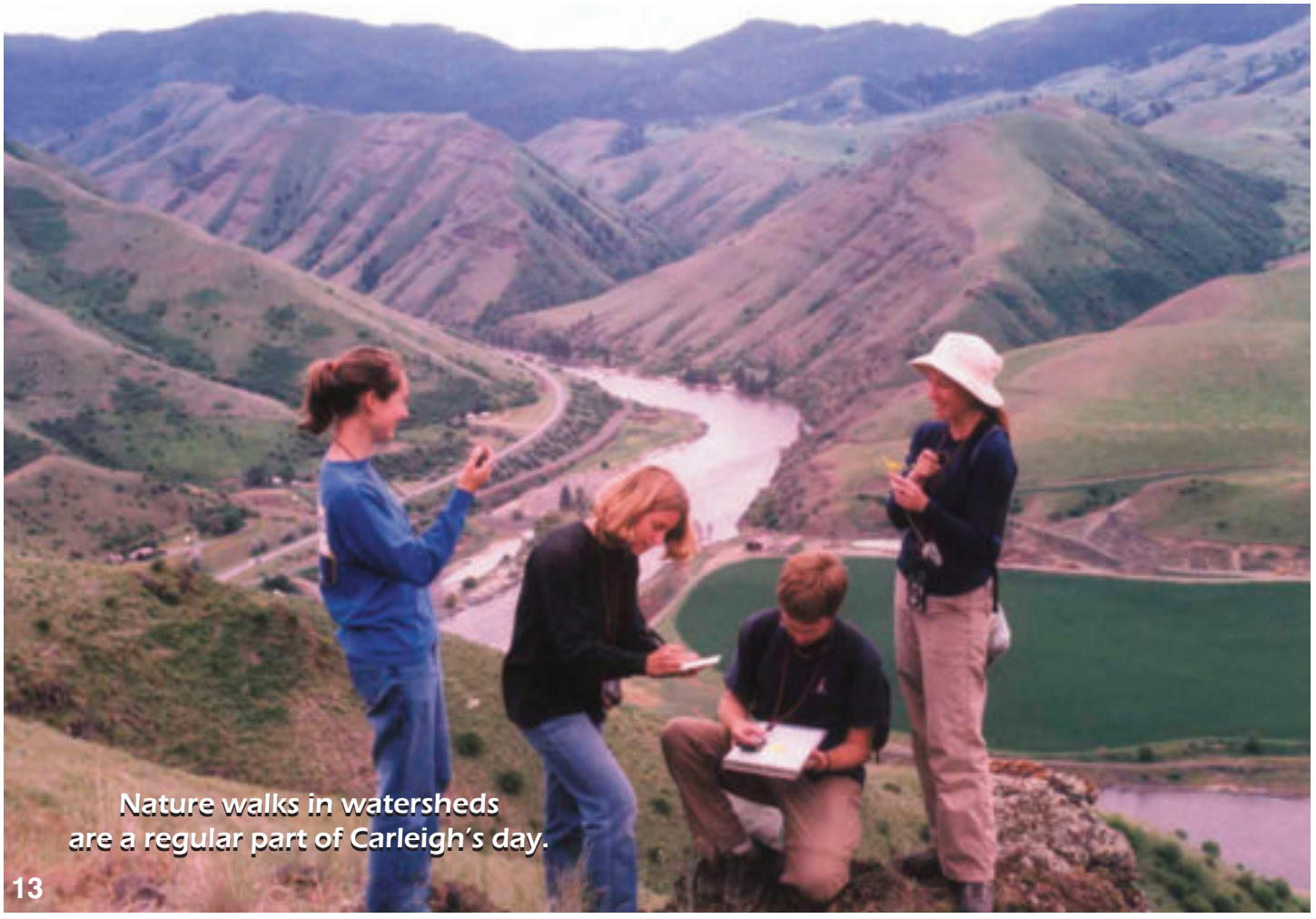
Drawing from her native roots on her dad's side, she was able to pray about what her next step in life should be. And her band, Carrier Sekani, was the answer to that prayer.

"They made it possible for me (helped financially) to do another year of university so as a result, I was able to get my education degree (from UBC)."

Carleigh completed her education degree in 2009 and then went to work utilizing both of her degrees. She works as an on-call elementary school teacher for the Langley School District, with all grades from Kindergarten to Grade 7. In addition to teaching general studies, she frequently incorporates environmental themes. The salary range for this kind of work is **$45,000 to $50,000 per year**, she said.

