

FRONTIER COLLEGE LETTERS

One Hundred Years of Teaching, Learning & Nation Building

COMPILED BY LARRY KROTZ WITH ERICA MARTIN & PHILIP FERNANDEZ



Copyright © 1999 by Frontier College Press

Published by
Frontier College Press
35 Jacks Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4T 1E2
Canada

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Frontier College letters: one hundred years of teaching, learning and nation building

Includes index. ISBN 0-921031-
28-9

1. Frontier College -History.
2. Adult education -Canada -History.
3. Elementary education of adults -Canada -History.
4. Working class Education -Canada -History.
5. Adult education teachers -Canada Correspondence. I. Krotz, Larry, 1948-. II. Martin, Erica, 1968
III. Fernandez, Philip, 1953

LC5305.T67F764 1999 374'.971 C99-932070-X

Designed, Printed and Bound in Canada by New Concept Complete Printing & Publishing Services Ltd.

Preface

Early in this, our 100th anniversary year, I was speaking with an efficient and courteous official from the Canadian Historical Sites and Monuments Board. She had called to inform me that Frontier College had been designated as an historic site, and a plaque was being prepared, but she needed to know one thing:

"Where," she asked, "should the plaque be placed?"

"Where?" I repeated.

"Yes. What particular place in Canada is the Frontier College place?"

Now this is a question! What place in Canada is most truly *the* Frontier College place?

We considered a long list of potential places including: Pictou, Nova Scotia, our founder's birthplace; somewhere along the near infinite reach of Canada's railways; one of Frontier's former headquarter offices in downtown Toronto; the remote site in the midst of the Rockies where the earliest Reading Tents were pitched; Queen's University, where the founders studied and where the concept of Frontier College was first discussed; or some ghostly and ruined logging camp or mining site in the north.

What place, indeed.

Since 1899, all of these places have been Frontier College places; all of these places and countless others like them have contained Frontier College. Frontier College has existed and exists in every place where a teacher and students have gathered to study, to learn, and to share ideas or, in the eloquent words of our founder:

"Wherever and whenever (people) have
occasion to congregate, then and there shall
be the time, place and means of their
education. "

Alfred Fitzpatrick, 1920

These letters and documents, all written by Frontier College members from 1899 to the present, illustrate this unique identity. They show how we worked to achieve our mission of taking education to the people, wherever the people happened to be - from logging camps to inner city communities and from mining towns to prisons, factories and farms.

Because the real Frontier College "place" is in the hearts and dreams and imaginations of each person included in this book. It is also in the hearts and minds of the thousands of others like them who have served, worked, learned and taught with Canada's Frontier College.

Frontier College is an essential part of Canada's great vision in education -education for all. Not just education for a few or for "the best," but education for all.

We have come a long way towards achieving this vision since young Alfred Fitzpatrick set up his Reading Camp Association 100 years ago.

Yet still, today, poverty, injustice and isolation prevent too many people from fully realizing their potential and their brilliance. So long as such conditions exist, and in every place where such conditions exist, Frontier College members will continue to pursue our mission under our original and inspirational motto: READING TENT ALL WELCOME.

By the way, the historical plaque honoring all Frontier College members and all Frontier College places will be located at our national head office.

JOHNDANIEL O'LEARY
President, Frontier College
August 1999

Acknowledgments

Once it was decided to put together a book of letters for Frontier College's hundredth anniversary, it was necessary to go through a great deal of material in a short period of time.

I'm indebted, in particular, to Erica Martin and Philip Fernandez, who believed in this book, pushed it along, searched for and found materials, and, with Sandi Kiverago, tirelessly made decisions and suggestions.

I'm also indebted to the work done by James H. Morrison, author of a number of historical studies of Frontier College, the best known being *Camps and Classrooms* (1989). His thoughtful analysis provides a helpful guide to any of us who subsequently want to find our way through the College's story.

From the beginning this project received encouragement from Doug Gibson at McClelland & Stewart Ltd and some valuable editorial help from Alex Schultz. Great amounts of time and work were saved by Miriam Brown's fastidious scanning of hundreds of letters. In the end, final design and publishing was achieved by Manuel Gitterman and Barbara Seed of New Concept Press, who took a project with an impossible time-line, and made it happen.

A huge debt, of course, is owed to the thousands of authors who over the span of a hundred years committed to paper their observations, thoughts, arguments, beliefs and passions about Frontier College, its role and special approach to education. It is their work and their record that we celebrate here. As well as letters, Frontier College possesses a huge archive of remarkable photographs. Regrettably, few still carry any photographer credit, so they appear here un-captioned.

My first connection with Frontier College was as a Labourer-Teacher in 1971, followed by contact through some additional tasks in the late 1970's and early 80's. To return now to the College's dusty basement and sort through the memorabilia of its story has been a thrill and an honour. I want to thank Frontier College, and its president, John Daniel O'Leary, for giving me the opportunity to come back once again and take a role in this centennial project.

LARRY KROTZ
July 1999

Frontier College acknowledges the generous support of:



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART ONE.....	3
1899-1954	
Education and Democracy	
PART TWO.....	59
1954-1974	
Education and Modernity	
PART THREE.....	91
1974-1999	
Education and Survival	
CONCLUSION.....	135
INDEX OF CONTRIBUTORS.....	137
INDEX OF LOCATIONS.....	139

Introduction

For one hundred years, Frontier College has gone where no one else would go. Its great moral argument is that it went where no one else had the imagination to go. If illiterate or non-English speaking workers in lumber camps or construction gangs had no possibility of getting themselves to schools, Frontier College - doing what was to become its motto - took the teachers and the instruction to them. If, as in more recent times, migrant workers recruited from Mexico or the Caribbean found themselves isolated in some five acre-wide Canadian greenhouse or endless fruit orchard, they might look up and find that the friendly and approachable worker standing next to them was a Frontier College volunteer.

For a brief, optimistic moment in the 1920's, the full text of higher learning, from Greek to Geology, was considered for offer from this mobile university without walls. But the staple of its makeshift classrooms always remained basic literacy. Inmates in prison or homeless youth populating the inner city street might be where they were due to a lack of education. Frontier College sought out these people and organized the instructors who met them in their own places and on their terms.

Frontier College has done its work largely through volunteers. The College invented the term 'Labourer-Teacher,' and perhaps its greatest gift has been its ability to inspire young men and women, from Norman Bethune, Benjamin Spock, and Isabel Mackey, to Roy McMurtry and David Peterson. It offered thousands of these young people the chance to move into outlying communities and camps and, once there, to support themselves by working shoulder to shoulder with the people who, at the end of the shift, would become their students. This is an episodic history built largely on letters, reports and other bits of written paraphernalia - fitting for an organization which placed its foundations so solidly on reading and writing. Frontier College, from the very beginning, has inhabited a literate culture, a culture of letters and the written report. And it is through the observations, insights, and dialogue of a voluminous correspondence, penned by youthful instructors while sitting at their rickety desks or propped up in their bunks late at night, that its history has in substantial part been recorded.

The anecdotal history presented here, as Frontier College reaches its hundredth birthday, is a distillation of the letters and reports sent to the College's always tiny central office as well as those circulated back and forth among Labourer- Teachers themselves. The first epistles came from a few Ontario lumber camps, but eventually that source grew to encompass thousands of out-of-the-way locations in rural (and, more recently, urban) Canada. As they accumulated year by year, decade by decade, the letters reflect many things: particular times, people and changing values. They are insightful, reportorial, sometimes complaining, occasionally angry. Often they are funny. Some seem quaint or even politically incorrect by standards of a later, different age. But there is no mistaking the sincerity of their authors or the poignancy of their feelings, for these are the letters and reports of young men and women eager to make a difference. Sometimes these young people might seem naive. But they are also exceptional; in the optimism and mission they exude, they are acutely aware of having a role in creating a uniquely Canadian approach to education and social justice.

*Larry Krotz
July 1999*



PART ONE
1899–1954

Education
and
Democracy





PART ONE 1899-1954

Education and Democracy

In 1899, the northern Ontario Shield was dotted with lumber camps. Almost five hundred of them. The lumber camps were that era's work stations, for out of the unremitting vastness of that carpet of primordial forest was cut timber needed for building the still relatively young country, as well as the wood devoured for things like pulp and railway ties. And in the smoky density of the scattered bush camps, fuelling an industry heavily dependent on the brute physical labour that could only be exacted from humans (and perhaps horses) lived some 20,000 men.

The young minister of the Presbyterian Church at Nairn Centre, Ontario, west of Sudbury and not far from the jagged north coast of Georgian Bay, at this time, was a 37 year-old Nova Scotian named Alfred Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick, single and considered a bit of an eccentric, was in possession of a highly developed social conscience along with a restless sense of mission. Influenced by a Scottish notion of practical Christianity as well as the nascent Social Gospel movement and the teachings of Professor George Grant at his alma mater, Queen's University, Fitzpatrick took a look at these camps, a number of which lay in the vicinity of arm Centre. What he saw was not an abstract labour supply so much as men (the camps were populated almost exclusively by single men) who existed cut off from the larger society and denied the basic pleasures of culture, education, and enlightenment. "The camp men," he wrote later in his book *The University in Overalls*, "suffer not only from the physical discomforts of the bunkhouse, but also from the deadening monotony of camp life, the absence of culture, or of any refining and elevating influences." Fitzpatrick's sense of social justice immediately recognized the bush workers, many of them recent immigrants, as "the most useful classes." "The least they deserve," he wrote in 1905, "is not charity but social justice." "The crime," he warned, "of robbing not money alone, but what is worse, character, lies at our door."

Fitzpatrick's prescription was straight forward: after securing the good will of the lumber magnates, he would go from camp to camp, and in each would erect large tents called 'reading tents.' The organization would be called The Reading Camp Association, and its modest budgets would be financed through the donations of enlightened church people. For each tent, Fitzpatrick would recruit and send out young men - and occasionally women - of "good character" (and from "good families") most of them students on leave from their university studies. The task of these reading camp instructors would be to set up libraries, along with whatever adjacent services they determined might be needed to transport the light of civilization to the bush camp populations.

Thus Frontier College was born.

It was the most Canadian of enterprises. The hinterland wilderness has always been the defining fact of the Canadian reality and the Canadian identity. Canada's wealth, whether furs or minerals or timber, was extracted out of the wilderness. All activity there was extractive, as with mines and forests, or constructive, as in the building of railways and power dams. But this wilderness was likewise a forbidding place, not a place where "softies" could go (except perhaps in their imagination). The person who actually went into the Canadian wilderness - to live or to work or to settle - was expected to be macho in the extreme. But similarly such an individual was cloaked with a sort of ambivalence, for any person who could live in the wilderness was also a form of the mysterious and awe-inspiring "other."

At the turn of the century "the other" found its most consistent definition in "the immigrant." Immigrants to North America always provided the fodder for industrial labour, and the mines and camps of Canada's frontiers were no exception. The nineteenth century lumber, construction, railway and mining barons viewed the immigrant workers as muscle, motivated to work hard for low pay, but also as compliant in that they had few other alternatives. In a larger sense, the immigrant as worker was useful and necessary as today Mexican migrant workers are considered useful and necessary when they are imported to plant and harvest the crops that most Canadians would be unwilling to bend their backs for. The immigrant workers were necessary and appreciated when they were doing the heavy and the dirty work of building and extracting, but they were perceived as "not quite ready to sit at the table". At least not as that table was conceived by the tiny corner of Canada which considered itself civilized and settled. Look at the faces in the photographs from those days, and you see the extraordinary visages of people who have lived a hard life and come a long way. They have arrived from every place on the globe, but they are not quite "here" yet. They are sentenced to pay a generation's worth of dues before their children (if they survive and get that far) or their children's children have a chance to inherit the rights of full Canadian citizenship.

The opportunity to work with such men drew out a kind of larger than life response from the Frontier College volunteer, a response which made the College, from the beginning, a sort of mythic organization or mythic venture. We see evidence of this in the photograph [left] of a young wide-stanced Norman Bethune posing in 1911 with his workmates at the Victoria Harbour Lumber Company, Whitefish, Ontario. A similar image is projected in the photograph of Edmund Bradwin [opposite page], who signed on as an instructor in 1904 and stayed with the College for the next fifty years, taking over from



Alfred Fitzpatrick (second from right) visiting workers at a lumber camp. Third from left is Norman Bethune, who was a Labourer-Teacher at the camp.

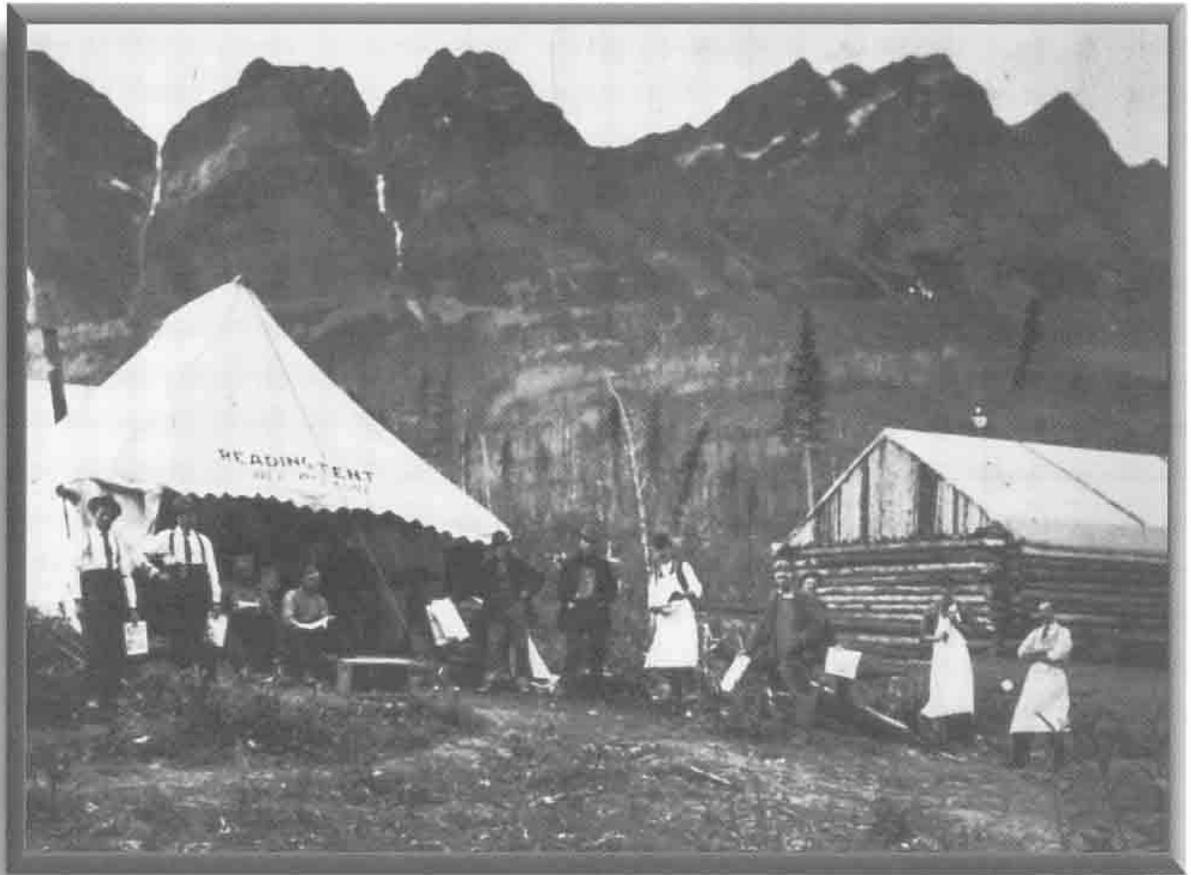
Fitzpatrick as Principal in 1933. Bradwin's first years were spent tramping through the countryside replacing the reading tents with small, more permanent log cabins, dozens of which he built single-handedly. During its first half century Frontier College lived a kind of dichotomy. Fitzpatrick, the Presbyterian minister whose wilderness attire was reminiscent of a weekend poet off for a tramp through the Lake Country embodied the word "college," Bradwin personified "frontier": rough-hewn, macho, earnest, clean living, straight forward.

Between the two of them, and the philosophical tension that danced between their ideas, these men set the tone for Frontier College's first half century: the democratization of education and a recognition of the best possibilities embodied in the working man. But their dreams would have amounted to nothing without the volunteer instructors they were able to recruit and send out, year after year after year.

Following here, first from a number of camp owners, and then from volunteer instructors, are some of the thousands of letters received - and sent - over Frontier College's first half century.



Edmund Bradwin



Cache Bay, Ontario
Feb. 18, 1902

Mr. A. Fitzpatrick

Dear Sir,

We regret very much having to turn the building, which we contemplated as a reading room, into a smallpox hospital this season, and as it has been in use for that purpose nearly all season, we have been unable to get the reading room in operation.



We may say that this idea of yours to have reading rooms at the camps is a good one, and will no doubt benefit the men greatly, and it is our intention to cooperate with you in every way we can next season, and have buildings put up expressly for this purpose early in the season.

Yours truly,

CEO. CORDON & CO

Gravenhurst, Ontario
Feb. 11, 1902

Rev. A. Fitzpatrick

My Dear Sir,

To my mind, it seems that libraries established in the lumbering and mining camps, such as you are organizing, should be highly commended and encouraged by the government, by the employers and by the men, who are in those remote places for such a length of time; as a work of this kind, if properly applied will no doubt benefit men who have not had the advantage of an early education, as well as give a further education to those who have had only a partial education, and it may also reach that class of people, who probably would not take advantage of literary privileges if they were not put before them in this way. A library of this nature, affording the opportunity of evening classes is no doubt very essential, and would supplement the work of our public schools for the older people working in the shanties.

I do sincerely recommend that this good work be carried on to its full extent, as there is no doubt that it will be a great benefit in many ways, and I trust there may be some steps taken to increase the present number of libraries, throughout the lumbering camps of the Dominion, by the Government's co-operation in this good work, as we are all aware that the better educated people are, the better citizens they become. I wish you every success in this your undertaking. Believe me, dear sir, sincerely yours,

J. CLAIRMONT
Agt. for The Rathburn Co.



Nairn Centre, Ontario

Feb. 15, 1902

Mr. Alfred Fitzpatrick

Dear Sir,

This is the second season that we have had the reading camp, and as we have had a long and fair trial of it, I take pleasure in testifying to its usefulness in camp life. The majority of our men took advantage of it, and appreciated its privileges. I think it is not too much to say that the health of our camp has improved, the sleeping camp being less crowded evenings, and Sundays, and there has been less jumping and fewer visits to the saloons. More men have written to their friends, and, in general, the moral tone of the camp has been raised. We shall try at least one, if not more, next year.

R. JACKSON

Agt. Victoria Harbor Lumber Co.

Sudbury, Ontario

February 15, 1902

Dear Sir,

The men like the reading room, and are specially taken up with the crokinole board. The majority of our men are French-Canadians, and they appreciate the French papers most. If it is not out of place, I would suggest a larger percentage of French books. Old Sunday-school books are not suitable.

HECTOR McDONALD

Carleton Place, Ontario

Feb. 16, 1902

Mr. Alfred Fitzpatrick

Dear Sir,

The reacting rooms are a decided success, I have seen forty men in one on Sunday afternoon, most of them writing letters or having letters written for them. One man told me it was the first time he had written home in six years. With regard to the literature most appreciated, newspapers are the favorite reading matter, but the men read or listen eagerly to one reacting aloud anything strongly humorous or pathetic – particularly poetry, e.g., Dr. Drummond's "Habitant," old ballads of war or love, much of Burns' poetry, and to mention single poems, such ones as, "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and "The Well of St. Keyne." In prose, Lever's novels, and the pathetic parts of Ian Maclaren seemed favorites.

Anyone who has seen the steady influence of the reading rooms on the men and their keen appreciation of them will join me in wishing the movement all success. The men themselves were uniformly courteous in the whole-hearted free and easy way of the woodsmen.