Carleigh also works with Kanaka Education and Environmental Partnership Society, called KEEPS for short.

Established as a society in December 1998, KEEPS has been involved with a number of different watershed stewardship



Nature walks in watersheds are a regular part of Carleigh's day.

activities that include mapping, restoration and monitoring. Their focus is largely community education, which is why they actively participate in BC's province-wide Rivers Day. On the last Sunday of September, when the event traditionally takes place, committee members take the public out on numerous educational activities including nature walks, kayak river trips and informal discussions about the common wildlife found in the local watershed, such as those managed by Metro Vancouver.

> "Embrace what's around you. From that, find a passion."

As fulfilling as the work is, says Carleigh, she would eventually like to pursue her dream of running an outdoor education institution located on or near a reserve as well as further promote the needs of First Nations students who are trying to choose careers.

Although she never experienced negativity throughout her years of study, Carleigh believes a lot of First Nations students struggle with a stigma by mainstream society. "You're assumed to have this free ride. You're assumed to be lazy. You're assumed to be a drunk."

But people do "want to see First Nations people succeed" and as a result, many educational opportunities are available to those interested, she said. "There are tons of scholarships out there, especially for First Nations women."

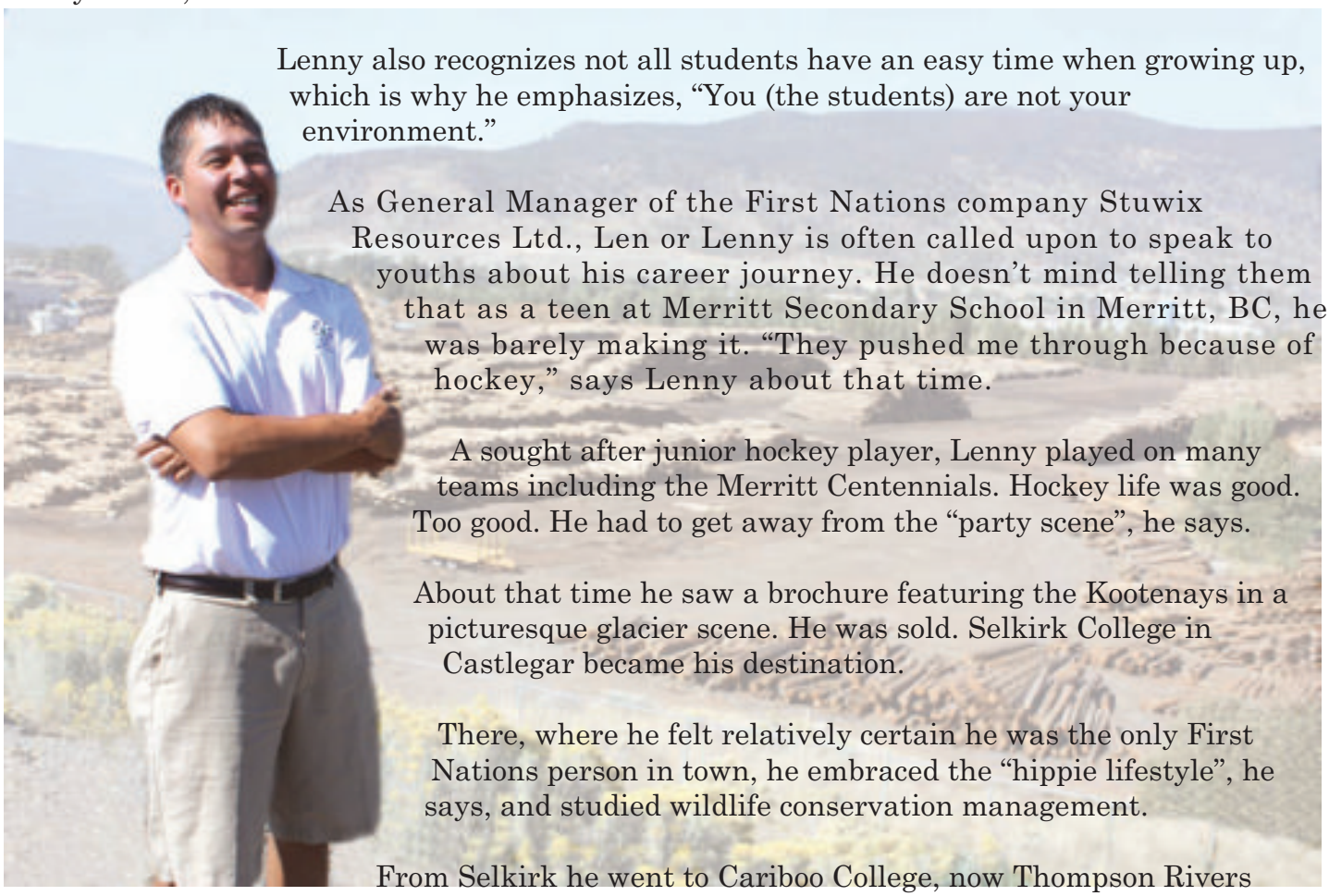
Carleigh says she hopes she can personally assist with building opportunities for First Nations students exploring their careers. Those who are preparing for their future should just take some time to go outside and "let yourself embrace what's around you and from that, find a passion," says Carleigh.

The road to aboriginal career success has stigma challenges as well as scholarship opportunities.

From Hippie To Professional Forester

Even C minus students have dreams.

Lenny Joe knew early on he was going to get an education and become a success. And having that faith in himself at an early impressionable age is something he preaches to students across the province now. “It’s simple advice, although not always easy to follow. Believe in yourself and trust yourself,” he tells them.



Lenny also recognizes not all students have an easy time when growing up, which is why he emphasizes, “You (the students) are not your environment.”

As General Manager of the First Nations company Stuwix Resources Ltd., Len or Lenny is often called upon to speak to youths about his career journey. He doesn’t mind telling them that as a teen at Merritt Secondary School in Merritt, BC, he was barely making it. “They pushed me through because of hockey,” says Lenny about that time.

A sought after junior hockey player, Lenny played on many teams including the Merritt Centennials. Hockey life was good. Too good. He had to get away from the “party scene”, he says.

About that time he saw a brochure featuring the Kootenays in a picturesque glacier scene. He was sold. Selkirk College in Castlegar became his destination.

There, where he felt relatively certain he was the only First Nations person in town, he embraced the “hippie lifestyle”, he says, and studied wildlife conservation management.

From Selkirk he went to Cariboo College, now Thompson Rivers University, and later UBC, where he graduated with an Honours Bachelors degree in Science. In 2006, a few years following his university days, he received his Registered Professional Forester certification, something less than 20 First Nations foresters could also say in the same year. “Now there might be 24 or 30 (First Nations foresters) who have their RPF status,” he estimates.

Before completing his education, he travelled to all corners of the world, including Singapore, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand. Although he loved the experience and says he learned many things about life, he still wanted to come back to his roots, the Nicola Valley. “I could have gone anywhere but this is home,” he says.

Besides the location, Lenny wanted his vocational path to incorporate traditional values. He made sure he would always say a prayer encompassing what his job duties were for that day. “When you are out there, you pray and you talk.”

Stuwix Resources or Stuwix to most is also entrenched in tradition, which is reflected in the company's logo. Last year, the company ran a local contest to see what residents could invent for a logo. The design that won was created by a high school student and incorporated eight people holding hands and circling a tree. Each person reflects one of the eight local bands that own the company: Shackan, Lower Nicola, Upper Nicola, Coldwater, Nooaitch, Cook's Ferry, Siska and Shulus. The artwork itself resembles the pictographs found in the local area decades ago. Pictographs are the ancient or prehistoric paintings or drawings found on cave or rock walls. The word Stuwix itself means the people and comes from the native language Nlaka'pamux which is being restored by Elders and the local post-secondary institution, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

"I could have gone anywhere, but this is home."

Tradition is very important to Lenny, who says he learned a lot of it from his grandfather who lived next door to him growing up. He now teaches it to local youth whenever he gets the opportunity. As a member of the Shackan band council, he helps with ceremonies for female and male youth who are entering into their adult years. Girls take part in a womanhood ceremony that involves teaching them about what it means to become a woman.

Boys follow the male adult ceremony otherwise known as the young warrior journey. Both ceremonies are challenging to teach, says Lenny, because neither have written instructions to follow and they both involve a number of different steps such as teaching youth the importance of sacrifice. "They may have to give up television or staying away from certain people," he explains. "It's all about healthy communities."