Let me close with the wish that your untiring and self-sacrificing efforts to better the condition of our woodsmen and miners meet with the success they deserve.

Yours sincerely,

J. F. MacDONALD



In 1902 one of Fitzpatrick's young instructors, a man named Angus Gray, invented the role of the labourer-Teacher. Bored with waiting for the men at Hall's lumber Camp, near Nairn Centre, to finish their day's work and come to his evening class, the University of Toronto student picked up an axe and went out to join them in the forest. The gesture solved two problems; it offered a natural connection between instructor and worker, and it created the means by which an organization with a shoestring budget might assure that its volunteers received pay. By 1903 and 1904, all reading camp instructors were, in fact, labourer-Teachers, and their reports from the field reflect this.

**Camp 3, Rat Portage Lumber Co.
March 15, 1903**

Dear Fitzpatrick,
My experience in this country has been very pleasant. I have been most considerately dealt with by the foreman, Mr. Blackie, and by the members of the company.

I have been getting on very well with my bush work, but am now chore boy pro tem.

The experience is unspeakably better than the student missionary gets. You are right in having the instructors engage in manual labor. We rub shoulders with the men, understand their problems, and learn to sympathize with their point of view. Besides, they are more interested in what one has to say.

The lengthening days of March are here and to whom are they longer than the "lumber jack"?

As the hours of labour lengthen the attendance on classes lessens. Camp will soon break up. A gang of fifteen men were "let go" lately. Still this is Sunday, and as I write, fourteen men are either reading or writing.

FRED MILLER

Tisdale, Saskatchewan
CNR
June 25, 1904

Dear Fitzpatrick,

You have not showed the best tact in handling the manager. He took offence at your address in Prince Albert. However, he has good common sense, and will overlook it.

We have a nice building now ready for a reading room. It is made of good lumber, 20 feet by 16 feet, with a nice large room upstairs for teaching, etc. We will soon have it nicely furnished, and it will be made very comfortable for the winter. There is a chance here for good work.

I gave a sacred concert (all by myself) last Sunday evening. They all took part in the singing, and seemed to enjoy it. I am teaching every night in the week, except Wednesday, and I am going to give a series of short addresses on those nights, together with music, etc. Next Wednesday I shall give the story of Romeo and Juliet, with some of the best readings from the play.

The men appreciate the reading room very much, and use it a great deal. Before and after meals for a while, and always in the evening it is pretty well filled. Some go in and use it even before breakfast.

Kindly send me some of the standard and up-to date novels, including Scott's, also some copies of the best poets.

Yours truly,

JOHN McEACHEN



Kaministikwia, Ontario
CPR Double Track
Sept. 17, 1907

Dear Mr. Fitzpatrick,

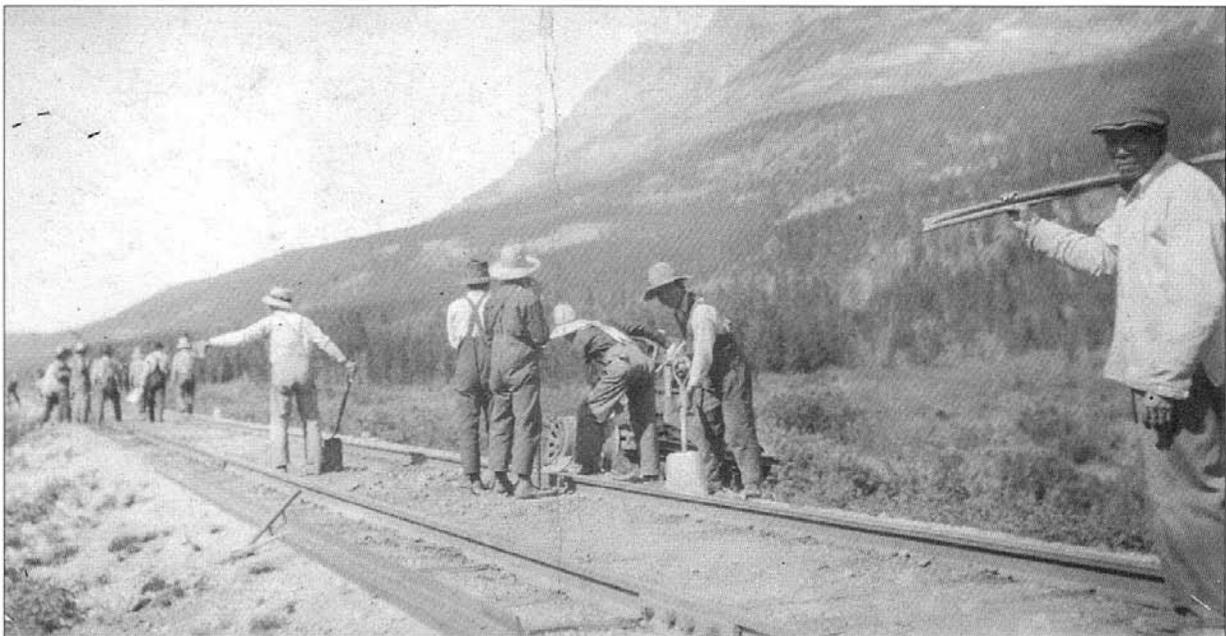
I wrote to Mr. Wearing concerning the work in our camp, but may be able to give you a more impartial account now. My first impression was that it was of little use to try to do much in the short time we were with the men, but I later became thoroughly convinced that the reading tent work met the very need of our camp, at least.

Among the foreigners the work is at once discouraging and enjoyable. Some are so completely ignorant of English that it is a liberal education to succeed in making yourself understood. This difficulty is experienced more particularly in the daily work. But on the other hand, there is much that encourages a person. I became acquainted with four different gangs of foreigners, and admired them for many qualities which I found lacking in my own countrymen. We had a superior class of Italians in our section. They came from Venice and northern Italy, and were strong, able-bodied, industrious, and cleanly. Moreover, they were not at all quarrelsome, and very readily grasped our ideas and manner of life, being particularly anxious to learn our language. Among these, and also in the case of a couple of Norwegians, I found my knowledge of French and German very useful, as some had been in the countries where these were spoken. The Galicians I found remarkable for their honesty and piety. Many tales regarding these could be told, some of which I can personally vouch for. They, too, were very anxious to learn the language, and seemed to take it up very readily. But the men who seemed to me to be the best material for citizens were the Scandinavians. These are men of magnificent physique, industrious, honest and honorable. Moreover, they are ambitious and progressive. Many are foremen, artisans or contractors, and all are of the best type of manhood. We had a few of these on our gang, and all were enthusiastic over our work. One of them came out to this country in the spring with no knowledge of our language and manners, but when I left this fall could read and write English fairly well, and could speak it so well that we could talk to him in ordinary language on almost any subject without selecting simple and easy words to explain our meaning. Most of my work with these people was done during the day's work, when they would ask me the English word for certain articles, etc. The nature of our work was such that we had frequent intervals of rest, and in these I used to take an old magazine and point out certain objects in pictures or advertisements and give the English name. For the more advanced these intervals were used as reading lessons, and on Sunday afternoons I devoted my time to the teaching or to personal talks, as opportunity arose, on English manner of life and ideas.

Some of the good effects of the work were lost by the frequent changes in our gang at the beginning of summer, for many of my first pupils left for various reasons. But nevertheless the teaching among the foreigners was productive of good and was made very pleasant by their evident gratitude for any favor, however small.

But with us the greatest problem was that of the English-speaking men. Many of these had been soldiers, or more often sailors, and had gathered a good many habits of an evil nature. Having seen only a very low order of living, they had no ideals, or no idea of decent living. Furthermore, they dreaded the inactivity of Sunday, so many of them used to go in to town on Saturday night with the work train, and besides spending Sunday in drinking, or worse, brought enough whiskey back on Monday morning to set the appetites of the rest going. But gradually they came to spend their Sundays reading, and read the books of the travelling library with almost ravenous eagerness. Now from this two great benefits accrued. First, they stayed away from town, and saved their money and characters, because they had something of interest to relieve the dread monotony of their previous Sundays. Second, they must have been unconsciously benefited by reading good books and magazines. As I said before, their ideals were so low that preaching would have very little effect, for an ordinary decent life had never been part of their experience; but not only the direct ideals but also the whole tone and atmosphere of this reading would by its interest for them impress upon them the belief in something better. It may seem a slow process, but it seemed to me to be about the *only* one that will meet the need. Apart from the ordinary influence of living decently among them, it seemed best to me to win their respect, and then do no "preaching," but merely in personal talks, when alone, point out as tactfully as possible some things that might interest them in college life, and indicate higher ideals or standards. I cannot speak of conditions in other camps, but I know that in ours the reading tent was welcomed by the men, and, I believe, did more good than any other form of influence would have.

F. C. MOYER



**Camp No.1, Canadian White Co.
Touchwood Hills, Saskatchewan
Nov. 1, 1907**

Dear Mr. Wearing, *

Silence, as you know, is due to occupation. Working on the grade, teaching most of the evenings, keeping the tent respectable, sawing wood for the stove, time is pretty much occupied.

My French class still keeps up pretty well. Camps 2 and 3 have each moved about, eighteen miles east of here. There is a great deal of finishing yet to be done, and the gangs left camp to be with headquarters here. That means about ten more men here to deal with. Two are Finns. One of the new arrivals is a young Frenchman of about eighteen years of age. He is very sharp and quick to learn. He wants to learn English. I am trying to help this fellow all I can, and every night last week he was over here, and I gave him some assistance. Several of the fellows want instruction in arithmetic, and I have mapped out a course which I think I can cover fairly well in about six or seven lectures. I will explain it all, and the fellows can take down the rules.

I give talks on geology and geography, and outline probable future developments in the way of canals, railways, mines, etc. I speak of methods of weather forecasting, importance of water-vapor in the air, winds, rains, action of water on cliffs, classification of clouds, etc. On these lines of study the boys seem uch interested.

We have occasionally a social evening, with several solos. One of the Galicians plays on the accordion, and several of them sing songs. I have a picture taken of my French class which I will send you. In the near future I will get three more taken, if you like: one of a class in mathematics, one of the Frenchmen and the Galicians, also one of the class in geography.

Seven new magazines arrived yesterday in the usual bundle of newspapers. Thanks very much. While I write the fellows are busy at them.

This tent is well patronized, and even the newcomers are trusting to my little sign outside- "Reading Tent. Everybody Welcome."

FRED SMITH

**Joseph Wearing was Western Secretary for the Reading
Camp Association in 1907.*

GTP Construction Camp
Touchwood Hills, Saskatchewan
Nov. 15, 1907

The camp from which I write is composed almost solely of foreign laborers fresh from their Galician homes. It is obvious that the assimilation of these people cannot be accomplished in a short time. It is rather a process, and not only so, but the means by which they become adequate citizens - their education - is also a process, tedious and often discouraging. I find that I have made a great step in teaching a foreigner when I have made his acquaintance. The Anglo-Saxon is repulsive to him, just as the foreigner is often repulsive to the Anglo-Saxon. So I can best teach him by winning his confidence and getting him to study me. I must work by his side, get him interested in my actions and my speech, and in that way entice him into my tent in his spare hours, when I can teach him more directly. In other words I must take the foreigners as crude material, and form the first mould. When that is done I have accomplished a great deal. And little more can be accomplished in one summer in a camp of this kind.

However, it is the work of the Reading Camp Association to begin, and to complete where possible, the molding of the foreigner, and to make of him a "citizen."

L. C. HARKNESS

CPR Double Track
Deception, Ontario
June 26, 1907

Dear Mr. Wearing,

A start has been made at the teaching, with very hopeful results. Six were present, and three or four more at least who are on the night gang and will have to be taught in the daytime.

Could you possibly secure a small dictionary of Swedish and English? It is useless explaining a word in English when they cannot understand the explanation. In the course of the summer some twenty-five foreigners, mostly Scandinavians and Swedes, attended the classes in English, although there were never more than five or six at one time. These men never made use of the library, as they were not far enough advanced, but a camp of Scotchmen were pleased to make use of it.



Although the Scandinavians were anxious to speak English, it was almost impossible to keep them at it. They would have preferred some sort of amusement, something to look forward to after the day's work, and I believe this would help to keep them from going to town so often for a good time. If it were possible to procure them cheap enough, a pool table in each tent would, I think, further the interest of the society.

Sincerely yours,
E.A. RICHARDSON

Escott Reid, the well-known Canadian diplomat and educator, introducing Prime Minister Lester Pearson to an audience at Toronto's Glendon College in 1966 remarked; "The Prime Minister and I have something in common. We are both minister's sons." He went on: "I remember working for Frontier College in the twenties. (Reid was a Labourer Teacher on a CNR extra gang at Southwold, Ontario in 1926). Our foreman used to shout: "C'mon you damn barbers and minister's sons!" Reid then admitted that he "never discovered what the foreman had against barbers."

Minister's sons, however, were another matter. You could say Frontier College has always acted out of a Canadian version of 'noblesse oblige.' The highly motivated and well-intentioned young men and women who worked for the college came from what were, by and large, privileged backgrounds. The fact that most were recruited out of the country's small university class underlined this. Their jobs with Frontier College, however, placed them shoulder to shoulder with the working people and immigrants of the evolving Canada. In the early days, the College unhesitatingly described its young people as coming from "good homes," the message being that some of what it delivered was a value system. "Making Good Canadian Citizens Out Of Our Foreign Workmen," blared its posters. This, likewise, was the promise given to the businesses and organizations who supported the College's work.

It's necessary to place these attitudes, though, in the context of the times. At the end of the Great War central Europe had collapsed and the Soviet Union had emerged out of a tumultuous revolution, one that was anti nationalistic and built on a philosophy of world-wide class struggle. Canadians took their patriotism seriously and weren't about to apologize for promoting citizenship with a certain missionary zeal. Nonetheless in the two-way street that is education, influences are never benign. Through Frontier College, young men from prestigious universities and possessing a good Canadian up-bringing found themselves face to face with their fellows who had been uprooted by war, were displaced from their families, and had lost everything. Since these men's experiences had left them cynical toward traditional philosophies, interesting encounters and clashes seemed inevitable.



Blackboard reads "Duties of the Citizen: understand our Govmt., take active part in politics, assist all good causes, lessen Intemperance, work for others."

1336 13th. Ave. West,
 Vancouver, B.C.
 March 27, 1919

Alfred Fitzpatrick,
 Frontier College, Toronto

Dear Sir:

Have seen one of your notices regarding "Combatting Bolshevism at its Source." I would very much like to have further information of this. I am at present completing my second year in the University of British Columbia, said year being 1st. year in Applied Science. One year in Arts is a pre-requisite to the Science course. This information would enable you to tell me just about what one would be required to teach.

I would also like to know what work would be engaged in, and in what part of the Dominion. The wages are also a consideration.

Thanking you in advance for the information, I am,
 Yours respectfully,

G. EVANS



The Labourer-Teacher with Finnish Miners
 (R. L. Cockfield (Queen's, Med.) Utility Man, Castle-Trethewey Mine)

The Labourer-Teacher with Ukrainian Navvies
 (F. Wishart, B.A., (Tor. Med.) Track Worker, End of Steel, Hudson Bay Co.)

WELFARE INSTRUCTION CANADIANIZATION COMPANIONSHIP

"I would not have the labourer sacrificed to the result. Let there be worse cotton and better men."—Emerson.

HEALTHY LEADERSHIP OFFSETS THE MENACE OF COMMUNISM IN CANADIAN CAMPS

SOME RESULTS OF THE YEAR:—

- 62 men carefully selected from Canadian and American universities have served in camp as "Guide, Philosopher and Friend."
- 1,559 adult workers have enrolled for study.
- 17,000 men on frontier works have benefitted from "Black-board Talks" and "Group Discussions" on Hygiene, Land Settlement, Canadian Geography, Thrift and Saving, Canada and its Provinces
- 47 dailies (both French and English)—53 phonographs with hundreds of records—14,500 magazines, and 760 books of fiction have been provided for men in bunkhouses.

**More than
 1200
 Labourer
 Teachers
 Have Carried
 Opportunities
 for Study to
 Workers in
 1100
 Isolated Camps
 of Canada**

WHAT THE PRESS SAYS:—

- "One of the most important agencies for adult education in Canada."—Daily Province, Vancouver.
- "No institution in Canada has more general good will than the Frontier College."—The Globe, Toronto.
- "C'est une invitation a etendre la culture intellectuelle dans tous les rangs de la societe."—La Presse, Montreal.
- "The Frontier College richly deserves public support."—Trades & Labour Congress Journal.
- "A remarkable Canadian institution."—New York Times.
- "An invaluable aid to workers in camps."—The Herald, Halifax.
- Every well meaning Canadian will wish this enterprise success."—Mail and Empire, Toronto.

THE FRONTIER COLLEGE MAKES NO CHARGE OF ANY KIND FOR SERVICES TO MEN IN CAMPS

1923

Report from Instructor John Hornal, Employed on a CPR Extra Gang near Banff, Alberta



These are some of the men who helped clear the right of way for the Hudson's Bay Railroad through the dense forests of the far north. They are stalwart Swedes, who, after a few years' residence in Canada, make a valuable type of citizen. It is among such men as these that the Frontier College does its work.

Making Good Canadian Citizens Out of Our Foreign Workmen

Every year thousands of workmen come to our shores from the crowded countries of Europe and a big proportion of these men find ready employment at railroad construction, in mining and lumber camps and in great Government works of various kinds. Few of these immigrants can either speak or write English. They are entire strangers to our manners, our customs, our laws, the organization of our society and our national ambitions.

If these men are to be turned into safe, sane and useful citizens it is obviously the duty of some organization to undertake the work of teaching them our language and our laws, and so to educate them that they will take an intelligent interest in Canadian affairs.

The one organization in Canada to-day which is doing this important work is the FRONTIER COLLEGE, long known as the Reading Camp Association. During the twenty years of its existence more than six hundred college trained men, for a season each, have donned the rough dress of the manual laborer and engaged with the toilers in every kind of work with the hands during the day, while spending the evenings in the education of the men. *This year there has been a Frontier College tent, car or building in sixty important railroad, lumber, industrial and mining camps in the Dominion, and the work is fast growing beyond even the most sanguine hopes of its founders.*

Your Partnership in the Work is Invited

Naturally, funds are needed to carry on such an extensive scheme. Eight of the Provincial Governments contribute each annually a stated sum, as well as scores of private individuals, but this year the expenditures have overrun the receipts by a considerable amount. *Funds are now needed not only to wipe out the existing deficit but ALSO TO MAKE PROVISION FOR THE NEEDS OF NEXT YEAR.* Over and above the Governments' limited aid, the Frontier College is entirely dependent upon public support for its existence. YOU are now asked for a subscription, and you may feel absolutely assured that every dollar you give will be spent wisely and well in transforming the rough, uneducated and untrained foreign laborer into an intelligent and useful citizen of the Dominion. *No cause is more worthy of your hearty support.*

Send in a donation AT ONCE. Make your check payable to the

Treasurer, Frontier College,
Bank of Hamilton Building,
67 Yonge St., Toronto

Tel. Main 4661

Officers of the Frontier College

PATRONS.

D. P. Hanna, Toronto.
M. J. O'Brien, Banff.
A. G. Browning, Edmonton.
Mrs. L. A. Hamilton, Toronto.
T. D. Hoachard, St. Hyacinthe, Que.
Sir Douglas Colin Cameron, Winnipeg.

OFFICERS.

Alfred Fitzpatrick, Principal.
E. W. Tremblay, M.A., Inspector.
H. W. Collins, B.A., Representative.
Miss Jessie Lucas, B.A., Secretary.

DIRECTORS.

Joe Playfair, Midland.
Dr. H. C. Denise, London.
Jas. Halpe, B.A., LL.B., Toronto.
Mrs. M. W. Gray, B.A., Quebec.
Jas. Halloway, K.C., Regina.
Mrs. Ralph Smith, Vancouver, B.C.

EXECUTIVE.