Like his lifestyle, Lenny's job at Stuwix, which started in January 2011, is all encompassing. He gets involved in numerous aspects that range from sourcing new trucks for the company and writing contracts for new employees to helping out in the bush, strategizing with agencies from across the country and fraternizing with provincial government leaders.

Lenny has had the opportunity to meet with former BC Premier Gordon Campbell as well as current Premier Christy Clark. He tells them Stuwix, established in 2004, is a highly successful private market fibre brokerage company that employs 10 people directly and 120 people indirectly. With an annual budget of $1,184,880, Stuwix manages 600,000 cubic metres of wood every year and is the only First Nations company in the BC Interior to hold a replaceable forest license. The primary species harvested in the area is Lodgepole

Lenny Joe at a workshop, sharing his knowledge and some laughs with peers.

pine but other species are included in the harvest, explains Lenny.

"From saw logs to full fibre utilization, we are a very innovative company because we have to be," says Lenny. That innovative energy is directed towards a number of business ventures including road building, silviculture and marketing.

Lenny has always tried to be professionally innovative himself and has channeled his energies into entrepreneurial efforts such as his consulting company Grizzly-Man Resource Management Ltd. Long before starting his career with Stuwix, Lenny founded Grizzly-Man, a First Nations forestry consulting company based on the Shulus Indian Reserve and named after his traditional Indian name. In addition to wildlife or habitat inventory, Grizzly-Man provides mapping, management plans and educational services.

For these specialized tasks by professional foresters, the salary range is **$51,000 to $80,000 per year**, depending on experience, states a recent salary survey by the Association of BC Forest Professionals. **General Managers earn between $71,000 to $100,000**.

When this single dad is not working as a General Manager, he's coaching hockey, making lunches for his three children, driving them to school, or running his homestead ranch, situated several miles out of town. A typical day for him starts at 5 am and incorporates "at least nine action items every day. And I wouldn't have it any other way," he says.

To inspire students contemplating future careers, he advises a forestry career is worth considering. "Almost anything you can think of, there's a job for it in forestry."

Wildlife inventory is a critical part of forestry consulting.

An Angel In Her Community

Whether you live in a busy metropolis or call a small town your home, homelessness is a reality that cannot be ignored. Perhaps no one knows that better than Comprehensive Community Planner Angel Ransom.

She lives in the BC community of Fort St James, where homelessness exists largely because the economy is moving along faster than the pace of infrastructure development. "Homelessness has become highly visible where I live," says the 26-year-old forestry graduate.

The billion dollar mine, Mount Milligan, (a copper and gold mining project) is largely why homes are in high demand as the town's economic future has improved with the promise of many new mining careers.

What was once a forestry town ravaged by Mountain Pine Beetle and the economic fallout it created is now a bustling community full of mine workers and related industries.

Angel, who spent much of her youth in Fort St. James, says she has seen the town

As one of only two certified BC instructors, Angel taught an aboriginal land-use planning course in Prince George at the Native Friendship Centre.

grow from a population of 1,400 to more than 2,500. "And if you count the outlying areas, the community is closer to 5,000 people."

The growth has meant Angel is extremely busy in her job that only started in July, 2011. Since beginning her holistic approach to planning sustainable living, she has had to learn about eight different aspects of community living that include housing, social development, lands and resources, governance, health, education, economic development and employment.

"From those themes, a high-level plan that can be put in place for 25 years or more has to be developed," explains Angel.

With only a year-long employment contract through her band, Nak'azdli, Angel knows she will not be able to produce such a detailed plan in this time. She does expect by the end of the year, however, she will have categorized the community's priorities into short, medium and long-term goals that can later be implemented.

For this type of work, she says the salary averages **$30 per hour** for entry level Land-Use Planners, **or about $54,600 annually**.

> "If I don't know it, I will learn it."

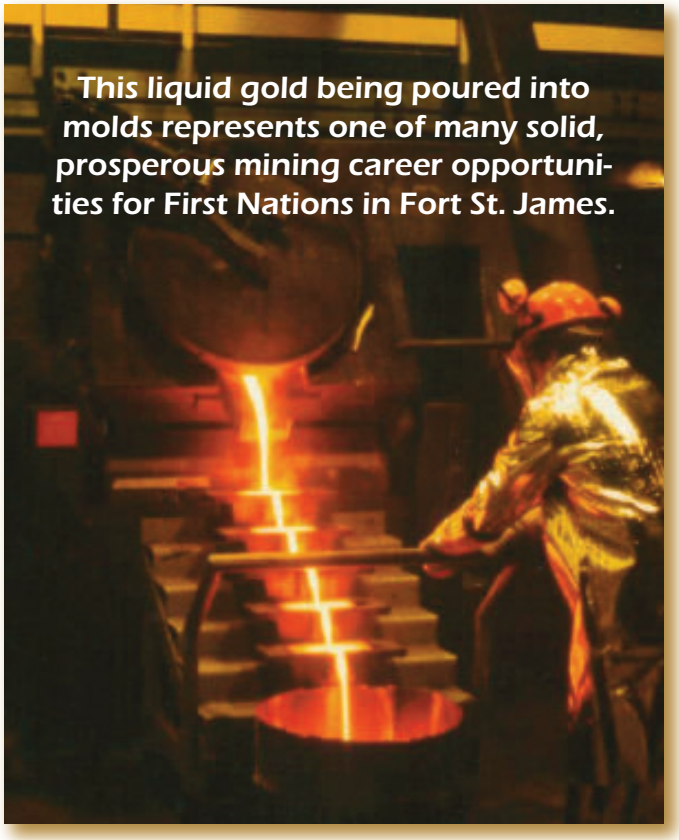
Part of her duties involve working closely with the Economic Development Officer of Fort St. James so the identified needs of her band align with the needs of the town itself. "I try to always collaborate with the city so we don't duplicate services," says Angel.

From holding community meetings and even meeting with people door-to-door, Angel says she has a good understanding of what Fort St. James residents want. "One key issue is having more people trained in different areas so they can train others for the services we need," she says.

Like so many other small communities, Angel's town and surrounding area has a shortage of doctors, especially ones who are willing to call the community their home.

Another identified priority is having a cultural centre within the town. Angel says residents would very much like to pass on the culture of the Carrier territory, something Angel already practices in her day-to-day activities. "I learn a new Carrier word every day," explains Angel who encourages her co-workers to do the same.

She says that passion for learning the language and better appreciating her aboriginal culture



This liquid gold being poured into molds represents one of many solid, prosperous mining career opportunities for First Nations in Fort St. James.

did not really come to her until her university days when she also figured out what her vocation in life should be.

Beginning as a student of nursing, Angel says it did not take her long to realize she was in the wrong field.

She then decided to move from Kamloops, BC, where she was enrolled in a Bachelor of Science nursing program. After speaking to an academic advisor at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, she realized that Environmental Planning was her passion.

While working towards her Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Planning with a major in First Nations Planning, she spent a great deal of time volunteering to mentor other students struggling with career choices.

The time was particularly difficult as not only were her studies demanding, she recently suffered the loss of two cousins, an uncle and one of her brothers. Speaking very openly about this experience, she said her brother had killed himself due to bullying. "I was only 16 at the time," she recalls. As losing him meant she had lost her best friend, she felt she wanted to quit school and drift. For a month, she did lose track of her goals, but luckily school staff intervened and convinced her to return and focus. "My two older brothers really stuck beside me too and gave me a lot of support," she adds.

Today, she feels she's grown from her experience, becoming a leader of sorts, especially because she is the first "community planner for her band."

"I can't believe some days I get paid to do this."

But, she recognizes she is young with much to learn, which is why she relies on the wisdom of the community's Elders. She always tells them, "If I don't know it, I will learn it." That attitude, combined with her commitment to always following up on everything she says she is going to do is what helps her be successful at her job.

In addition to her position with her band, Angel sometimes gets called to do special projects, such as instructing a four-week aboriginal land-use planning course in Prince George. Students who complete this course receive a Certificate of Completion from the Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources Society (BEAHR) and Eco-Canada. They are taught basic land-use skills that could help them become land-use planning assistants after they are done, explains Angel. "That's why this course is being offered – to address capacity issues in the communities," she adds. In all of BC, Angel is one of only two instructors qualified to teach the course.

This diversity of tasks keeps her work interesting and challenging. She loves all areas of her job, adding: "I can't believe some days I get paid to do this."

Careers In The Classroom

Maxime Lépine has worked in the forest, in a mine, and in a botanical research laboratory. Education and field experience have been the keys to Maxime's success.

Today, Maxime is a Forester-in-Training and a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialist. His job at a First Nations-owned forestry company based in Ucluelet offers a lot of variety, from computer work to preparing proposals for government. "Depending on the day, I could be in the field ... determining where to log," Maxime said. Or, he could be working with an archeologist, identifying culturally sensitive trees "so that they don't get cut down." His own Métis aboriginal ancestry gives him a unique interest in preserving culturally modified trees.