A. Fitzpatrick.
D. A. Dunlop.
Prof. L. T. Westman, M.A.

In my work as an instructor during the past season I did not attempt to teach just lip-loyalty among the foreign-born, but rather I tried to get them to understand our problems and their responsibilities towards them. I endeavored to do this by helping them to improve their English, then when talking with them I was able to point out on what our institutions were based and how they worked out.

Among the English-speaking my efforts were directed more to correcting erroneous impressions and to keeping alive and stimulating their taste for the better things of life than to actual instruction. This after a few weeks experience I decided was the ideal of the Frontier College and as its representative I have kept it before me, although I may not have lived up to it as I should have.

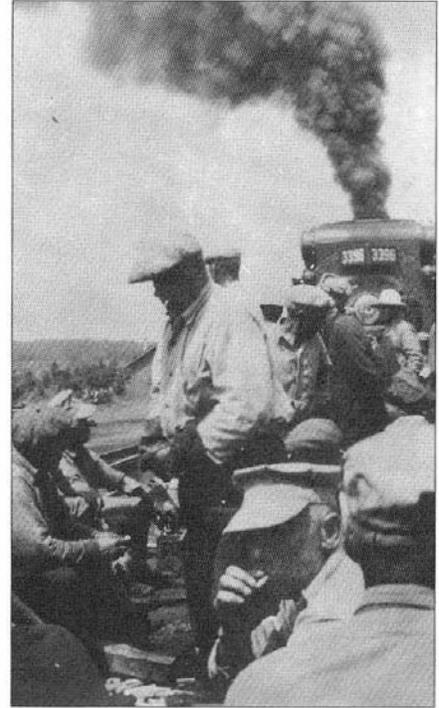
Perhaps the strongest impression left upon me by my summer's work was that the labourer under present economic conditions needed sympathy.

The next strongest impression probably was the difficulty of assimilating the foreign-born and their children, owing to the colony system of settlement and the preponderance of their numbers in the kinds of work they engage in, such as extra gang labour. They will not converse in the English language except when necessary and will not adopt Canadian customs unless there is a sufficient number of Canadians and Britishers to set a good example. For instance, in my first camp where there were quite a number of British the ordinary decencies of cleanliness and courtesy were observed. In my second camp where the ratio was 13 to 3 in favour of one single class, the Ruthenian, rather revolting conditions prevailed

1924
Report from D. Fraser McDonald, CNR
Hornepayne, Ontario

Two of the labourers, Russians, who were very expert poker players, had managed to secure about three hundred dollars each from their fellow workmen. With this amount of money in their possession, they became very indifferent regarding their work and conceived the idea of getting the whole gang to strike for higher wages. They believed that if their demands were not met, they should be discharged and receive a pass to wherever they wished to go.

The classes were just completing their work one evening when these two agitators, whom I had always regarded as friends, came into the Frontier College car. They unfolded their plan giving me to understand that all the others were favourable to the proposal. I was strongly urged (though not threatened) to join them for they indicated my influence as teacher would be great with the men. The hopelessness of the whole plan was pointed out to them but they refused to listen.



Thus I was left with the problem of my course of action to worry out before I retired. It did not require much time to decide which was the proper course; if I had any influence it was certainly wrong to use it to help direct a strike for which there was no justification. The problem, as far as I was concerned, resolved itself into whether I had enough "sand" in me to walk out alone in front of them all when the foreman called the next morning.

Sleep came at last and morning a little later and with it the confirmation of my decision to walk out as usual when the foreman called, come what may, for I believed it was the only proper course. At 7 o'clock the customary shout was heard, pulling on my coat I responded as usual. It was necessary to pass every car in order to reach the hand cars. The two leaders and some of their immediate friends were very angry. Had there been some convenient stones perhaps I should have been a suitable target. Some angry shouts of "Strike breaker" were hurled at me.

About fifty eight men followed my lead and came to the hand cars. The remainder, around twenty men, stayed in the cars and were promptly discharged by the foreman. The work proceeded as usual throughout the day. The reality of the incident was renewed, when I returned to the car in the evening. Everything was in absolute disorder, papers torn and strewn over the floor, books thrown about, some missing, my fountain pen broken, an eversharp pencil gone. So they had taken their revenge before their departure.

The papers were gathered up, the floor was swept and the classes were resumed as usual, and the trouble was soon forgotten; but the recollection of the incident is still very vivid in my mind. This was the only occasion during my sojourn that I caused the ill-will of any of the men.

I have commenced work on the road and must confess find it a little hard with the resultant effects - blisters and fully-developed symptoms of a kink in my vertebral column. However, I enjoy it and am sure I shall like it immensely later on.

**from Instructor
Norman Bethune's first report
from Whitefish, Ontario
October, 1911**



Page from 1923 Annual Report, with the caption "Thirty-four of the seventyfive College men who engaged in manual labour on the frontier camps of Canada during the summer of 1923 in order to serve their fellow toilers. 'And whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all'."

Toronto, Ontario
July 21, 1926

Frontier College Instructor
c/o Supt. Horn's Office, CNR.
Kenora, Ontario

Dear Spock:

We have received your letter of the 12th and note that you are somewhat discouraged in the effort you are making on the gang. I cannot give you any ready receipt for success, but one thing, I would suggest that you do not make the holding of a class the whole estimate of your work.

At the same time I do not want you to draw away from the Galicians and other foreign -born. As mentioned to you at different times, the foreign-born on your gang have no conception whatever of Canada other than that imparted by influence of an instructor such as yourself. Too frequently these men spend years simply as labourers, ignored by any agency that would bring a cultural influence into their lives. As you know by now, the foremen and the railway officials look for efficiency in the day's work. It is only the instructor who can give them a broader view on questions of everyday concern and widen their horizon as future citizens in the country.

The men on your work group shift so frequently that it is not simply what is done with the first group, but rather what influence you have with the whole turnover during your sojourn as a labourer. You have at least the opportunity of tempering or shaping, even to a small degree, some of these itinerant workers when en route.

Benjamin Speck, by his own admission, was not a sterling Labourer-Teacher. As a twenty three year-old in 1926, the man who would later become the world-famous pediatrician almost allowed a freight train to wipe out his crew mates along the CPR line at Kenora, Ontario. It was lunchtime and Ben, who'd been sent from Yale by his parents up to Canada to take on "the toughest summer job possible," left his post as flagman to take his break. In so doing, he failed to pay attention to the fact that the noon cattle train was running late that day and soon would be barreling down the tracks toward his unsuspecting workmates. When it did, they had only seconds to dive for cover and safety, leaving Spock a much-chastened young man.

This misadventure notwithstanding, Speck's stint with Frontier College provided a coming of age for a life whose further endeavors would demand character and hard work. The same was the case for numerous other young people who would make their marks later in life in many fields. Norman Bethune later became famous providing medical care for the guerilla army of Mao Ze Dong in China. Escott Reid went on to a career in diplomacy and was present at the creation of the United Nations, and Francis McNaughton became a distinguished neurologist. Three men who were to become high officials in the United Church of Canada, Moderators J.R. Mutchmor and Stanley McKay (the church's first Aboriginal moderator) as well as General Secretary George Morrison, were all Labourer Teachers. The list also included future politicians Roy McMurtry, David Peterson, David Kilgour, and Svend Robinson. These four men ended up in three different parties, but shared the experience of Frontier College.

In each case, as such prominent individuals might later reflect back on their life's formative moments, the broadening of the world and the challenges offered and met through their experiences with Frontier College were character-building life lessons.

Either by visiting in the different cars or by blackboard talks that will attract, endeavour to prove helpful to the men on the gang. These general talks could relate largely to current events, personal hygiene, saving and thrift, homesteading, or any other subject intimately connected with the hopes and aspirations of the men. Let me impress on you, Spock, that this is the real test of your ability as an instructor, and it is a try-out that will give you the most satisfaction.

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. E. W BRADWIN
*Director of Instructors **

** Bradwin would later become Principal of Frontier College.*

ITS PLACE
FRONTIER COLLEGE
ITS PURPOSE

COMPANIONSHIP — INSTRUCTION — CANADIANIZATION — LEADERSHIP
for Navvies, Bushmen, and Other Campmen Across Canada

Labourer-teachers of Frontier College share in the day's work; instruct English-speaking workers; teach the foreign-born labourers; and shape campmen toward health citizenship.
FRONTIER COLLEGE IS A PIONEER IN ADULT EDUCATION—Free Press, Winnipeg






















E. P. MCKINNEY, Univ. of N. B. Fraser Valley.
 JULIEN MARCOUX, Univ. of Mont. Comau Bale.
 M. K. OLIVER, McGill.
 H. W. POITS, McGill.
 H. J. MACDONALD, Toronto.
 R. J. DUCHARME, Cape Breton area.
 R. W. O'HANLEY, St. F. Xavier.
 M. HOPSTETTER, Dalhousie (Law). Western.

A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF LABOURER-TEACHERS

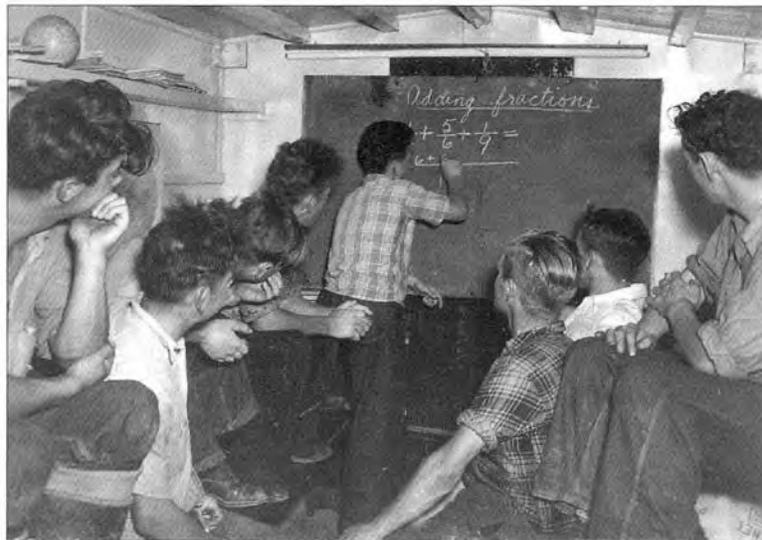
In the labourer-teacher the campman has alongside him a university man, with broad human qualities and a background of solid Canadianism.

(The Field Staff of Frontier College represents students from seventeen colleges and universities.)

**From a letter to Scott Young
April, 1957**

I was a complete failure as a teacher. The workmen were all Galicians who were very courteous and agreeable people but who apparently felt no need to learn English ... They came to my class in fair rapidly dwindling numbers for a few nights, apparently out of curiosity and politeness, and then stopped ... If I didn't teach anything I at least learned something about straightening track, laying track, sleeping on a wooden shelf, getting along without toilet facilities, washing clothes in a creek, resoling my shoes. In the evening the transcontinental limited would thunder past our box cars - way out in the muskeg wilderness - with elegant-looking people seated in the brightly lit diner or on the observation platform and it was hard for me to believe that I ever belonged to that world.

*BENJAMIN SPOCK
Instructor on CPR, Kenora, Ontario, 1926*



**Labourer-Teacher
Francis McNaughton,
CPR Extra Gang
Chapleau, Ontario**

I tried to get acquainted with everyone I could, and it kept me busy with a large gang like ours. We had nearly a hundred men at the beginning of June, and as they left, new batches would be sent up from Montreal called "contract labourers." I was most interested getting in among these fellows and learning about their past life, and all their little prejudices and peculiarities. I came to the conclusion that it was the most important thing that I could do - to study human nature in all its aspects, clean and dirty, good and bad alike - and it is a study that can never be finished. I wish that I could remember all of the men I met. I suppose I will never see most of them again or I might. They are wandering labourers for the most part, with no home, and no trade they can follow, about half the men on our gang were foreign born from Scandinavia, Poland, Roumania and Czecho-Slovakia - the rest were old country English and Irish, and French Canadian. They will only be names to you, but I will run over a few of them. I think first of Nick Dettling, a Jugo-Slavian, who spoke English and had read English books. He came on the gang for a couple of weeks when I was still new at the job - and feeling a bit lonely. He had bummed his way from Vancouver jumping trains. He had read Carlyle, and Stevenson and a lot of other books - so we had much in common. Frank Brousseau, called "Soup" was a Canadian boy, part French, part Indian, who was with us all summer. Very ignorant and not interested in becoming less so, but a good-talker and a great arguer. And I must mention old Jimmie, an old gray-bearded fellow who has been toiling on these tracks for some fifteen years, and can still work hard with a shovel, although he is near sixty; and there is "Red" and Longboat, and Scotty, and George Barker and so on.

When harvest time came around the middle of August, nearly all the men went East, to catch the harvester trains at Sudbury and a good many went to the bush to begin cutting wood.

We lived in old box cars fitted out with bunks, twelve to a car and there was also a cook car and dining cars and a "commissary car" attached. Our cook was a big Irish-Canadian - not a bad fellow. The cookees were very friendly to me, so I never went hungry to bed at night. Our meals were really not bad although most of the men grumbled. Of course the food was rough and plain but we had plenty of it. Bread, prunes, applesauce, sausage, bologna, greasy beans, potatoes, tomatoes, peas and corn were the main articles. Meat was always very tough and doubtful and cake was nothing like home, but still we never starved. Nevertheless I always enjoyed a good hotel meal when I got into Chapleau, at week ends, occasionally.

The pay on extra gangs is very poor, 24¢ per hour while you work, and deduct 90¢ per day for meals, so no one ever makes forty dollars a month. As a result the men are of the poorest class, or are foreigners newly arrived in Canada.

I made one discovery at least. It is impossible to get any kind of correct impression of a country from a railway train. At least it is impossible in Northern Ontario. Just as impossible as for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and for a similar reason. I am quite sure that nearly every man, woman and child who passed by us on the transcontinental trains, lounging on soft cushions - was quite bored with the endless succession of evergreens, and stagnant lakes and meandering creeks. But for we people living in our ramshackle train of cars on the siding, seeing the mists rise each morning from the swamps and the sun go down each night over the Tamaracs, and passing the same little creeks day after day - for us, I think, this was a wonderful country, with beauties all its own.

Carleton Place, Ontario
Oct. 31, 1919

Miss Christine Morton

Dear Miss Morton:

Since we began the work nineteen years ago we only employed two ladies. We regret our not being able to employ more, but conditions in the camp did not warrant it. We have recently, however, been thinking something of employing a few college trained girls at industrial plants, and if we decided to do so I will ask the favor of an interview with you at Carleton Place.

Should we decide to take up this phase of the work, you would require to work at the plant during the day and conduct classes, say four or five evenings a week.

Kindly let us hear from you.

Sincerely yours,
ALFRED FITZPATRICK
Principal

The first woman actually employed by Frontier College was Mrs. Alex Scott who, in 1900, administered the reading tent at the lumber camp near Whitefish, Ontario where her husband was foreman. After that, it would be almost two decades before another woman was involved. Alfred Fitzpatrick seemed, in all his recorded statements, to be quite encouraging of women. This didn't mean, however, that it was easy to find places for the ones, like Marjorie Wickwire, Miriam Chisholm, or Christine Morton who wished to join the cause. What follows are exchanges between the College and the earliest group of women to apply. The letters went back and forth to Fitzpatrick and, after 1922, often to Jessie Lucas who, for the next forty-three years, filled the role of College registrar and secretary, not to mention, in many people's opinion, the glue that held the whole operation together

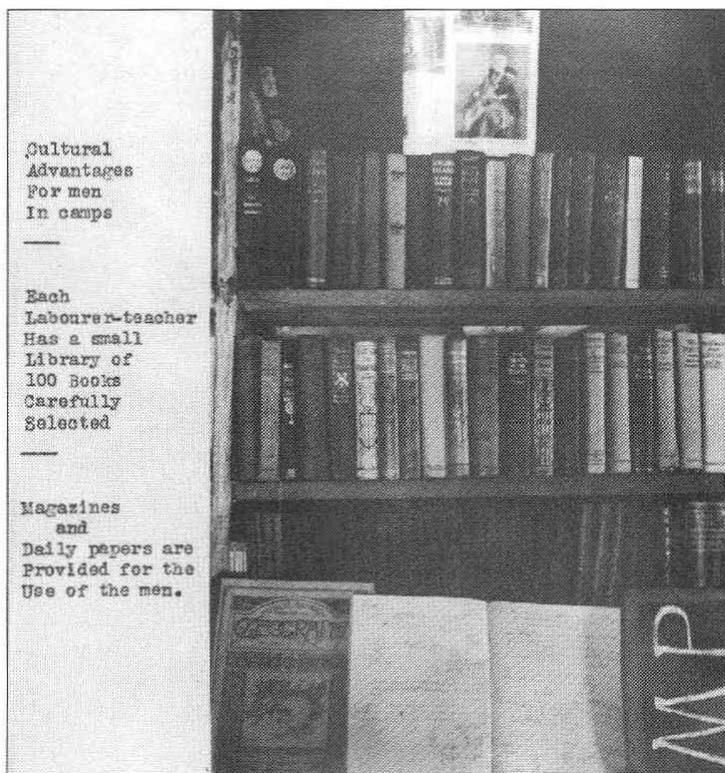
**Norumbega Cottage
Wellesley, Massachusetts
March 16, 1922**

My dear Mr. Fitzpatrick:

Your letter of February 23rd seemed to be rather discouraging, and I had hoped to see our vocational advisor again before replying. However, I have been unable to have a conference with her. Perhaps some of your fears of my not caring to do factory work would be removed if I tell you that I am for the most part working my way through college by waiting on table, washing dishes, cleaning floors, and so on. I have always been accustomed to work at home, and am certainly not afraid of working with my hands. My father is a minister who worked for several years on Indian reserves in Canada and is now doing home missionary work among the mountain whites in Virginia. I have therefore been thrown with people of the lower classes to a more or less degree practically all my life. I should really like to know more of the work, for my ideas are still very vague about what the work really looks forward to. I should not object to working in a factory if I were working toward some object. As for the guarantee, I really do not know. It seems as if the total should be a thousand a year, but if others are working for less and managing on that, I expect I could do the same.

Of course you realize that I am still a Junior, and would not be able to enter the work until summer or fall of 1923. However, if you could give me further information, I should greatly appreciate it. I assure you my interest is real.

Yours sincerely
MARY G. HUGHES



Text of poster used to recruit new Labourer-Teachers. Sidebar reads: "Cultural advantages for men in camps/ Each Labourer-Teacher has a small library of 100 books carefully selected/ Magazines and daily papes are provided for use of the men."

Toronto, Ontario
March 25, 1928

Miss Mary G. Hughes

Dear Miss Hughes:

We are much interested in your letter. Do you know of any factory where you could work in your vacation? So far we have never had any young ladies take this work up as a profession, but only as a stepping stone. I think we mentioned in a former letter that we have only had five or six women in the work. If you do not think of any place could let us know and if you still wish to try the work for your vacation we would look for employment for you where girls and women are employed. We find it much more difficult to find suitable places for women than men. Our experience is that the hours of labor are so long in factories that college girls find them too confining after a heavy year's study. We are hopeful that conditions of labor improve and hours are shortened, but these reforms come slowly. If can think of any place where you might find employment that would be more or less congenial, we would be glad to co-operate with you.

We have adopted a new schedule and you, being a junior, would be entitled to \$26.00 a month. The following is the scale of wages we have decided upon for this season:

1st yr.	\$22.00
2nd yr	24.00
3rd yr.	26.00
4th yr.	28.00
5th yr.	30.00

Three Dollars extra for each year's experience in Frontier College work.

Yours faithfully,

A. FITZPATRICK

London, Ontario

April 6, 1929

Dear Sir:

I wish to make application for work on the frontier this summer with Frontier College.

I am a sixth year medical student at University of Western Ontario medical school, London, and expect to graduate this coming May. Since we try our council exams in June, I will not be free till about June 1st and am under contract to begin intern work at St Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton, on October 1 1929.