Maxime earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from the University of British Columbia (UBC). Majoring in Forest Resources Management, Maxime studied the science of the forest and forestry practices. Because aboriginal relations are important in forestry, his course also included aboriginal history, culture and land claims.

To qualify as a Forester-in-Training, Maxime took extra courses while studying at UBC. He needs to acquire field experience and pass an exam to earn his Registered Professional Forester designation.

While at UBC, Maxime had a work-study position at the Department of Botany. That job allowed Maxime to earn money and obtain work experience in his field. He worked with sunflowers that were part of a research project. "I would record when the plant flowers, how big the head gets, the size of the leaves and the width of the petals. They chose to study sunflowers because they are very beneficial to subsistence farmers in the south." This type of farming grows crops largely for the farm's occupants rather than for market.

Career growth at UBC Farm.

Maxime's post-secondary education began in Victoria when he entered the Environmental Technology program at Camosun College. There, Maxime took courses called "*Ecosystems and Human Activity*", "*Environmental Microbiology*", and "*Map and Air Photo Interpretation*".

Maxime in front of Myra Falls mine in Strathcona Park.

And In The Field

Maxime also worked in the field learning about ecology, and in the classroom about the technology used to study and measure natural systems. To become a specialist in GIS, Maxime learned how to make maps.

At Camosun, Maxime took advantage of the co-op or work-study program in mining. That allowed him to gain valuable work experience. Maxime spent part of three years working at the Myra Falls zinc and copper mine. He was part of the team monitoring the environmental impact of the mine. He tested water and soil samples, measuring parts per million of zinc, copper, and other heavy metals.

His experience leads him to recommend the mining industry as a career choice. "It's a very good industry to get into. Mining has quite a few different areas of work: geologists, mining technicians and engineers. Mines also need a lot of labourers, carpenters, people who run machinery, and assayers to analyze the content of rocks." First aid attendants with level three certification (Paramedic in Industry) earn more. PwC, (a multinational accounting network), in their *Seize the Day: Mining Industry in BC 2010* study, calculated the **average salary/benefits** for mining employees was **$108,100 for 2010**.

Forestry is another field that aboriginal youth should consider. "There is a lack of aboriginal representation in forestry...(with) an ever-growing market for Aboriginals in resource industries," Maxime said. "Land claims are being settled. That creates a demand for Aboriginals." Many opportunities, with varying pay scales, exist for aboriginal youth. Salary ranges from **"$40,000 - $80,000 per year,** depending if you go private. As a log broker, or owner of a log company or road building crew, you can make more than that."

People who succeed in the resource sector share certain qualities. "You have to enjoy the outdoors. You have to enjoy working with computers, and working with the public," Maxime said. "You need to be personable...talk to people, learn from others."

In college, Maxime learned that "you can learn anything if you put your mind to it. If you get out of high school and don't have science courses, you can still upgrade and get the courses and go down the path you choose."

"(Mining) is a very good industry to get into."

A High-Flying Career

It wasn't easy for Max McDonald to get started on his career. A college diploma was not enough to secure his future. So he went back to school. "I found that I wasn't getting a lot of success. I was not that marketable, so I went back to get the degree. That helped a ton," Max said.

First, Max studied for two years to get a Resource Management Technology Diploma at Vancouver Island University (VIU). Then, he went back to school for two more years to earn a Bachelor of Natural Resource Protection. Max's studies prepared him for his career as an Environmental Enforcement Officer. "There are a lot of people...(who) don't have a clear idea about what environmental law enforcement means. At VIU, they give you a really clear understanding of what you are going to do. I can walk into any environmental enforcement field and between my school and my work experience, I can succeed in those fairly well."

"The program has its own specific curriculum, including geography classes and cultural sensitivity classes. You take a lot of fish and wildlife identification. You get lots of great hands-on classes and labs," Max said. "For the first two years, you study basic stuff like math and English. You get some Canadian law and court procedure." Courses then became more complex. "You start doing population dynamics, hydrology courses. You start doing stream surveys. You build on the things you've already learned and it gets much more technical and marketable."