I am a young woman, 28 years old, in perfect health as far as I know. I was born and raised on an Ontario farm, have always been used to hard work and plenty of it, and I want more. My summers have been spent at home taking a man's place in the fields. I can handle a team or hoe a corn patch or take off an apple crop better than I can sew or keep house but for all that, I can cook a good square meal. I can handle a carpenter's tools sufficiently to make shelves and cupboards, a dinner wagon or a passable cedar chest.

I took my B.A. at Western in 1926. My academic record is, I think, good. For further information in that line, I would refer you to Dr. A. B. MacCallum, dean of western Medical School, London. I spent a month last summer as apprentice in a doctor's office. I have worked in a medical class who were all boys but myself, and taken all lectures and clinics with them.

I have no financial resources of my own. As far as possible, I earned money at school by cataloguing books, acting as library assistant, doing private tutoring work and demonstrating to a class of junior Meds. Otherwise my father financed my college course. Following graduation I am going to hoe my own row, starting with nothing but a pair of good hands, a sound body, and some brains.

I am not socially popular, there was never time for that sort of thing, but I get on well with almost everybody - children or adults. I have had some musical training gleaned mostly from choirs or orchestras and can play piano or organ and violin cello. My father is an elder of the church at home and his numerous family have served and are serving in that church in different ways from Sunday School teaching to president of the Young People's Guild.

I have done some writing for the local papers and the University Gazette and am acting as historian for several organizations at the school.

I can't swim - there never was enough water near home in which to learn - nor paddle a canoe, nor use a rifle with much effect. But I can ride a horse bareback or sleep alone in the woods at night. And I have an increasing sense of humor.

I beg you to believe, sir, that the above facts are given without any idea of boastfulness, they are merely for your information. I hope they commend themselves to you as qualifications for work on the frontier, and further, I will try anything.

Following my intern work I plan to go north to establish a practice, but I would like to see and experience a little of the country first.

I am aware that most of the representatives of the College on the frontier are men, but surely there is a place for women there too. I want a job on the frontier this summer, a good hard one, and preferably under the auspices of the Frontier College. Can you place me?

Yours sincerely,

E. MARGARET STRANG

Toronto, Ontario
April 8, 1929

Miss E. Margaret Strang

Dear Miss Strang:

We have to-day received your letter of April 6th, and as Mr. Fitzpatrick is out of the City, I am writing to acknowledge it.

It is not customary for the Frontier College to employ women, but I know that Mr. Fitzpatrick will be interested in your application. He will not be back, probably, until the first of May, and I am afraid we cannot write you definitely until his return. I would advise you to write us again in about three weeks or so, and your letter will then be brought to his attention.

Your sincerely,

JESSIE LUCAS
Secretary



207 Kelsey St London, Ont
June 8, 1929.

Mr. G. Fitzpatrick, M.A.
Principal, Frontier College,
Toronto.

Dear Sir: I received your letter two days ago, and feel I must thank you for the trouble you are taking on my behalf. I shall be glad to fit in to whatever conditions I may find at Edlund. I should like to do chemical experiments for the classes as you suggest. And if I can work it in with my luggage, I may take my microscope with me too. I don't know much about cement brick, but have worked with my father in laying cement floors and making cement blocks. I should judge the process would be very similar.

Since last writing you, a number of things have happened at my home, which will delay me a little beyond the 18th of June. I could get away on the day if it was necessary, but I feel that it would not be fair for those at home. I hope that this will not upset any definite arrangements that may have been made for me in Toronto or at Edlund. If it does, please let me know. I don't think I could count on reaching Toronto before June 21st or 22nd, but will let you know definitely early that week. Kindly let me know if this delay is an inconvenience to you.

Yours sincerely,
E. Margaret Strang

London, Ontario
June 8, 1929

Dear Sir;

I received your letter a few days ago and feel I must thank you for the trouble you are taking on my behalf. I shall be glad to fit in to whatever conditions I may find at Edlund.

I should like to do chemical experiments for the classes as you suggest. And if I can work it in with my luggage, I may take my microscope with me too.

I don't know much about cement brick, but I have worked with my father in laying cement floors and making cement blocks. I should judge the process would be very similar.

Since last writing you a number of things have happened at my home which will delay me a little beyond the 18th of June. I could get away on the day if it was necessary but I feel it would not be fair for those at home. I hope that this will not upset any definite arrangements that may have been made for me in Toronto or at Edlund. If it does, please let me know. I don't think I could count on reaching Toronto before June 21st or 22nd but will let you know definitely early that week. Kindly let me know if this delay is an inconvenience to you.

Yours sincerely,

E. MARGARET STRANG

Edlund, Ontario
June 24, 1929

Dear Mr. Fitzpatrick:

Your brother told me he was writing to you and for me to add a line if I wished. I arrived safely here at 10:30 Sunday night. Your brother and Mr. Burcette were down at the track to meet me. They told me Mrs. Burcette was ill and asked if I would go over. I went over right straight and stayed the night. They got the French doctor out from Kapuskasing, and at 6 in the morning another boy arrived to swell the already numerous family of the Burcettes. I stayed till about ten o'clock and helped to straighten things as far as they could be straightened in that crowded cabin. Our brother came over, we got the trunk, and I settled down in the log house. Mr. Fitzpatrick came over last night for tea. He made pancakes and we had a royal feed.

I started school yesterday and four of the Brisettes came over. We had a big time. We started at two o'clock and school was out at 4:30. We studied arithmetic, geography, and history, went over the alphabet, and got the first six sounds. If the three smallest can't read a little by the time summer's over, I'll be disappointed. They're smart youngsters. Little Marie is quite an artist, or going to be one at least.

Then there were eight today. School overflowed into the other room. Three LeBlancs and some Fontaines came to learn English. My French is just about nil - I've forgotten most of what I did know. But one girl knew enough English to translate me to the others. We got along famously. I think some of them want to study music and there isn't a good elementary book here. I wonder if you could find a book called "Root's Pleasant Hours" in some of the music stores. It's the best beginner's book that I know of. There are enough scribblers here for the present, but I think a few more of the Canada Atlases could be made use of. And they need erasers - all those on the ends of their pencils are worn off. A dozen one cent soft rubber ones would do.

I'm going to teach every afternoon of the five school days, and some nights if anybody wants to come. July 1 is a holiday, and that day Mr. Fitzpatrick and I are going on a jaunt westward. We'll take the team and call on Mrs. Langdon and see about her two girls and some school for them.

Now about the car. Mr. Fitzpatrick and I have talked it over and agreed that we'd be better without it. It would be convenient for us, but all the neighbors would want to borrow it. Brissette, George and Albert all came home from Kapuskasing drunk tonight and nearly tore the Brissette house down. Mrs. B. was quite worked up and almost ill. I went over and by that time things had quieted a bit. It would never do to have a car with fellows like that borrowing it, which they would want to do straight off. So no car for us. A saddle would be very acceptable. George says there may be one at Edlund. We're going to hunt it out July 1." if there is one there. If not, we'll let you know and you could send one up.

Hope this is satisfactory to you.

Yours sincerely,
MARGARET STRANG

In 1919, the Reading Camp Association applied to the Government of Canada for a name change. After 1920 the organization would be called The Frontier College and in 1922, reflecting its national scope, Frontier College was granted a Dominion Charter. This gave it the authority to grant university degrees and seemed the fulfillment of Fitzpatrick's fondest dream: the recognition of the academic validity of extra mural study. A worker studying by lamplight in a bush camp bunkhouse could receive a university degree just as someone could in the ivy-covered halls of McGill or the University of Toronto. Fitzpatrick got busy putting together course calendars and curricula, engaging luminaries like Charles G. D. Roberts and C. D. Howe to write the syllabuses and act as examiners.

The dream, however, was short-lived. A mere three degrees were granted before all came crashing down. To make a long story short, Frontier College might have wanted to see itself on a par with the University of Toronto, but the inverse was not so. Canada's universities, led by the U of T, lobbied strenuously and Ontario, in 1932, succeeded in having Frontier College's degree granting powers rescinded. The philosophical argument was that the federal government, by chartering this unique institution, had stepped on constitutional powers held by the provinces. The naked power play, however, had Ontario refuse its substantial financial grant to Frontier College unless the College would cease handing out degrees. These were the early years of the Depression; the College's board, strapped as always for cash, voted to comply.

Fitzpatrick was devastated and resigned as principal. The end of the dream, some said, led to his early death in 1936. Frontier College went back to its stock-in-trade: informal education offered to those the rest of society had missed. The simple and straight-forward mission suited the man who took over from Fitzpatrick, Edmund Bradwin, just fine. He preached a return to basics, disavowed all competition with existing educational institutions, and as the relief camps of the 1930's Great Depression filled up with unemployed men, he was able to send out 200 labourer-teachers a year.

Bradwin's standard communication with the volunteers were brief, one-page missives called "Helps." Over his decades as principal he sent out dozens of these, part instructor manual, part philosophy. The following is the first, sent out probably in about 1930.



Geo. Luxton, of Trinity University, upper left corner, with Grand Trunk novices at Bridgeburg. Photo is taken outside a box car loaned to the Frontier College.

Financial Help is Needed To Citizenize Our Foreign Workmen

It is clearly obvious to every right-thinking Canadian that if the foreigners who come to our country, chiefly on the invitation of our Governments, are to be taught the English language and trained in good citizenship, someone must undertake this work. For 20 years the Frontier College (formerly the Reading Camp Association) has taken up the task, and during that time has had the assistance of over 500 University students. These students work during the day at manual jobs and teach in the evening, thus winning the confidence and respect of the foreigners. Money is now greatly needed to carry on the work this winter and next year. Will you help?

Extract from the Report of Instructor Geo. Luxton, 1st year Arts, Trinity College.

"I am just in receipt of a report made by Superintendent of the Grand Trunk Division, Mr. Cymbal, to whom Mr. G. A. Luxton, who has been conducting Frontier College work with our Union of 1931-1932. In sending me this report Mr. Cymbal states that Mr. Luxton's work in educating foreigners was quite successful, and he cannot speak too highly of this young man. I wish to congratulate the Frontier College on their success in carrying on the work of this character."



Men who work in brick, but whose art work is being better than that of any other. They are working for more pay, and are to teach all their men. As their flag shows, they are citizens.

WHAT THE G.T.R. THINKS OF THE WORK GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY WORKERS

George A. Fitzpatrick, Principal, Frontier College, 41 Temple Street, Toronto, Ont.

Dear Sir:

I am just in receipt of a report made by Superintendent of the Grand Trunk Division, Mr. Cymbal, to whom Mr. G. A. Luxton, who has been conducting Frontier College work with our Union of 1931-1932.

In sending me this report Mr. Cymbal states that Mr. Luxton's work in educating foreigners was quite successful, and he cannot speak too highly of this young man.

I wish to congratulate the Frontier College on their success in carrying on the work of this character.

Yours truly,
GEO. A. FITZPATRICK
Principal, Frontier College

SEND A SUBSCRIPTION TO-DAY

Treasurer Frontier College, Bank of Hamilton Bldg. Toronto, Ontario



A portable type of new 'Reading Camp' (formerly 'Reading Camp') which was used in the relief camps of the 1930's. It was used to teach the English language and citizenship to the unemployed men of the 1930's.

HELPS TO THE FIELD

As one fresh from the classroom where you have lived a sheltered life, pursuing ideals in freedom of thought, you are now brought into new surroundings of life. Situations will confront you that seem rough and uncouth, but nevertheless very human and real. Does it jar on you a little? It should not, for instead of mixing with fellow-students in the classroom, you are now employed with men, many of whom from early years have been at manual work - life and its bumps, in their case, has been very real. But if they can meet life in its varying aspects, why should the man be nonplussed who comes from a good home, reared with care, and blessed with university attainments. Can you, with your accomplishments, sit with men where they sit? Can you enter and share in their thoughts and questionings? If not, then something is wrong in your own training and preparation for life.

Throughout the weeks that lie ahead you will experience drab days, but your whole relationship should be enriched by a real opportunity to study firsthand and observe men who are hand-minded and industrious. Feel proud that you are in a position to help and counsel men who have not shared in

Always keep in mind the void that has pervaded the lives of these men, many of them your own age. They have been denied a whole lot. As a teacher, you can be refreshed mentally as you impart to others something of human values.

It has been said that, greater than all earth's woven creeds, is the eternal-possibility of man himself. Do not overlook the fact that the camp men, open-throated, hairy-breasted, have pushed their way, not infrequently, in the hard places. They have been tested by isolation, and although they do not express themselves in academic phrases, they have their own voice and do their own thinking. After all, keep in mind that these are they who have helped make this land. They dwell close to the earth and are kindred to it and the strong earth strengthens any man. It is not easy to measure the place of a Labourer- Teacher, but make the right approach in your efforts - give your best to the men!



SUGGESTIONS TO MEN ON THE FIELD

July 5, 1933

At this particular time when Canada has just passed its 66th birthday, I hope that you will take the opportunity, some time within the present week, to give a particular talk on CONFEDERATION. It is well to tell the story of the events immediately preceding the union of the British possessions in North America. Indicate briefly the apparent needs for a union of the various provinces, and sketch in outline the steps that were taken that gradually culminated in the passing of the British North America Act.

On page 65 of the Primer, you will find some facts and figures that will give you a basis for informative discussion. You will understand that the 1930 column is already three years old. Some of the figures indicated there have diminished and others have increased. You might add to the above tables the following three items.

1. In 1901 Canada had about 18,000 miles of railway, and 30 years later its railway mileage had increased to nearly 43,000.

2. In 1908, the first year in which motor vehicles were numbered, there were 3,033 in Canada. By 1932 this total had increased to 1,114,503.

3. Another item that may interest some of the men is that radio receiving sets, practically an innovation in the past ten years have increased in number until the present total is 600,000 throughout the country.

The General Talk on Confederation should occupy two or three evenings. Make your class a period in which you can point out some of the huge problems that confront this great stretch of land north of the Lakes, so often harsh and forbidding, and not always temperate in its climate. Have the men feel that they in place have a responsibility in the advancement and development of this great area.

For this land has been particularly favoured in its historical heritage - it is rooted in a Past full of legend and rich in Indian lore. The story of its development is resplendent with the romance of discovery, adventure, and exploration. Its pioneers possessed the rugged, human qualities that have made of the wilderness a land of comfort with peace and plenty.

Material benefits have enriched the Dominion - products from the woods, wheat from the Prairies, ore from the mines, and fish in abundance from coast waters and great inland Lakes. Population has increased slowly but steadily. In spite of the existing depression which has sapped this country for four years, Canadians have reason to look forward with contentment, confidence, and hope.

SUNDAY IN CAMP

July 19, 1933

Perhaps no day spent around a camp is so long and drab as a Sunday. All who have opportunity, or who are in any position to take advantage of the day, seek relaxation by leaving camp if possible, and thus get in some new environment. There are others, again, who, whether from disinclination, older years, or from duties at the camp, are precluded from going afield.

I am writing this note to suggest that, in so far as it is reasonable, the representative of the Frontier College will be in evidence among the men during the monotonous hours of a Sunday afternoon as well as any other time. There is something in the quiet, unobtrusive presence of a man who stays at his post when others are away. Exceptions, of course, have to be made occasionally, but it is not well when the question is asked on a Sunday: Where is the teacher? to hear nonchalant replies, such as: Oh, his friends called and took him for a ride, or, He has gone out with the clerk, or, He has gone into the city, or, Maybe he's away fishing, etc.

From long experience in camps I realize that naturally there comes a tug to one on a Sunday to leave his cabin, or his work, or tent, in fact, shake off the dust of the camp, and participate in some form of personal relaxation. We must be reasonable. At the same time, while one is acting as a labourer teacher, it is a good thing to have him consider that even his personal wishes for the time should be shaped to the needs of men who, during the spare hours of a Sunday, seem to look for companionship. There is a satisfaction to the "stay-at-camps" to know that the labourer-teacher, at least, has not ignored them, and is interestedly in evidence.

After all, the little human observances count with campmen. Migratory men congregated on isolated works are often sensitive, yes, and proud. Do not overlook them. When the final estimate is made of the worth of any instructor, it is usually based on human values. For this reason, let the campmen about you see that your heart is with them, not only in the games and recreation, and in the classroom when activity is all about, but also in the drab periods that beset camp life, particularly on a long Sunday afternoon. You have hung up your hat at the camp for a season, and a singleness of purpose should actuate your life and work among the campmen.



DO NOT LEAN TOWARD ONE SOLUTION FOR SOCIAL ILLS

1933

It is only natural that in the face of unsettled conditions now prevailing there should arise a great deal of discouragement and even despondency among the men. As a result, radicalism in one form and another will be offered as an immediate relief and a cure-all for the existing economic situation. I should, as I have endeavoured to do heretofore, advise you not to lean too strongly to anyone solution as a cure for the present social ills. In spite of what one may say, the conditions prevailing to-day are not the result of War Debts alone. Neither are they incurred entirely by High Tariffs, and equally so all the evils that exist cannot be laid at the door of the Capitalistic system.

We are particularly anxious that as a representative of the Frontier College you do not undertake to condemn the new and unusual solutions that are being made for the betterment of our institutions, for latent in all, no matter how grotesque, there lie the basic truths that will, when times are opportune, help fashion our social fabric along healthier and firmer lines. At the same time, however, it is not necessary to cozen semi-radical organizations such as the new Co-operative Party or the re-actionary powers that exercise despotic control in a vast country like Russia. The fact of the matter is that no man whether a student, a labourer-teacher, or philosopher, has in his hand the sole key that will unlock the maladjustments of society.

But the world moves on, and just as surely as one season follows another, there will arise as a result of the constant pruning, reshaping, the adding-to and the taking-from, existing social customs, modifications that will in the end prove a leavening in the social relations and which will work to the advantage of a greater number than at present.

Let it be the pride of Frontier College instructors that in these unsettled days they have given of themselves wholesomely in an effort to companion with men who too often have received the hard knocks of life. While not agreeing with the extreme radical proposals neither should we set out to denounce the "Reds" but rather may we have in mind the giving to the camp men of our best - providing them with something worthwhile to think about and to do in the long evenings at their disposal. For in the end, this unselfishness and the help thus rendered in a practical way will bring its own compensations, not only to the instructor himself, but in the realization of a better and more ordered thinking among the men about him.

The Great Depression threw millions out of work and set thousands of men off on aimless journeying back and forth across the country hoping to find the jobs that, at the same time, they knew weren't there. Eventually, as a relief measure, the federal government opened a string of camps where, on a minimum stipend of twenty cents a day plus their room and board, these men were put to work undertaking such public works as building the Trans-Canada Highway. The relief camps were the logical place for Frontier College to offer its services and it responded with vigor, soon doubling the number of Labourer-Teachers on its rolls.

But if this was an opportunity, it was not one without challenge and complication. The camps were run by the Department of National Defence, and with this new employer the College found itself walking a fine line. The men with whom its instructors were working were perhaps even more angry and radicalized than the Bolshevik and IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) influenced agitators had been back in 1919. However, a Frontier College worker was in camp under the auspices of the federal government which had to keep the lid on things. Walking this delicate line successfully required all the poise Bradwin and his troops could muster.

The next piece is a letter Bradwin sent on June 29, 1935, to all Frontier College instructors in Dominion Relief Camps

In common with other instructors located at various Relief Camps, you must, particularly at this time, hear considerable talk and criticism of life and work involved in the existing system of Unemployment Camps. There are some workers, pronounced in their views, who would desert the camps and trek toward Ottawa.

It is unfortunate that in a land like Canada, it has been found necessary to institute Relief Camps. Naturally there is resentment among many men, virile and ready to work, that they should be employed at labour which gets them nowhere and provides only sustenance and necessary maintenance

But even the Government itself does not pretend that Relief Camps provide work with real wages. The purpose of these camps is to give single, unemployed men who are destitute, food and clothing and shelter until such time as a betterment in industrial conditions makes possible the renewal of regular employment.

There is a feeling, of course, particularly among the uninformed, that governments should be in a position to create work for men and give wholesome employment with reasonable wages. This position seems particularly sound in the face of vast products and apparent plenty all about. The campman will frequently ask, Why then is there scarcity with any individual?

This idea is naturally accompanied with the belief that unused funds are available for any government, and that they have only to be tapped to set every man to work. Again, the campman will question, Why are not huge public works undertaken In a national effort to relieve unemployment?

Nevertheless, experiments made in various countries, during the last fifty years, in the way of public works show that even a national government cannot long make heavy expenditures - even with the well-intentioned purpose of providing work at lucrative wages to all. A little serious thought, also, will convince one that great outlays of a public nature must necessarily involve revenues raised largely by increased taxation. Taxation, however, may for a period get at sources of wealth that so far have eluded, but it is only a matter of time until possible revenues from taxation, itself, will dwindle and become insecure.

It is clear that in our Economic system, Distribution has not kept pace with Production. Realizing this, every government is seeking to bridge the discrepancies. Increased income taxes, business assessments, and the enlargement of public services for the benefit of the people all indicate the desire of governments to improve existing social conditions.

Notwithstanding these efforts, it is quite true there is still cause for resentment and discontent. But, is the best to be accomplished by endeavouring to increase complications among campmen? Such procedure, in the end, only reacts unfavourably on men already suffering from existing maladjustments. It is easy to theorize and offer solutions in individual cases, but governments desirous of obtaining a solution have the further advantage of seeing the whole problem from many angles and from diverse attitudes.

Do not enlarge unduly in your talks upon unemployment which besets so closely the men and workers about you. Align yourself in your thinking with the trend that actuates responsible men and women of the country who, after, all, are sincerely endeavouring to better things and are giving of themselves unstintingly in an effort to remove the cause of the depression with its attendant suffering. So many questions will come to you pertaining to social conditions that you should endeavour to allay grouch in a sympathetic way, rather than commend or promote the cause of unrest, distrust, and suspicion.

This letter is sent to you confidentially - I know you will use your own judgment in your intercourse with the men of your camp.

Hoping that you are well,
Yours sincerely,
PRINCIPAL



FROM BRADWIN:
SUGGESTIONS TO MEN IN THE FIELD
LABOURER-TEACHER - A CONSTRUCTIVE FACTOR IN CAMP

It is not necessary to point out to any representative of the Frontier College that in his dual capacity as a worker and a teacher, he has at times a difficult role to play. This is true, particularly at the present time when there is so much discontent rampant among men. This unrest, of course, is reflected in a work camp more than elsewhere. There are many wrongs to be righted, both social and economic. This is apparent to any thinking person, and we should keep our face to the sun, desirous in every way to better and improve man's relationship with man. That is, or should be, why you are a Labourer-Teacher - so that you can help better conditions among migratory men by giving them opportunity to turn their thoughts into wholesome channels.

There are always two extremes: those so constituted who hold back and begrudge any change that will mean dislocations; and those, again, with nothing to lose and everything to gain who would create a sudden upheaval, no matter what is the consequence. You should know that the way of all permanent progress lies between these two points of view. A continuance in any other course is a perversion of all true and orderly advance obscuring your goal which in the end would count most for the furtherance of human life, and civilization, and happiness.

In your position as a Labourer-Teacher, you are more or less a guest at camp - you have been invited to the camp and the doors have swung open to give you a place and recognition. As a representative of the Frontier College I hope that you will avoid all entanglements. There is so much that is helpful and wholesome, so much that is proved and tried, and is abiding, which any instructor can impart in the short time he is in the camp as a leader, that I am asking you to emphasize these, rather than undue discussions on social realignments.

However, in your endeavours to be helpful, do not allow yourself to be made a spear-head for the men in unreasonable demands, neither become a "tattle-tale" to the officials. But, teaching the men, and having the confidence of all, you are in a position at times to interpret, and to act constructively for either. For that you keep your poise: you should be the one in camp who is trusted - because of your fairness, your impartiality and the detachment from any animosities.

North Bay, Ontario
May 15, 1933

Mr. C. H. Fullerton
Deputy Minister
Dept. Northern Development
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Sir:

In connection with the Hon. Mr. Finlayson's request as to the work performed by the Frontier College men on the Trans-Canada Highway I submit the following report:

This Institution, with headquarters in Toronto, has been active in many of the Camps on this District for the past 18 months with the exception of a short interval last summer.

The men sent out are young and either graduates or undergraduates of a University. They are classed as Labourer-Teachers and after working all day with the men hold classes in the evening. They are invariably not only good in character but high in their ability to gain respect from the workmen and in making their classes popular enough to attract them.

These classes appeal mostly to the Foreigner who is anxious to improve himself in English and Geography, and in general knowledge of an elementary character. The English speaking students are taught writing and arithmetic and in special cases Algebra and French. The average number on the Roll is about 40 while the average attendance runs about half that number. Other subjects are taken up if asked for.

In the event of a disturbance the Teachers are sometimes able to tell those in charge where the seat of the trouble lies without being accused of talebearing, being in a good position to obtain the men's point of view. The Hut set apart for the 'School' is looked upon by the men as a Club Room and the Teacher as one to whom they can go for advice.

In conclusion the service given by the Frontier College Teachers so far as education is concerned, is distinctly praiseworthy, and the moral effect of their influence with the men is to be commended. Yours very truly,

G.A. WHITE
District Engineer

Sometimes there were problems. This letter, and the two following, between the College, officials of the Department of Defence, and contractors and superintendents give a bit of a feel for the delicate dance (and some less delicate pressures) that were intrinsic to the relationship between Frontier College and the Relief Camp administrations and structures in 1933 and 1934. The names of the instructors at issue have been deleted from the letters

H.Q. M.D. No. 11
WORK POINT BARRACKS
VICTORIA, B.C.
May 7, 1934

Dr. E.W. Bradwin, M.A., Ph.D.
Principal
The Frontier College
26 Queen Street East
TORONTO

Dear Dr. Bradwin,

Your letter of May 3rd has reached me this morning and I have gone carefully into the situation with Major Rycroft.

As you now know, _ has left. I entirely agree with you in your opinion of this young man who was inclined to take upon himself to act in various ways without any authority and we shall endeavour in the future to impress upon any men who may be appointed to a senior position that they shall take no action without instructions.

I think we are reaching a more distinct understanding as to the best method of administering your work here. As far as possible, all instructions should come to Major Rycroft and we will take steps to post your man to the most advantageous points and, if found advisable, move them from camp to camp if unsatisfactory conditions prevail. In this way I think we will obtain the maximum results. If you will direct any appointees you may make to communicate with us we will place them under the direction of the Group Superintendent and as new men are appointed, will develop small groups of Frontier College men in different areas with a leader, all operating under the instructions of the Group Superintendent.

I note that you expect to enlarge your work to at least eight or ten representatives until the Fall months and we shall be glad to have these reported to us as rapidly as possible. While we have had some reflection that men are more inclined to be interested in sports rather than educational matters during the Summer, it is quite evident that as you can obtain more men during that period our policy will be to see that they are utilized to the greatest possible advantage.

Sincerely yours,

E. C. ASHTON
Major General



Toronto, Ontario
February 8, 1934

Foreman MacGregor
Race Horse Camp
Dept. National Defence
Petawawa, Ontario

Dear Mr. MacGregor:

In a letter from Mr. Scott, senior instructor of the Frontier College at Petawawa, he gave me some details of the unfortunate beginning that _ made in starting his work as a labourer-teacher.

The Frontier College took this young man largely on the recommendation of his brother, who had done fine work as a Labourer-Teacher at Camp Borden and also at Hudson. (The brother), however, is older - twenty-eight years of age, and has apparently more experience of life.

If there is one thing more than another that we try to inculcate into young men going out on Frontier College work, it is that they must avoid all discussions of debatable questions, particularly anything that deals with social readjustments. We desire that the young men give what help they can to the men in the way of study and self improvement, and do not desire that any Frontier College representative pose as having a solution of social ills.

As I think this is the first time that one of our representatives has been at your camp, I wish to express regret to you personally that such a poor start was made, for it has been a satisfaction to the Frontier College throughout the years to know that it has sent out a pretty fair type of man as a representative. We endeavour in the first place to satisfy the local foreman. An instructor of the Frontier College should do a good day's work, and then render help to the men about him. We desire to have the instructor fit into the life of the camp with little friction - to help and not be a hindrance.

I should like sometime to send another representative to your camp, and I hope that Frontier College will yet have your approval and co-operation.

Wishing you success in your work as foreman, I remain,
Yours sincerely,

E. W. BRADWIN
Principal

F. G. Ongley
Highway Construction
Vermillion Bay, Ontario

Most instructors did succeed, however, during their time at the Relief camps. They were able to give reports like the two following.

It is nearly 7.45 P.M. The teacher collects his books together and makes his way to the dining hall. One of the cookees is already on the job for a long table is cleared of dishes and half a dozen lamps are burning brightly on the table. Slips of paper and books of various kinds are scattered along the table. The cookee hammers on the triangle and in a few seconds from all down the line of shacks, doors open, and dark forms emerge carrying scribblers and readers.



The men file in, many butting cigarettes at the door for further usage. Soon the table is full, some twenty-four men are busy writing on their slips, their names, the day and month. This is the beginners class, the men are mostly Ukrainians, with five Scandinavians, one Italian, one Lithuanian, and one Austrian. The readers are shared up one between two or three men. "Everybody look at picture forty-six, what is it?" "A broom" is the chorus. Whereupon the teacher produces a broom from under the table. "Who can spell broom?" John says BROUM, Mike says BRUM. "How

do we spell broom?" Adolf lights up and BROOM is written on the board. Everyone spells it together and writes it in his scribbler. "What do we do with the broom?" "Sveep de floor" comes from Bill. The teacher sweeps the floor, then Sam tries it. Sweep is finally spelt correctly and the sentence is given "John sweeps the floor with a broom." Looking about the table one sees some writing without trouble; others are trying different spellings for "floor" and "with" on scraps of paper, still others are completely lost and are looking over their neighbors' shoulder in a guilty manner. The class now has its nightly practice saying "TH" and "W." The Ukrainians enter heartily into the spirit of it and thoroughly enjoy making faces at one another. The Scandinavians are having a terrible time even to begin to make a face. There is then a chorus practice on, "with," "this," "that," "these," "those," "them," "wife," "window," "walk," "wash," and the like.

Time is up for the first class, it is now 8:35. The gong is sounded again, a few remain from the first class and new men come into the dining hall. This is the advanced class for Grammar and Geography. Tonight the lesson is on the present progressive, many examples are brought forward to illustrate the idea of continuous action, chiefly coming from the men. As a final example of this, the teacher obtains a set of dishes and a piece of bread and asks "What do we say now," expecting "The teacher is eating" but Tony with a merry twinkle in his eye shouts out "Pass de booter please." At which everyone bursts into a gale of laughter.

The time is soon up, 9:20 arrives and all leave except two. These are two very serious minded Ukrainians who are taking full advantage of the teacher. Every night for three months these two remained to struggle with Arithmetic for a half an hour. 9:50 comes all too quickly, the table is set up and the lights are blown out.

At ten o'clock the night watchman slowly strikes the gong ten times. Lights go out all around the camp except two, one in the kitchen and a low burning light in the teacher's shack. The teacher puts down his books in front of the shack and slips away to the lake shore for a quiet fifteen minutes. He returns to his shack and in a few minutes he has joined his voice to the other seven in the symphony of sleep. Occasionally the bass drum gets out of time and sleep becomes a little elusive.

A sound gradually grows louder and louder and louder and finally the teacher is aware that it is six o'clock and that the second cook is taking his daily dozen at the triangle. The whole camp is aroused and the wash houses are soon overflowing. There is a mad dash to breakfast and soon everyone is engaged in getting on the outside of as much as possible of porridge, hot cakes, sausages, bread and coffee, in quick time.

At 7:15 the triangle is sounded again and one hundred and thirty men start on the trek to work. There are three large gangs working, the first about three quarters of a mile from camp, the second gang about a mile and a half, and the third gang keeps on to the big hill two and a half miles from camp. The teacher tramps on with the third gang; it is a beautiful morning after nearly a week of rain. A doe and small fawn bound on to the road from the bush just ahead of them, look towards the men and unhurriedly disappear across the other side. Of course the teacher has left the camera at home this morning.



The teams arrive, shirts come off and picks and shovels begin to fly. Soon the straw boss comes around with a beckoning look in his eye and the teacher finds himself with some five other unfortunates composing a culvert gang with a particularly dirty job ahead, namely to lower one end of a culvert already down some eight feet and wedged in with rocks weighing from one to three hundred pounds. The teacher pairs off with a little "Stenli," a Lithuanian who gives a demonstration of tremendous strength and stamina. He and the teacher pull and lift together getting the sheer joy of muscular effort.

The mud and water being reached, rubber boots are donned and after a few vain attempts at remaining clean the gang jump into the muck and have a glorious time picking and digging. Every once in a while some one would slip off a foot hold and sink well over the rubber boots. The air increases in temperature after a few seconds which helps to dry up some of the water. It is a tired and mud bespattered gang which crawls out on top at noon for lunch.

During the day's work many opportunities arise to show the men that life isn't all work, eat and sleep with the occasional visit to town. Discussions on morals, marriage, religion, education, music and the like are brought up while waiting for the wagon to return, walking in and out of camp, at lunch hours. There were several long and arduous discussions on slum conditions. Walking in at night the discussion inevitably centered around food as prepared and eaten from the "jungle" to the "Royal York."

Boots are flung off as soon as home is reached, hot smelly socks are removed and hung up to add their small but efficient part to the sum total of camp smell in spite of open windows. Everyone seems rather glad to have the day behind and there is much shouting and laughter as everyone mills about washing with great gusto. The supper gong clangs and the ravenous band mob the dining hall.

After supper the swimming crowd congregates and all gaily leave camp, walk around the lake shore, strip off and plunge with every degree of gracefulness from the elephant to the whale, into eight feet of crystal clear spring water. It is a weird sight to see some twenty bodies swimming about with the top half almost black and from the waist down comparatively white. Some great contests are staged here. The fun and abandonment resembles a school boys outing, more than laborers from the highway.

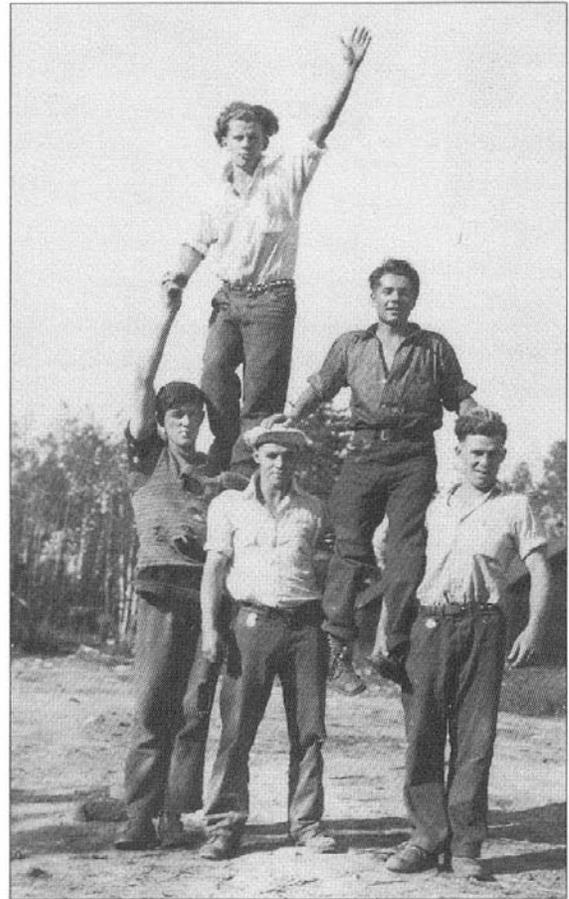
Saturday nights the steam bath is ready. This is a real treat for those who can take it. The Finlanders are absolutely at home, one rolly polly Finn sits on the topmost bench with his bucket of water and flings the water on to the red hot bricks; while everyone else almost suffocates with the heat and sweat, he screams with delight beating himself with a twitch of broad green leaves. Most of us finally stagger weakly to the door and stumble out into the blessed fresh air.

Sunday morning is one of great activity, being wash day, pots of water are hung over fires, the men are busy scrubbing and rubbing, many are washing fleece lined underwear in spite of temperature in the day of ninety degrees F. The Ukrainians seem to be able to keep white things better than anyone else. The teacher's white woolen socks became greyer and greyer as each wash day came around. Darning was the great problem, this was finally solved by entering the field of mathematics. The holes of the socks were carefully measured and when a reading of one inch was obtained the sock was numbered among the departed.

Sunday afternoon baseball is a joy which one can only experience. It is a combination of Trinity corridor baseball and inter-year soccer and rugby. The New Canadians enjoyed it immensely, oftentimes one base would have three runners on it all very excited and wondering what to do next, while the baseman struggled hard to hold them until assistance came, while the remaining half of the team would be prostrate with laughter. Some of the men should make good lacrosse players judging from their ability to catch the ball in their hats.

The teacher as a rule has letters of various kinds to write for the men on Sunday. Someone drops into the shack to borrow a book from the shelves around the teacher's bunk and a pleasant half an hour speeds away talking of books. As darkness falls a small crowd gets together and all sing to their hearts content. A little later the Ukrainian choir of some twenty men go back with heart and voices to the land of their birth and thrill us with their beautiful two and three part ballads in plaintive minor keys.

This is just a cross section of camp life as seen by a Frontier College instructor. As one goes back in memory to many of those happy scenes, the stark tragedy of the hopelessness in the lives of so many of those men is felt. Every stage of degeneracy in the English speaking man can be seen, the real hobo to the man who has just hopped his first freight; from the "rubby dub" addict to the fellow who has taken his first drink of "goof." For some the task of life has been much too hard, for others there does not seem to have been the first chance. When one sees a young immigrant after some three years in Canada with lots of real stuff in him, from a kind Irish home, but who in his brief stay here has sipped all the dregs of Canadian life because there has not been a break nor anyone interested to help, it does not make one very proud of one's country.



Let us take our hats off to the New Canadian, many brought out here under false pretences with tales of fabulous wealth, driven from cities where lies the only hope for advancement through education, to the backwoods. Here they are found, for the most part very clean, good workers, and good friends, treated as dogs by certain English speaking men, many of whom are not fit to black their shoes. How many of these men welcome someone who has come to give them a chance and to try to show them that there is a better Canada than that which they have met. One feels that the summer has not been with vain while the remembrance lasts of the warm grasp of a hard Finn's hand on saying good bye with his simple "Tanks for friendship."

1935
L. Gordon Bennett
Salmo, British Columbia

On the first day of my first job I was issued a complete set of khaki army fatigues, which I was to wear exclusively for that summer. Being dressed like my fellow occupants made a lot of sense; it made me "one of them," and from a practical point of view it was the only type of clothing suitable for the dustbowl environment. I observed that a few of the workers appeared on the week-ends in white shirts; I discovered that they had created their own "Sunday best" attire by the simple expedient of bleaching out the khaki colour from the regular government issue fatigue shirt.

With respect to details of my duties and my activities, I have retained copies of my monthly reports to the Toronto office of Frontier College. These are fully descriptive and are attached at the end of this narrative. There are, however, several vivid recollections which are not included in my official reports.