Today, Max is an Environmental Enforcement Officer for Environment Canada. He makes sure that environmental regulations are being respected. Based in Vancouver, he is part of a team of 11 officers responsible for a territory that covers a large area of Southern BC. Max's days at work are far from routine. The duties of an Environmental Enforcement Officer are varied. "I could be sitting at a desk working on a file, or I could be in the middle of winter in water taking a sample, or I could be in an industrial facility doing a PCB inspection (for environmentally toxic chemicals), looking at a huge transformer site taking a sample of oil," said Max. "That broad range makes this job difficult, but it makes it interesting too."

Lately, Max has been hard at work on an investigation into the illegal export of hazardous waste. "It started with a referral from another country which triggered an inspection that has since shifted into an investigation," he said. "We're still a long ways off for that one to be wrapped up. It'll be satisfying work at the end of the day."

"I was a B or C student in high school. But I was an A student in university."

When hiring enforcement officers, Environment Canada looks for people with post-secondary education in natural or environmental sciences, legal or police sciences, or criminology. Enforcement officers earn between **$45,000 to $72,000 a year**. A **manager can earn** up to **$90,000**. "Now **I am making close to $60,000**," Max said. "It's reasonable, You're not going to get rich working in the public service, but you don't go into public service to be rich."

Max's work history is broad. He has enforced laws against international trade in endangered species. He's worked as a backcountry park ranger in wilderness parks in BC and Alberta. He did a lot of facility inspections as well as enforcement. While a marine park ranger in the Southern Gulf Islands, Max spent his days boating instead of hiking. Max has particularly fond memories of his time as a park ranger in Kananaskis. There, his duties included high angle rope rescues and rescues by helicopter. "It was the most enjoyable job I've ever had and the most enjoyable job I will ever have. Period," said Max.

"You'd be dangling under a helicopter off the end of a long line."

"You'd be dangling under a helicopter off the end of a long line. You'd be in a quad (all-terrain vehicle) late at night. You'd be dealing with fishermen, drunk campers, and terrific, sober campers. I dealt with the attempted abduction of a young girl; I dealt with a sexual assault. You get all sorts of crazy stuff that you don't expect to happen in the bush."

Even with two post-secondary programs under his belt, Max's career development is not over yet. Max is now thinking about law school. His environmental enforcement experience has opened Max's eyes to a new career: a lawyer working on Native land claims, where his Métis aboriginal heritage may assist in negotiation efforts. "My job helped me see that being a lawyer is something that I am capable of doing," Max said.

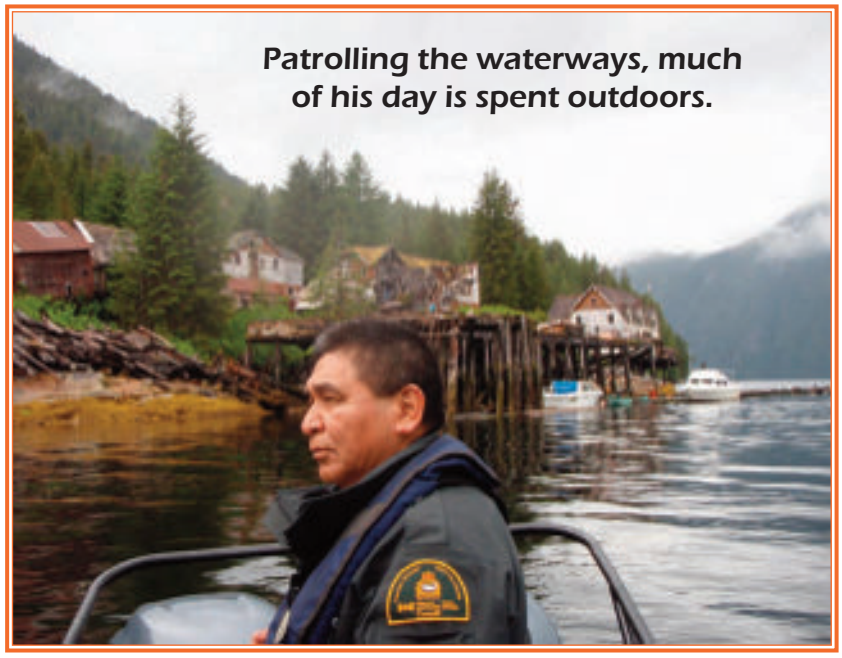
Max has some important advice for young people who may feel overwhelmed by the idea of going to university or college. "People have to keep in mind that they don't have to be the greatest, they don't have to be straight A students to succeed at university. I was a B or a C student in high school, but I was an A student in university. And once I had that degree in my hand, it opened up so many doors it was unbelievable."