For example there was Michael Shanahan (who could forget a name like that?). Mike was in his sixties; he had left Ireland as a young lad and had worked all the years as an underground miner in B.C. Mike appreciated having someone to talk to, especially a willing listener, and he told me in his rich brogue of the "good old days in the emerald isle." But over the years Mike had never received a formal education; he was only able to scrawl his name. I hadn't been in the camps for more than a few days when he came to me with a letter from somewhere in the border States, addressed to him. "Would you read it for me, Perfessor?" (That was my nick-name at the camp). The contents were certainly surprising. It was evident that my Irish friend had been corresponding through a lonely hearts club and had established several lady pen-pals in the U.S. The letters were written, and read, by the timekeeper in the camp. As the time-keeper was away at the time, it was up to "the professor" to maintain the correspondence. I can still remember Mike's standard opening as he dictated his reply, "Hoping to find you in the best of health as it leaves me at present." The information exchanged between Mike and his lady friends appeared to be innocuous enough. On the lady's part it was mostly news of her activities on the farm, and her family. In some cases snapshots were enclosed. In Michael's case it was pretty routine; mostly small talk about working on the government airport. I recall one incident when I was placing his return address on the envelope, and as usual I read every word aloud before mailing it. "For god's sake, perfessor, don't put "Salmo Relief Camp" on the letter - I'm working for the Government Airport at Salmo, B.C." His point was well taken, and I assisted Mike in maintaining his identity as a government worker currently employed on the Trans Canada Airlines project. I must admit my youthful conscience was tested a little during this period. But when I could see how eagerly Mike looked forward to the mail van every day, and how pleased he was to have a contact with the outside world, how could I refuse his request?

When one's cash income is twenty cents a day, how does one spend his pay? There was a canteen next to the cook house, open for an hour or so each day. The big seller, of course, was tobacco. And that meant a pouch of Bull Durham ready-cut, along with a pack of cigarette papers. Candy bars and confections were also available but these were real luxuries. Aside from a few comic books there was very little reading material; most of the camp inhabitants were unable to read English. However, after a few weeks on location I discovered where a good portion of their monthly pay was spent. One week-end I noted an unusual amount of activity in the bunkhouses; some of the inhabitants were actually washing, shaving, and getting out their "Sunday best" shirts. "Are you coming with us, Professor? We're going up to Nelson for the week-end." Sure enough, a group of them had a 48-hour pass and I was invited to join them. Why not? Camp life was beginning to "get to me," and I was glad of the opportunity to get back to civilization for a couple of days.

We all jumped into the back of the "puddles jumper" and the driver took off the rugged mountain road to the city. When we arrived in Nelson I noted that my companions would drop off one at a time in front of houses along main street. "See you tomorrow" the driver shouted. As for the Professor, he was deposited at the door of the YMCA to meet a couple of his Frontier College buddies from neighboring camps. The three of us had a night on the town, including a good dinner at "the Y" and dancing in the local community hall.

Come next morning, in the back of the puddle-jumper, my camp-mates were swapping tales of their nocturnal activities. It soon became apparent that this was a monthly outing for many members of the camp. Each one of them had a particular lady friend in Nelson. For the total sum of three dollars cash, these ladies were good enough to provide the luxury of a hot bath, a full home-cooked meal, and a good night's rest between honest-to-goodness white sheets! Whatever else happened behind closed doors I will leave to your imagination. Suffice it to say, these would be the only females my friends would see, from one end of the month to the next.

Abbotsford, B.C.
June 14, 1936

Dear Mr. Yonemura:

I am breaking my rule of not answering any of the hundred and one applications to which I have not been able to accord an interview.

Some of these pieces prove a grim reminder of the tenor of the times in which they were written. For example, we might look at this exchange between G.H. Cockburn, Western Representative of Frontier College, and a job applicant of Japanese heritage. The year is 1936.

My ignorant fellow racials - I use the words advisedly and not insultingly - would prove inept pupils, and their foolishness would come between you and them. In extenuation of my race, I may say they are our lower castes.

Yet I am personally convinced you are the best of the applicants, and it more than hurts me to have to turn your application down. It is discrimination, but not my, not our, discrimination, but rather the ignorant prejudice of the mob. In this field it would defeat you, and I refuse to expose you to that defeat.

Thanking you for your application.

Yours,

G. H. *COCKBURN*

137 Hastings East, Vancouver
June 16, 1936

G. H. Cockburn Esq.
Abbotsford, B.C.

Dear Sir:

I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the kind and thoughtful sentiments you have expressed in the letter communicating to me of the refusal of my application.

May I add that your letter gave me perhaps as much joy and gratification as if the application had been accepted. It was truly good of you to have taken the trouble of sending it.

With regard to the "New Age," I regret very much to say that I have none of the copies left. It is now nearly four years since its last issue came out. Although I am aware that you were curious to see the format and contents of the paper as reflecting the thoughts and aspirations of the second generation Japanese in British Columbia and not particularly in my own scribblings, I am taking the liberty of enclosing herewith one loose clipping I was able to find in my scrapbook. It is a poor substitute to be sure, but it gives me the satisfaction of having complied with your request to the best I could.

Again thanking you for your kind letter I remain, sir

Yours most respectfully,

JAMES H. YONEMURA

Dr. Bradwin sent me \$20 to use at Christmas for the men who could not go home or who had no homes to go to. Since there was nothing in camp to buy for such an occasion, I wrote to Eaton's explaining the situation, asking them to supply what they could for the money in the shape of cakes, cookies, candy, nuts, and the like. When the parcel arrived, it was evident that Eaton's had gone far beyond my request - and my money - and sent us a royal supply of figs, dates, and confectionery of several kinds, and in some quantity. I immediately organized a party for Christmas Eve. Noticing signs of Christmas around the school hut, the young blacksmith's helper from Bracebridge said scornfully, "I hope you're going to put up a Christmas tree!" (He was going home).

"I'll think about it," I said.

On the Sunday before Christmas I went into the bush and cut a little spruce, dragged it in, and set it up in the schoolhouse. There were no decorations, but I found some coloured paper and tinfoil and soon we had enough of a tree for us, and nobody criticized it.

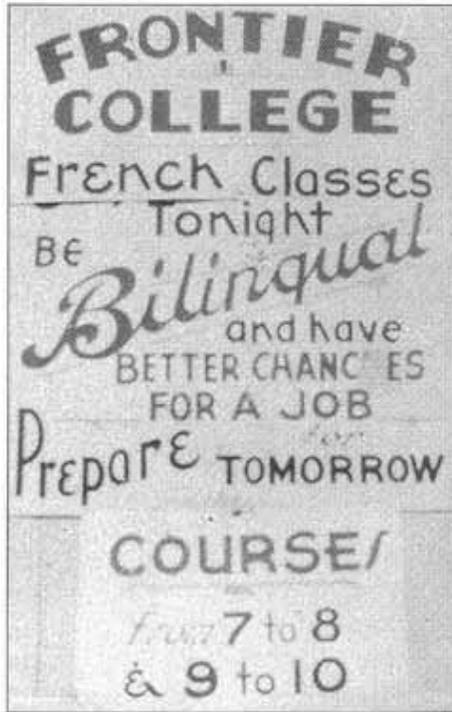
Some of the men objected to losing a day's work - and pay - for Christmas; they preferred to work. But most of the bosses were going home and the holiday stood.

I offered a prize for a photography contest, and got a flock of pictures. One of the older men did the judging, and the prize went for a funny snap of one of the "straw bosses" pushing another chap in a wheelbarrow.

After supper on Christmas Eve the men crowded into the schoolroom and filled the benches and the floor. We sang all the Christmas songs we knew, and I told the story of Scrooge and Tiny Tim. Many of the men had never heard it. The refreshments from Eaton's were passed around, and tea served, courtesy of the camp kitchen. There were plenty of jokes and laughing. When Tom the Welshman stood up and called for "Three Cheers for Schoolmaster," my cup was full.

In 1937, at Long Lac in northern Ontario, labourer-Teacher C. Hume Wilkins found himself in his posting, a camp of men building a hydro dam across the Kenogami River, Ontario with Christmas approaching.

**CN Extra Gang
Moose Creek, Ontario
1942**



Dr. Bradwin
Principal
Frontier College

Cher monsieur:

Vous trouverez ci-joint mon rapport pour le mois d'aout. L'été a passé rapidement pour moi et je devrai retourner à mes études avant la fin de septembre.

Je me rappelle bien la première semaine de la tâche que j'ai entreprise il y a trois mois. J'étais fourbu chaque soir et le travail me paraissait très dur, mais maintenant je puis le faire assez facilement. Je souhaiterais parfois vissent à l'œuvre. Mes propres études cette année présenteront un nouvel intérêt pour moi, car, après avoir vu ces hommes à la tâche pendant toute la saison, je comprends main tenant le prix du privilège dont je jouis. Je regarde ces hommes qui travaillent avec la pelle et le pic parce qu'ils n'ont pas eu l'occasion d'étudier et de fréquenter l'école et je considère tout ce que j'ai acquis.

* * *

Pendant ce dernier mois, j'ai cause avec ces hommes et j'ai essaye de connaitre leur opinion sur les problèmes de la vie. Je puis vous confier que ce fut très intéressant pour moi au début, et aussi pour ces hommes. Parce qu'il y a ici de braves gens qui ont leurs propres idées, mais ils ne peuvent les faire valoir parce qu'ils n'ont pas l'occasion de le faire ou encore parce qu'ils craignent d'être l'objet de moqueries. Et le plus souvent, ce sont ces gens qui ne parlent pas qui ont les meilleures idées.

* * *

Une expérience comme celle-là, c'est-a-dire de vivre et de travailler pendant quatre mois avec ces hommes et de promouvoir l'esprit de solidarité nationale, fera de n'importe qui un homme au véritable sens du mot et lui donnera une conception sérieuse et réaliste de la vie. J'espère que je ne vous ennuie pas en ressassant ces choses, car je vous considère comme un père à qui je puis parler en toute confiance des choses qui me viennent a. l'esprit.

J'espère recevoir bientôt de vos nouvelles.
Votre instructeur d'équipe,

JEAN-MAURICE DUBÉ

1946
What Frontier College Has Meant to Me
by Clifford Waite

Until I saw a notice on our bulletin board at McMaster University asking for young men to work as Labourer-Teachers, I had never heard of Frontier College. Since that day I have become one of these Labourer- Teachers, and Frontier College has come to add significantly in the development of my life.

It is just over a year ago that I returned from active service in Britain with the Air Force. I had completed a tour of operations over Germany and had spent six months in Training Command, teaching air armament subjects. On my return to Canada in April, I was anxious about my rehabilitation as a civilian. Serious study soon took the place of anxiety, however, and I completed my senior matriculation in three months. It was a greater thrill to me to receive that university entrance certificate than to hear I had been honoured for work in the Service.

For the next eight months I threw myself heart and soul into university life, working and playing hard so that I might gain the best from a course which the Department of Veterans Affairs was making possible for the men who had served their country. The results of these efforts was a full, successful, and highly enjoyable freshman year.

Now the summer vacation was approaching. There was a need to earn money to keep myself during the summer months and to buy clothes for the return to university. More important than these considerations, though, was my desire to discipline my body which had grown corpulent in the service, to bring it to physical compactness by means of heavy manual work, and further, to grasp with my mind something of the significance of this Canadian way of life for which I had willingly risked all.

It was a godsend, then, that little announcement which invited educated, virile, Canadian youth to share their lot with the back-woodsmen in the program and purposes of Frontier College. Mine was a feeling of satisfaction that I had discovered something truly worthwhile at which to devote my summer, when I undertook to be the representative at a Hydro camp at Stewartville, in the Ottawa Valley.

My experience in this camp at work, in association with the men, in teaching, in fostering recreation and entertainment, has been one for which I am thankful. Here some eleven miles from Arnprior, and in a typical Canadian setting of forest and wild rushing river, I learned to know and grow very fond of this part of the Province. I am indebted also to the Superintendent and the local officials on the work for their fine accord and co-operation in so many ways.



It was here, rubbing elbows with my fellow- Canadians - poor immigrants and rough logmen alike - that the secret of living is in the day by day impact of personality on personality. Here I found confidence in my ability as a teacher, for in the quiet after a day's work my mind reached out and grappled with the practical problems of giving educational guidance to men who needed it badly. Here I felt the thrill of erstwhile accomplishment as I watched the gradual response to gentleness in men whom I knew could be so rough.

I am thankful, too, for the aids sent me from Toronto. In the midst of my efforts at organizing regular classes, obtaining suitable quarters for a schoolhouse, catching

the attention and holding the interest of the working men, little gems of thought diminutive pearls of helpful suggestion-came to me from headquarters; these helped my thinking, nor was their influence lost on the men.

This telepathic sympathy from wise, experienced headquarters lends authority and stability to the men in the field, especially when the advice conforms so realistically with experience and is often so timely. It is a comfortable feeling to know he has a solid, sympathetic backing even while the instructor is attempting to forge ahead on his own.

"There is a destiny that makes us brothers, none goes his way alone; all that we send into the lives of others comes back into our own." The idea expressed in this excerpt of poetry echoed in the caverns of my mind and has added richly to my interpretation of life.

The challenge is great in an enterprise so free for individual interpretation. All the latent talents of the teacher are called out and do front-line service. Young Peoples' work, experience with the Air Force, ability at drawing, lettering, singing, boxing and leading in discussion: all these aptitudes found full expression in a summer just crammed full of interesting events that bound my life together, gave me greater strength of character and made me realize what a wonderful heritage we Canadians possess. My months with Frontier College have meant to me an opportunity to build my body, strengthen and enrich my character and have left me with a mind fired with the possibilities of a life spent in worthwhile endeavour. ~

1949
William A. Tetley*
Rail Gang
Green River, New Brunswick

If my experience as a Labourer-Teacher during the past months has done nothing else, it has shown how little I knew about men; how little I know about learning from others, let alone helping others. Experience gained at the beginning of the summer helped me to make the later months more fruitful, and yet I still realize how much there is to learn about life by living and working with men.



One dominant thought eventually matured in my mind during the summer: it is that the duty of a Frontier College Instructor lies not only in the classroom, but in every minute that he is with the gang. His influence and example teach greater lessons because they are living, animated, and in full colour, than the lecture in a classroom which is a cold collection of words.

For this second duty of a Labourer-Teacher is a twenty-four hour job - the measure of influence upon men. It all counts: the way he eats; his cleanliness; his language; his attitude toward women; the way he spends his pay - neither blowing it all in one night, nor guarding it so stingily that he never stands a treat. The men appreciate a clean-living person, they admire him, seek his advice and at times emulate him.

I had trouble with formal discussion groups. Acting upon your suggestion, I tried to mount the large map of Canada on a pole, and hold discussions in the open, but did not find it to work so well, for it seemed like a formal class. Quite often, however, groups would gather around the map in the end of the dining-car, where we held classes, and we would have long and impromptu talks. Every night, too, after the regular class, we would chat together and I tried to steer the conversation. It is noticeable that not only do they encourage such talks, but the men seek out each other and we all come together. A chilliness, however, seemed to freeze the men at the thought of holding organized classes. Perhaps with more experience I will have greater success, for there is so much to be learned which is impossible in one season.

The Labourer-Teacher can help a lot as a leader outside the classroom. There are boxing gloves here, and my boxing at McGill stood me in good stead so that I was able to show a few blows and parries to the younger men. We had a baseball team and although the men are too independent and individualistic to stand for a captain (our team worked magically in unison by mental telepathy - we beat Edmundston, Ste Anne's, and Green River twice) the Labourer-Teacher can be of value by taking up a collection to buy a ball and a bat. Yes, there is much for us to do outside the classes, in fact, many times more than in the class, perhaps. I wonder how you feel about this.

* *William Tetley would later serve as chair of Frontier College's Board*

One thing impressed me about the men on the gang. I observed that many of them could handle adequately and spend wisely a certain amount of money. This amount is much less than a week's wage, with the result that the men who work a full week usually squander a good part of their wages on the night of payday. A fixed amount of money is set aside for necessities, and the rest is lost drinking. This, of course, is not true of all the gang, but many of the men spend blindly until they are without a cent. Their education has been so limited that they can see no use for extra dollars. Their houses are sometimes in a terrible state, yet the men will work only fifteen or twenty days in a month. They don't know of values other than the ones they have.

At the end of August our pay was raised 10c. per hour, but very few men used the raise to improve their standard of living. It was not set aside to educate the children or to rebuild the house. Instead it can be seen by scrutinizing the time-book that the men work less hours per week and receive the same total pay that they received before the raise. Our job is to educate these people so that they have broader outlooks and more worthwhile values.

And this observation I wish to make: our gang was half French and half English, and I noticed that if there was any disunity in the gang, it was always rectified by someone who spoke the two languages. Once there was understanding of languages, there was an understanding and appreciation of opinions. Because I knew French and English, I was in a position to promote good feeling, and it wasn't hard to become trusted as a fair and unbiased interpreter. The way to promote unity in Canada is by means of the two languages, and I intend to learn them both and teach them as well.

No matter what the task is that the Labourer-Teacher faces, he always finds himself trying to help human clay. He must understand men, know their habits, desires and actions under certain circumstances. "Man" is the central subject of study. It is the only underlying consideration. The chance to live with men this summer and to try and understand them and so understand myself is something for which I am very grateful. I have been very close to the men on this gang, much closer than when I was an officer in the Navy. Thank you for this opportunity, and thank you for the limitless aid - the books, maps, the well-chosen texts, the newspapers, and your letters. I never once felt alone or cut off. The feeling was the feeling that one has when one works in a factory, everyone applying himself to the same product, although each is in a different place. In our case the product we are trying to build is a better, happier humanity and a stronger Canada.

Toronto, Ontario
June 6th, 1949

Dear Tetley:

Very glad indeed to get your letter and we are prepared to allow you something for any work that you do in a constructive way among the men. It would depend, of course, upon your reports and what you think would be fair, but I think you will find we will do what is right.

I always like your letters. You have the right spirit and approach to life. As I think you know, we make equally important the development of human relationships as we do the actual teaching. Make yourself a monitor with the men, not trying to talk down to them but to talk with them. That carpenter is surely a diamond in the rough. He represents the good solid thinking latent in the best of French- Canadian thought. What a treat it is to have a man like that, independent in character, back among the men and associated with yourself.

We are ordering *La Presse* for you and later on may send the *Weekly La Patrie*. We are sending you a parcel containing a geography, some textbooks on Arithmetic, and a few books of fiction that will not irritate French-Canadians.

Take care of yourself, Tetley. Watch yourself in using the axe, if you do. Be careful of overhead branches and always know where a blade will strike, when brushing leaves or foliage away from the spot you are aiming at. Doubtless your camps are well provided, for Price Bros. are wealthy, but for fear you have not a mosquito netting, we are sending you one by parcelpost.

I hope you will have a profitable summer in knowing something about men. A law student from Dalhousie who was with us last year wrote: "All winter I have been studying Law, Law, Law – and I ask myself what good is Law if I do not know the hearts of men for whom Law is made." The commentator in your camp had the right idea.

E. W. BRADWIN



Many LTs go out for two or three years in succession. Others - at least a dozen in the last three years - are sons of former LT's who sent their offspring to Bradwin. He admits he leans over backward to work these youngsters in somewhere, "but only if they've got the stuff."

Typical LT is husky, modest Eric Robinson, twenty-five-year-old native Montrealer, McGill graduate, and overseas infantry veteran. Bradwin hit Robbie just when he was trying to decide whether to return to his regular highly paid summer job as rigger on the Montreal docks or seek more lucrative, less strenuous employment.

In 1951, labourer Teacher Eric Robinson was profiled at his CNR railway job at Pass lake in northern Ontario. Robinson, in 1954, would become Principal of the College. The article by William Stephenson in the *Saturday Evening Post*, was titled "There Are No Sissies At Frontier College."

Before he realized quite what was afoot, he found himself on a night train out of Toronto bound for Pass Lake, a small siding on the Canadian National Railway thirty miles north of Lake Superior. In his pocket was a chit declaring that LT Eric Robinson was now a track man on the CNR; rate, sixty-five cents an hour; labor period, sixty hours per week; cost of board, \$1.50 a day.

Twenty-seven hours later, at three A.M. on a black night in June, Robbie reached his destination. Frontier College was ready to make a brave new start. Let Robbie himself tell it.

Doctor Bradwin had told us all to rest a couple of weeks to get used to the work before starting classes. But I'd done heavy work before, and figured on starting school at once. What a surprise I had coming!

Tamping ties, I found, was twice as rugged as any job I ever had. There was no end to them! And what with the heat, the bloodthirsty mosquitoes and black flies, and me stupidly drinking far too much ice water, I could barely crawl to my bunk each night, let alone teach.

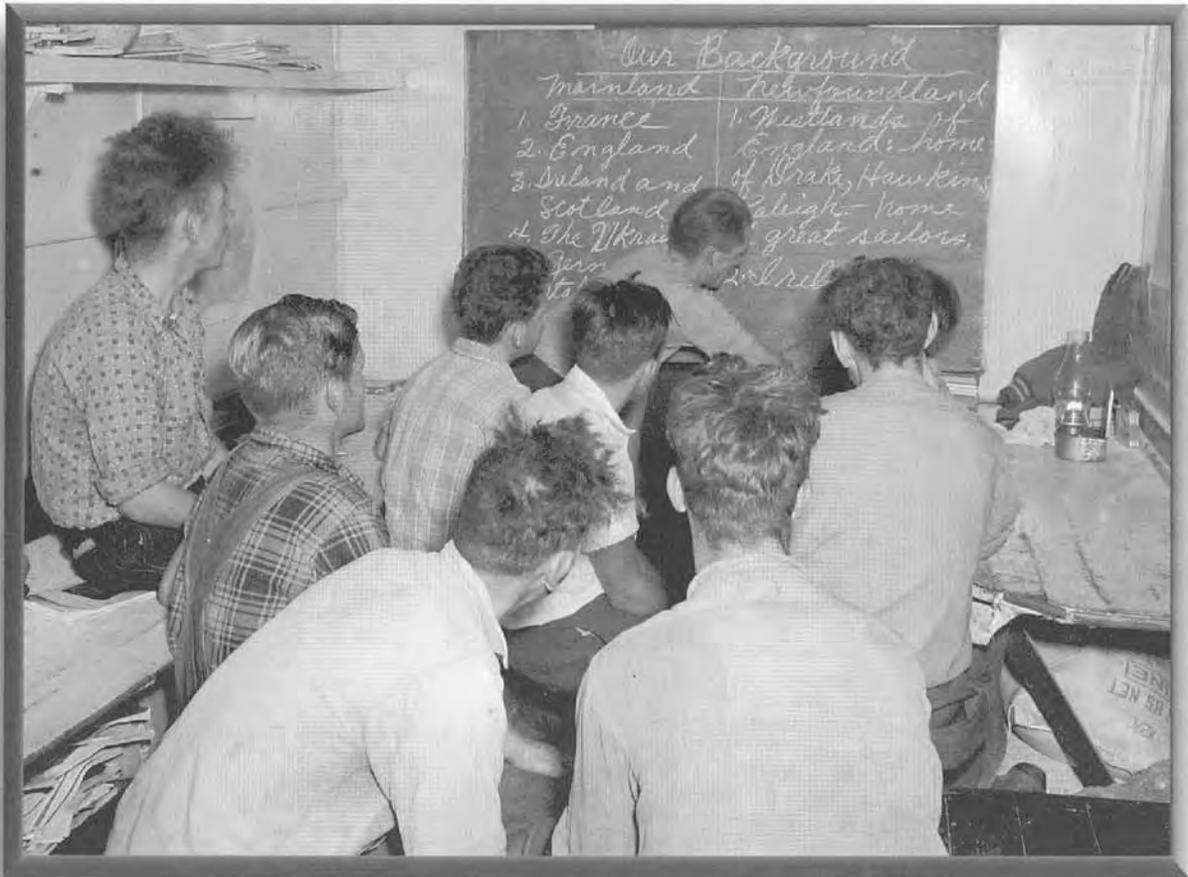
The foreman went easy on me. He let me carry ties instead of tamp them for a while. But this turned out worse, because in slapping at mosquitoes on my face with creosote-soaked mitts, I burned it horribly. One morning it was so black and swollen I couldn't even see out of it. The foreman told me to take time off, but I thought they'd put me down for a quitter if I did) so I stuck it out.



PART TWO
1954-1974

Education
and
Modernity





PART TWO 1954-1974

Education and Modernity

When Bruce Weaver arrived in 1965 for his posting at the Mactaquac hydro dam construction site in New Brunswick, he found earth-moving trucks as big as houses and crews assembling elaborate systems of dynamite to blow apart obstructing walls of rock. This was still technically the frontier, but specialization and mechanization were changing everything. No longer did jobs require an army of men with axes and shovels. Canada still had a large hinterland, extractive economy, but brute human and animal muscle was being replaced by mechanical equipment. What thirty or fifty years before might have required simply a strong back and callused hands, now demanded workers with the skills to operate and the wits to work with a variety of machinery. Over the next thirty years levels of technology would continue to increase, and the complexion of work on the frontier would change even more.

Alfred Fitzpatrick and Edmund Bradwin had, in turn, guided Frontier College up to the moment of their deaths. When Bradwin died in 1954, the job of Principal was given to a recent Labourer- Teacher, Eric Robinson. The tradition of the Labourer-Teacher was firmly ensconced, and Robinson's task for the next seventeen years was to try to keep it going. He was then followed by another young ex Labourer-Teacher, Ian Morrison. The College's style of operation during this time was vividly described in a 1961 article by Labourer- Teacher Dennis Lee. But Robinson and Morrison found themselves dealing with a changing world. The bellwether for that changing world were the vivid reports sent in from Frontier College's instructors out in the field. With brash ideas and sure-footed words, Labourer- Teachers - and others - discussed and debated the role the College would play into the future. ~

1961
CALL TO BLOOD, SWEAT, AND LEARNING

By Dennis Lee

(poet and founder of Anansi Press, with another former LT, Dave Godfrey)

One of the most unusual recruiting campaigns in Canada will get underway in Hart House, Monday when roughly one hundred and fifty University of Toronto students come to the Music Room at one o'clock, to hear about summer and winter work opportunities with Frontier College.

This unique organization attracts many to its annual recruiting meeting who know nothing about Frontier College except that it is somehow unusual; it persuades many of these to apply, with what are superficially the most negative recommendations imaginable.

Students for example will be told by the College Principal, 35-year old Eric Robinson, "I can offer you hard work, long hours, black-flies, mosquitoes, dirt - and a chance to help your fellow man." He will go on to explain that each Labourer-Teacher, as the College employee is called, will work a grueling four-month summer on a railway gang, or in a mine or lumber camp.

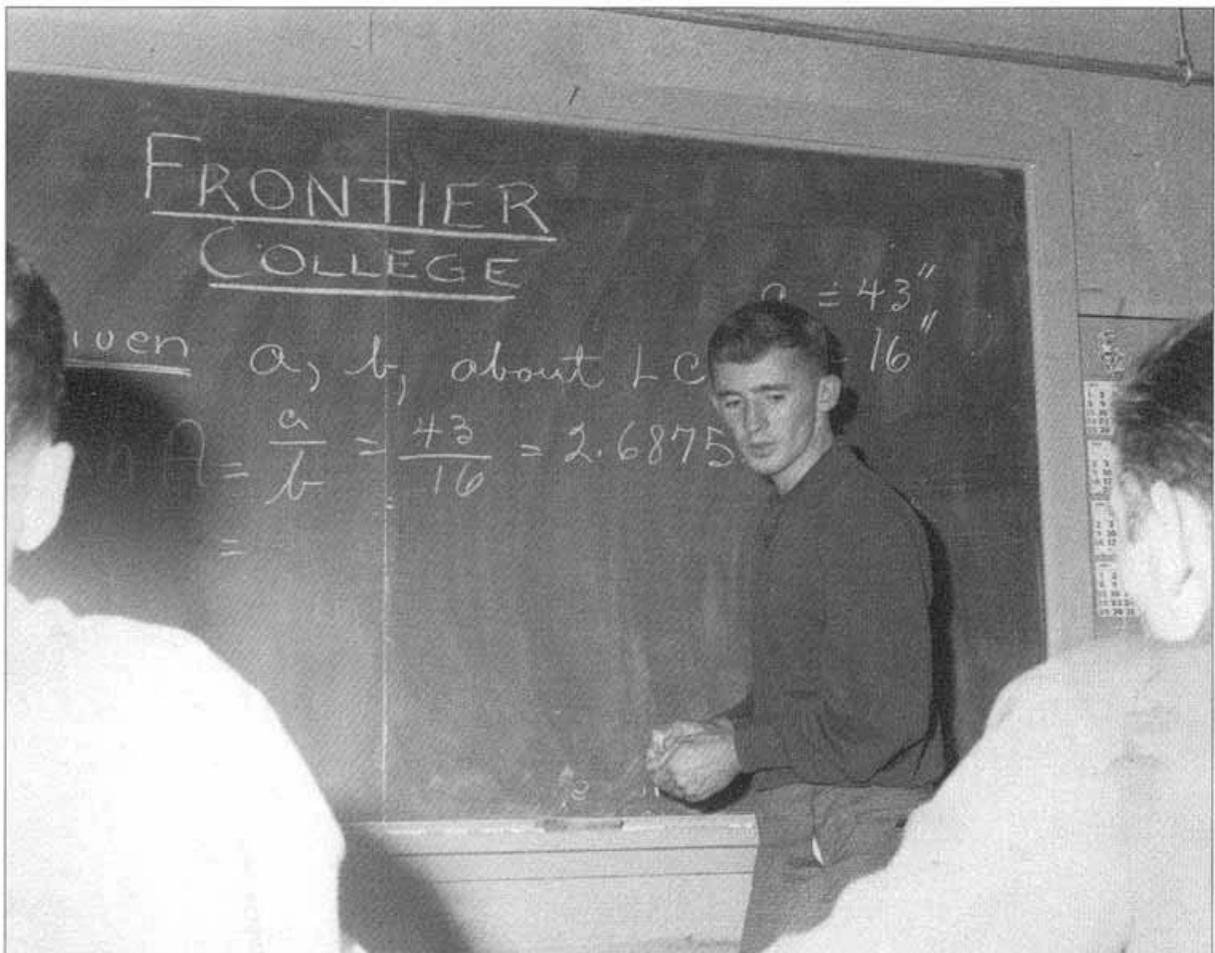
In addition to a full fifty - to seventy - hour week as pick-and-shovel labor, he will organize evening discussions, sports, and classes in anything from basic English to folk-singing; for all this, his



pay will be the income from his day's work, plus a modest salary from Frontier College. Anyone who feels that there must be a catch somewhere is apt to be told: "You'll work seven days a week, with Wednesday afternoons off for burying the dead." With prospects like these, why are there usually three applicants from all across Canada for each of the 90 summer positions Frontier College offers? And even more important, why do instructors who have had their full summer's share of sunburn, backache, overtime, sweaty socks, mean foremen and primitive living conditions, return next summer and ask for more?

To find this out, we might look at a second-year Knox student, Zander Dunn. Stocky, outspoken Zander spent last summer on a railway ballast gang in Saskatchewan. When he arrived in camp, a string of box-cars heated by stoves and lit by Coleman lamps, he found a gang of 56 men, many divided by racial differences and all suspicious of their new college kid. His first week was spent getting used to rising at 4:30, working an 11-hour day with a ten pound sledge-hammer, and indulging in one shower a week.

He found that his fellow-workers, like the other quarter-million bunkhouse men in Canada, were living in a social, cultural and spiritual vacuum. The Canadians in the gang were often hard-bitten and cynical; one was an alcoholic. There were Yugoslavs, Portuguese and Italians, several of whom belonged in university. But their English was too faulty, and no amount of horse-play or backchat could conceal their loneliness on the gang.





With advice and supplies from home base in Toronto, Zander began to look for chances to interest the men in classes and sports. He found seven men who wanted to learn English three nights a week; classes were started in an old dining-car. Two young Canadians decided to take Grade Eight math. When horse-shoes appeared alongside the cars one Sunday, the men got to work and cut some pipe into uprights; later one of the foremen discovered he enjoyed a game with the men. Another dining-car was christened the Roxy, and weekly movies began. Gradually a full Frontier College program went into swing.

Over the course of the summer, Zander found himself in some unusual situations. At one point he was nearly fired by a hot-tempered boss who didn't appreciate his sense of humour. He wrote love letters for a young Yugoslav, climaxing them with a successful proposal of marriage.

Older men in the gang he found very hard to reach; after a lifetime spent in extra gangs, they had little use for anyone who was trying to rouse them. Zander began by leaving magazines in their bunkcars, finding by experience that anything but pocketbooks or magazines with pictures would be left untouched.

He waited till they were ready to talk about the boss, or about the family they'd left back in New Brunswick; gradually some of them decided that this 'professor' was genuinely interested in them, and wasn't trying to sell them anything. Others remained mistrustful till the end of the summer.

Every instructor is bound to have one or two special interests. His basic responsibilities are to do the same work as the men he is with; to take classes in English, arithmetic or trade-training for men who are willing to better themselves; and to offer everyone recreation, movies, discussion, and anything else suitable to the role of teacher or friend. These opportunities are fairly constant in both railway gang and mining or lumber camp. But every good Labourer-Teacher draws on his individual resources as well. He may give classes in creative writing, or teach swimming.

Some instructors have a knack of unearthing unexpected talents in their fellow-workers - particularly among New Canadians there are often gifted mimics or musicians. And there are always a few men like the Ph.D. from Belgrade, who informed the Frontier College man on the first day that he "wished to better my syntax, which is unfortunately not yet impeccable;" or the French Canadian who told his teacher rather superciliously that "incontinency is unaesthetic."

In the case of Zander Dunn, the particular interest was a bulletin-board, rescued from a junk pile and nailed to the side of a bunk-car. On it appeared the Joke for the Day, news, Frontier College announcements, and twice a month, the "Ballast Gang Bugle." This little journal poked fun at overtime, camp food and the foibles of the men including the Labourer-Teacher himself. Apart from nearly getting him fired, it provided a rallying-point for gang morale and helped break down the many barriers between the men.

At the end of his summer, Zander shared at least one thing with his fellow instructors: he felt that he brought away more than he had given. What he had given was not easy to pinpoint: for a very few men, the vocational future or outlook on life was radically changed; for many more, there had been moments of excitement and deepened friendships; and for all men on the gang, there had been the chance to sense that they possessed capabilities and an essential dignity which this man respected, and which are too often crushed by life on the frontier.

What Zander brought back from his summer he knew more definitely. First, over nine hundred dollars pay. Then, the knowledge that he had been of service to men who are usually forgotten - a rather disturbing insight into our society. And a firm pride in having tackled what was a man's job in every way, and having seen it through.



In 1965 when I was a 17-year-old high school student, I was assigned a Labourer-Teacher position near Fredericton, N.B., working on the initial stages of what has since become the Mactaquac Hydro- Electric dam. I have a clear recollection of the first day I arrived.

Eric Robinson, who was the Principal of Frontier College, had impressed upon all of us that we should always give a good impression of ourselves since we were Frontier College "ambassadors," and give 110% effort to everything we did. I took this to mean that we should arrive at our place of summer employment in our best attire. Thus, dressed in my one good business suit, I climbed off the train and bus and reported for duty at the project Manager's office.

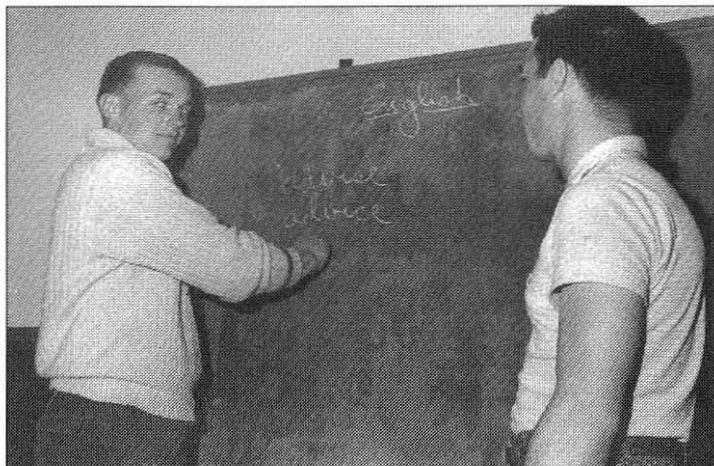
Within 5 minutes of reporting in, one of the Supervisors showed me where I was to work – a place where monster-sized trucks were backing up to a cliff to dump earth and stone removed from the areas just blasted out of the place where the dam would eventually rise. I was supposed to stand there and, in this cauldron of noise, indicate by sign language just how far back the trucks could go before joining their load at the bottom of the cliff.

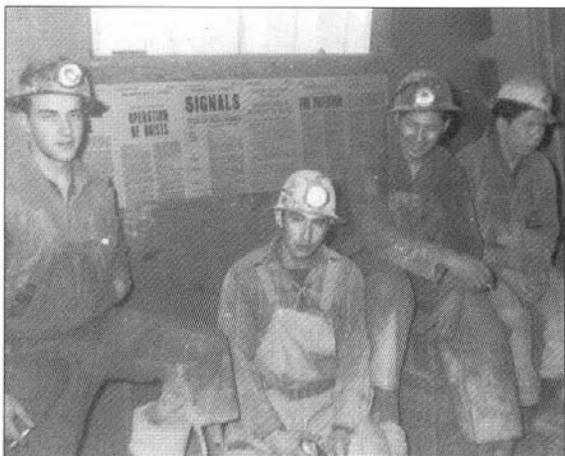
The temperature was in the mid 90's, and up there on the cliff the Convection Principle became a reality. The hot wind came howling back up the cool face of the cliff, bringing with it 110% more dust than was dumped down. I, naturally a somewhat pinkish white, quickly turned gray and eventually dirty black. My suit never recovered from this traumatic experience.

This first Frontier College assignment for me was during the period when the School was experimenting with somewhat larger projects. I set up classes in the cafeteria which was big enough to handle about 5,000 people, and there, lost in a corner where, despite big posters advertising "Come Learn How to Read and Write with Frontier College," only a few people were actually able to find me. Actually, it had somehow escaped my attention that the very people who would most benefit from this facility were the very same people who couldn't read the posters.

Eventually, I learned from my errors and spread the word verbally during the down-time periods just before the next round of blasting took place. There was something magical about sitting there in the cafeteria, and watching everything (books, papers, bottles, and me) jump about two feet into the air as 50 tons of explosive would detonate half a mile away.

BRUCE WEAVER





In the 1960s I got a summer job at Renabie Gold Mine, off in the bush near Missanabie, Ontario. The men resented a college boy and my presence underground was barely tolerated. I was assigned to the 1400 foot level with Old Pete, a Yugoslavian who loved to turn off his lamp in the middle of a shift and pretend we didn't exist. "Take it easy, boy. We take it smoke." Sometimes, late in the shift, a sharp "click" would come through the rock, followed by a rumble. If we turned on our lamps quickly, the smoke from our cigarettes would dance back and forth without changing shape, as the pressure waves went by. "They blasting," Pete would remark. Strangely, none of the blasting smoke itself, ever drifted through the 1400 foot level.

One day Pete took sick and I was given to Stan, a snappish old miner who ragged me mercilessly. We worked at the face, essentially the end of a long tunnel called a drift. They had just blasted there at the end of the previous shift. Shattered rock was everywhere. I operated a hose, washing off the face. I let the hose point down momentarily at the loose gravel called muck, on the floor of the drift.

"For Christ's sake!" said Stan. "Keep that hose off the muck. You want to kill everybody?" What did he mean? "The water," he said, "makes poison gas in the muck. It looks like a mist. One breath and you're deader than a doornail." I reflected that although Stan's methods were harsh, they were probably necessary, considering the dangers of the job. I dutifully kept my hose elevated after that

Several weeks later, back with Old Pete again, I felt thirsty. "That okay, boy. You go to station, you take it drink." I walked half a mile along the drift out to the station, a hollowed-out cavern where the cage, the mine elevator, would occasionally whiz by. There was a hose there, attached to the mine water supply by an extremely rusty valve with an old wrench sitting on the valve stem. I struggled with the wrench but couldn't get the valve open. Finally, I bashed the wrench with a hammer and the valve reluctantly opened. Water jetted from the hose with tremendous velocity. I drank by cupping my hand, catching some of the spray. When I was done, I let the hose drop and concentrated on the valve. It took a minute or two to close it again. When I turned around to go back up the drift, I got the shock of my life.