Max watches over the environment and all its critters, including illegal trade in endangered species, like the eastern cougar.

Netting A Great Career

Leonard Guno covers a lot of territory—in every sense of the word. Leonard is a member of the Nisga'a Nation, and a Fishery Officer for Fisheries and Oceans Canada. "Because I am First Nations and I work for the federal government, I am a bridge to the community and a bridge to the federal government," Leonard said. "I go to meetings that are with First Nations. A lot of times when I speak, I introduce myself in my language. It surprises people because I'm wearing my uniform at the same time."

As a Fishery Officer, Leonard is engaged in law enforcement. That role starts at a **$44,000 salary per year and rises to $63,000** plus benefits.



Patrolling the waterways, much of his day is spent outdoors.

His uniform includes a service belt complete with handcuffs and pistol, and a bulletproof vest. "I enforce the Fisheries Act and laws that pertain to the Fisheries Act," Leonard said. "In spring and summer, this office does a lot of truck patrols to check the various streams." Patrols usually last a full day, he said. "If I come across any infractions, I have to enter them into our system when I get back, and let my supervisor know what I've done for the day."

In the winter months, Leonard prepares case files for trial. He also makes sure his Fisheries and Oceans' office in New Aiyansh is in good condition.

Law enforcement is only part of Leonard's duties as a Fishery Officer. His job also includes community outreach. "I love talking to youth about my experiences on the job and what it takes to get here." Leonard has paddled in two Gathering Strength Canoe Journeys. In those journeys, aboriginal youth travel along the coast to First Nations communities and participate in cultural activities. "Last summer we went on a ten-day journey to retrace the footsteps our forefathers have taken," Leonard said. "This journey was good. You could see the change in the youth as the journey went on. They started to open up and interact more. I never saw so many smiling faces," he said. "The Gathering Strength Canoe Journeys are a great tool for myself, both as Fishery Officer and as a community member. I've seen how the youth grow. They find strength within themselves."

"I love talking to youth about my experiences on the job."

Leonard decided to become a Fishery Officer after seven years employment with Nisga'a Fisheries. His inspiration for changing his career was his children. "I needed to inspire my kids. I

needed to show that it didn't matter how old you are, that you can go out there and get the job that you want," Leonard explained.

To qualify as a Fishery Officer, Leonard completed the Resource Management Officer Technician program at Vancouver Island University (VIU) in Nanaimo. During his two years at VIU, Leonard took classes in zoology, BC fisheries and wildlife, report writing, resource management, small motor repairs, self-defense, firearms safety, law, and investigative procedures. Fisheries and Oceans Canada also has its own training program for new officers. "We get training in everything we operate: boat operating for traveling in swift water and ocean, as well as emergency vehicle training. We're not supposed to do car chases, but that's exactly what it trains you for."

A Fishery Officer also needs skills that don't come from a book. **"You've got to be able to observe and take notes. You've got to be an analytical thinker. In this job there are so many different personalities and types, and they all work together. It's not about personality or attributes. It's how you apply yourself to get the job done."**

Leonard's Nisga'a heritage helps him in his work. "It's just the way we practice in our culture: respect and honesty. Our common bowl philosophy, *Say't-Kilim-Goot*, always helped me out," he explained. "We all share from that common bowl that life provides. That's how we survive and live from the land and the river. We all share and respect. That comes to mind when I do my job and when I was in school or in training." Leonard's very proud of his culture. "My culture is part of me. I've had my culture all my life, but I've had this job since only 2007. My culture is part of me when I do my job."

Leonard feels lucky to be a Fishery Officer. "Sometimes when you're out on a patrol, you look at the other officer and you say, 'They're actually paying us to be out here!' It's a good job. I enjoy it."

Like a grizzly, whose tracks Leonard pointed out on patrol, man and beast both depend on sustainability of fishing resources for survival.

Get fired up about your future career in BC's natural resources. Talk to your Elders, career counsellors, university/college admissions staff. Visit these websites below for information on career planning, post-secondary funding, housing & other education resources.

CanLearn - Planning Post-Secondary Education
www.canlearn.ca/eng/preparing/index.shtml

Aboriginal Canada
http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/eng/ao27032.html

BC Ministry of Advanced Education - Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education & Training
www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/student-resources.htm

Aboriginal Scholarships
www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc/welcome.htm