The station was filled with a grayish mist. Thanks to Stan, I knew exactly what it was. Poison gas. There was a distinct "click" in my head. I went into panic mode, filled with self-pity at the thought of dying so young. When I realized that I would not be the only one to die that day, I ran to the phone board on the other side of the station. My breath came in short gasps, I called the emergency number by cranking the phone: Two short rings followed by one long ring. An authoritative voice answered: "Mine office!" "There's poison gas on 1400-Poison gas on 1400," I screamed. "Stay where you are!" said the voice. The phone clicked off. The grayish mist had now thickened almost to a smoke. Whimpering, I took off my woolen vest, soaked it in water, and placed it over my mouth as a kind of filter. I lay down on a wooden bench by the phone to conserve energy. I would probably be dead before the rescue team arrived. I wondered dully whether they would put up a memorial plaque to me on the mine head-frame.

The poison gas had begun to thin somewhat and I was barely conscious when the rumbling of the cage echoed down the shaft nearby. It squeaked to a halt at the 1300 level. I could hear bellowing, shouted instructions, and the sounds of men's feet on the shaft ladder. They emerged into the station, finally, two of the mine's roughest, toughest men. Paddy the Irishman and LaFramboise, the French Canadian. They wore gas masks and were hung with every variety of rescue equipment, ropes, picks, prys, hammers, first aid kits and blankets. "Where's da gas?" LaFramboise wanted to know.

From my supine position on the wooden bench, I waved my hands vaguely about, indicating the nearly invisible grey mist.

"Jesusfuckinggoddamsonofafuckinassholecollege prickhead." It was the longest curse I had ever heard. I gathered that I had overestimated the danger. LaFramboise went to the phone board and rang two short and one long. "Dat's hokay on 1400. Hit's dat college guy. He seen da blasting smoke. "Oh, you poor, fucking bastard," moaned Paddy. "Have you not seen blastin' smoke before, lad? It's the mine ventilation system. It drives the smoke up from the levels below, sometimes. Och! You're goin' to get it tonight, I'm afraid!" He meant that I would be the butt of endless jokes at the cookhouse. He was right.

As I joined the line that evening, men turned and pointed at me, conferring privately on the idiocies of college education, laughing in sudden bursts. It helped them to feel superior. It also explained to them why the government functioned the way it did, so many politicians having university degrees. Old Pete was there in the cookhouse lineup. "Oh, ho! You thinkit water on muck makeit poison gas. Oh ho, boy. Nevermind. We takeit smoke."

KEEWATIN DEWDNEY



CHRISTMAS IN CAMP

With Christmas approaching there is an unsettled atmosphere in camp. This atmosphere will work to the disadvantage of your programme and classes unless you make a special effort to capitalize on the Christmas situation in camp for the benefit of your Frontier College programme.

You will find (probably you have already found) that there is a great exodus of men from the camps at Christmas and an influx of new men in the New Year. There will also be heavy drinking and can make a very great contribution if our initiative to give the men an alternative to a "lost Christmas." If you can make an even greater effort to promote discussions, to screen good films, to hold interesting classes in different subjects, (e.g. astronomy, electricity, science, a one night anthropology course), you may make Christmas 1967 a more enjoyable one for your fellow-workers.

We are sending to each instructor a quantity of Christmas song sheets. Use these sheets to create a bit of Christmas spirit in camp! Can you organize an informal skit or even a skit night? Remember that it must not appear to be organized, rather, it must seem spontaneous. Christmas is also a prime time to promote your library facilities.

In the past, many imaginative instructors have succeeded in gaining a vital place in the life of their camps by their efforts at Christmas. Many an instructor has gained respect from the men and also a new student or two by helping a man to recover from a drinking spree. When the new men come into the camp after Christmas you will benefit from the knowledge that you have stayed in camp with the men, and are now an established part of the camp.

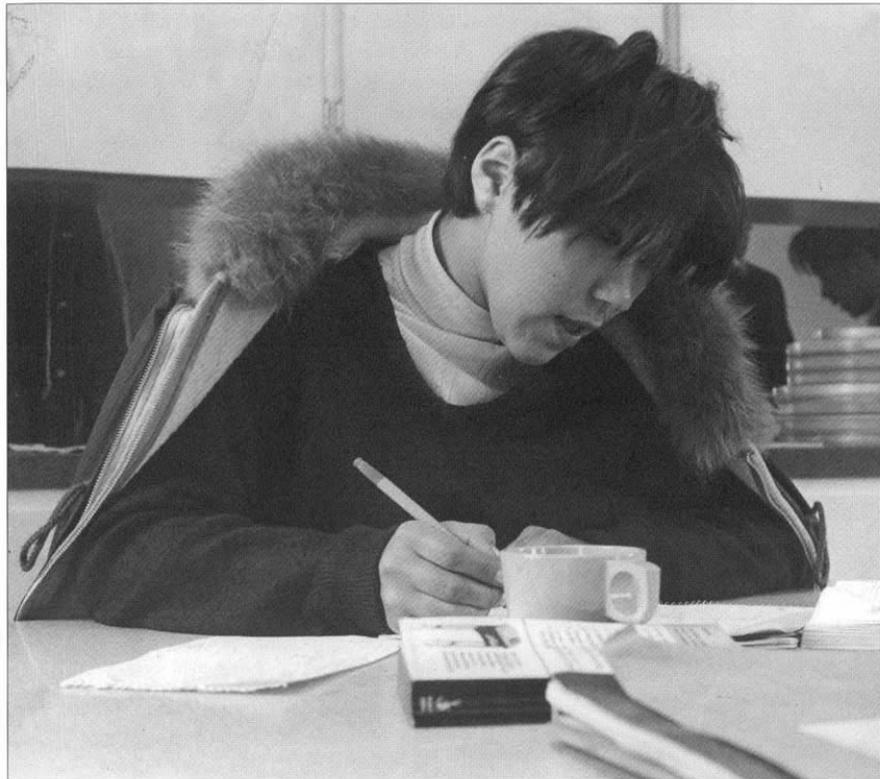
After Edmund Bradwin's death, the practice of sending gentle but pithy "Helps" to the field became part of the Frontier College tradition. This one was sent out in 1967 by Ian Morrison, who was, at that time the Supervisor of Instructors and who would later become President of Frontier College.



In the 1960's, the College undertook a couple of experimental projects. One, at Elliot Lake Ontario, was a technological program. The other, at Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) was about Inuit education.

Native and Metis communities and Newfoundland outports were not the frontier of bunkhouse labourers, but they were still the frontier, socially and economically isolated. Using a new term, "community education," governments in Canada were starting to recognize the needs of such places. In response, they set up a plethora of programs from the Company of Young Canadians (CYC) to the local Initiatives Program (LIP).

When Ian Morrison became Principal in 1971, he expanded Frontier College's participation in community education programs. Instructors were placed for longer terms and, rather than needing to be employed in industry, were paid for their teaching and community development work from government program grants. Along with male instructors, the College started to send out women and couples.



**Armstrong, Ontario
1969**

When reading this report, three essential qualifications should be borne in mind:

- 1) We were working almost exclusively with Indian people, in the context of a racially mixed community.
- 2) People using the equipment varied in age from 15 to 35, and the majority of them were under 25.
- 3) We imposed no censorship of any kind. (Consequently, there were numerous tapes of women talking, hips wiggling, etc., with appropriately obscene, breathy commentary).

We must stress that from early April to the end of June, due to equipment failure, the people in Armstrong had perhaps five weeks access to operational VTR. This report, then, should be taken in the context of that extremely limited time span.

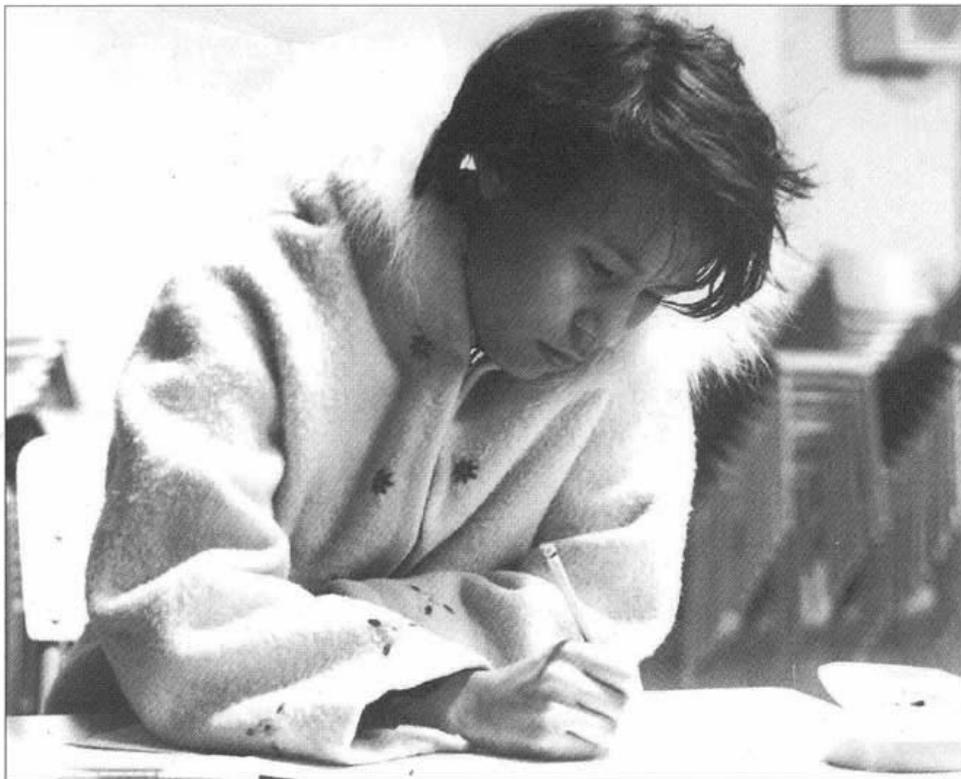
For the first week or so, the VTR was regarded as an exciting new toy. People quickly got used to seeing themselves on camera, and impromptu interview-type shows went on without cease. Several people began to develop their natural "ham" abilities.

In the next two weeks, the transition from VTR as an entertainment device to VTR as a personal-development and community-development tool began. Simple projects were conceived and carried out; local softball games were taped, and an automobile tour of town was recorded (much to the concern of the Armstrong constabulary, who couldn't understand what that nasty looking camera was for). Although these projects were not scripted, the sound and camera crews would hold conferences before taping, making sure they were prepared for any eventuality.



In the next several weeks, people became more and more sophisticated in their use of, and reactions to, the VTR. We noticed that audiences viewing the tapes developed finer critical facilities-people would no longer sit through twenty minutes of boring 'interviews,' and would occasionally turn to the person responsible for them and suggest, quite firmly, that he find more interesting things to tape. During this period, several people took the lead and developed more complex projects. One fellow took the portable camera apparatus 30 miles down the CNR track and filmed the tiny town in which he was born. Brought back to Armstrong, his tape provided an interesting overview of life in a "bush" settlement. Another group of people took the camera and did an interview show with Hector King, the local Indian politico. This tape contained some radical statements, and when shown to both the community and outsiders, produced lively debate.

Just as Armstrong's use of VTR was coming towards its close, things began popping. A videotape exchange program between Armstrong and Aroland, Ontario (a town 100 miles east), was initiated, much to the interest of everyone. A similar exchange program with Hawke's Bay, Newfoundland, was contemplated. The Indian Association was in the process of purchasing a building in town for use as a Friendship Centre, and a taped report on the whole idea was planned. Another chap had arranged a series of interviews with key figures in the community (Chief of the Ontario Provincial Police, priest, Commanding Officer of the local Canadian Forces Radar Station, etc.) for taping. All of this, when the recorder went kaput and there was not enough time left to have it repaired.



Our feeling is that VTR can perform a useful community development function in the Northern Ontario context. Although we felt it was temporarily effective in Armstrong, we doubt that, given the short time it was available in the community, it had any lasting value. A longer-term project might be worth considering. Speaking personally, we found that although VTR was a tool that involved a gratifyingly large segment of the community, it took up too much of our time. And we must emphasize that a) either we had a uniquely accident-prone set of equipment, or (more likely) that b) VTR equipment needs to be more reliable before it becomes suitable for use in remote areas.

Summing up, we think VTR proved to be an interesting device that demonstrated some community-development value and promised much more; but that, in order to justify the time, energy, and cost involved, it requires further experimentation in the field and considerable technical development.

BART and JULIE HIGGINS

Over the hundred years, a substantial number of Americans came north to work for the College; in the early days there had been active recruiting done at Harvard and Yale. The previous piece by Bart and Julie Higgins, is an example of Americans working as Labourer- Teachers. In the 1970's with the Viet Nam War a powerful issue, some conscientious American students found they had still another reason to look for things in Canada. In 1970 the following announcement concerning LTTomBomba appeared in "Chime," the College newsletter.

Tom Bomba, Benson Lake, B.C., was classified 1A by his draft board shortly before the new year. A sort of oddball Christmas present from Uncle Sam I assume. Since then he has been freed from this purgatory and is safely back 'neath the shelter of his 2S student deferment. He wrote us that he should be smoking big cigars. We sent him the biggest one we could find in the United Cigar Store. Perhaps we are overly concerned about our people's health at the moment but we would like to advise Tom to heed the advice of my old Swedish grandmother and *avoid drafts*.

Colin Brezicki, Jim Byrne and I have just returned from visiting instructors on location and have coordinated our general observations on the present summer effort of Frontier College. This is part of what we found. By the time this bulletin reaches you, you will probably be experiencing what is often called the "midsummer slump" - a period of doldrums in your program, when your initial enthusiasm has worn thin and you are beginning to count the days until the end of August. Perhaps our observations will be of use to your program.

First of all, we found that there is no absolute formula for the ideal instructor, but there are important approaches that good instructors usually follow. Most important, the only effective approach to ascertain needs and recruit potential students is that of *personal encounter*. To be effective you must take the initiative, confront men who need your help and make your services known to them. In most camps we found that our instructor did not actually work on a *gang per se* or with a group of men who were at the same time potential students. This means that most instructors do not have sufficient on-the-job contact for recruitment purposes. While there are exceptionally motivated men in all locations, men who will take the initiative to find out what you can do for them, you can't rely on most men to come to you by themselves. The men who need our help most quite often have built up barriers in the form of inferiority complexes and defensiveness about their own inadequacy. They need confidence and motivation and the best approach is to seek out each individual privately to build them up. The "come and see me" approach thus usually fails to get out all the men who really need you. Generally in each location there are two variables you should consider: you have X amount of personal potential; on the other hand there is Y number of men, each with special needs. The relationship of these two variables must be kept in balance. You must be careful not to spread your influence too thick or too thin. If either X or Y is out of proportion, you must readjust your efforts to get the most mileage for your location.

In larger locations, the instructor should regard himself as a resource to the camp. Increase your influence by motivating others to handle less difficult parts of your program (e.g. - library, sports, films) and delegate authority. Use the natural leadership of the camp and use local expertise to supplement your teaching program. This multiplies your own time and lets you focus your efforts on the most important

By the 1970's, on the heels of the social tumult of the previous decade, the world of "doing good" was in flux and sometimes in turmoil. Under the pressure to examine and re-invent everything, Frontier College found itself at the centre of the maelstrom. Nothing was deemed beyond the bounds of scrutiny and debate.

The democratization Frontier College sought in education was manifested as well in the way the institution tried to decide its own course. Everyone, whether they'd been involved with the College two months or two decades, felt they had the right for an equal say in the course the college ought to take. Young people in dramatic and passionate ways voiced their feelings, their frustrations, their values and beliefs. An intense debate –like the following exchange between Ted Smith and Norman Mcleod - circulated among Labourer Teachers, as well as the head office, via letters and the newsletter, "Chimo."

Following that exchange, the reactions to a letter from a Labourer-Teacher resigning his post showed that though the LT ethic in a changing world might be under strain, it could likewise be enthusiastically defended.

and difficult aspects of your program. If there are existing structures in the location (e.g. recreation committee, etc.) work with them, or through their connections, in setting up parts of your program. Don't work at cross purposes with existing structures, but try to redirect or motivate them into different roles if this is necessary for improvement in your location. Remember: they will endure long after your own short-term efforts are finished. While it is very important to be a motivator in your location, you should not be satisfied with being a catalyst only. A "good citizen" role, contributing to activities that are already going on, is not an adequate role for a Frontier College Instructor. Because of your short period of influence in your location, you cannot be satisfied with a low profile approach, you must provide the leadership initially in all your programs. You should carry the ball for the first fifty yards before passing it off to someone else.

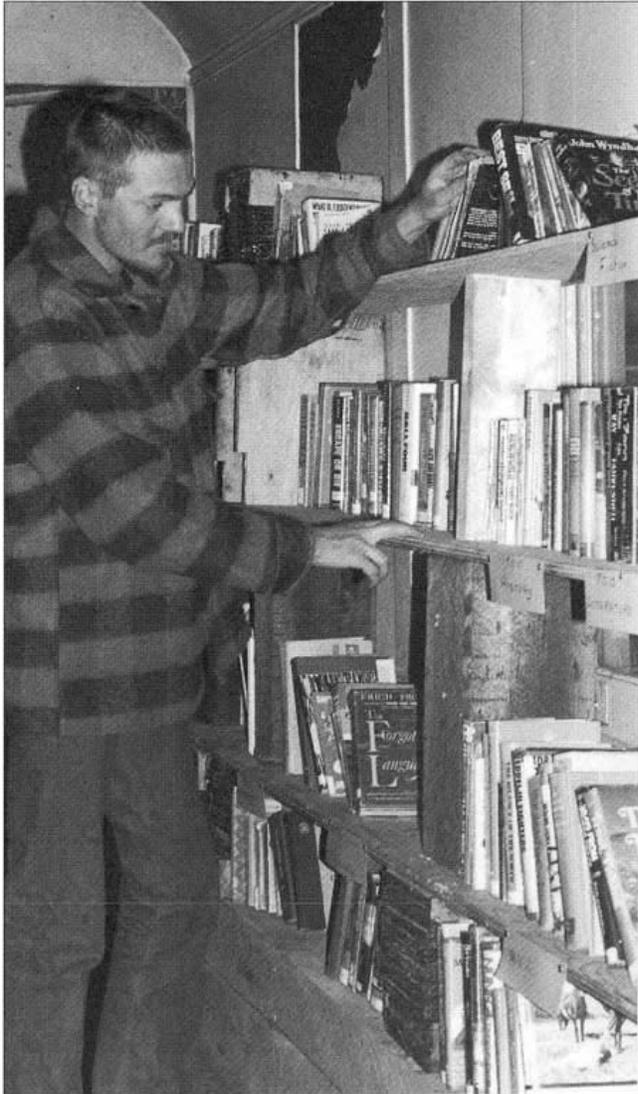
We also feel that there must be a readjustment in the emphasis of many Frontier College programs. Most experienced camp-men that I have encountered have the impression that "Frontier College teaches English to D.P.'s" - and that's all. Teaching basic English is, of course, an important part of our total role. But we must be careful not to get stuck in the D.P. Rut. In too few of our programs are we coming to terms with the problem of the indigenous English- or French-speaking Canadian. It's a much tougher problem to get these men interested in adult education. Most of them have a built-in defensiveness about their educational need and consequently are much harder to reach. But they need the benefit of our resources as much as anyone. We believe that Frontier College is moving into an important supportive role in cooperation with Canada Manpower and provincial vocational institutions. Let's face it - we can't give these men the sophisticated technical training they may need to readapt and upgrade their skills so that they may really benefit economically. We don't have the resources, the manpower nor the expertise of government - nor vocational programs. Furthermore, we are on the job for a frustratingly short period of time. But because we are virtually the only organization going into camp situations, living and working with the men, we have an advantage that such agencies as Canada Manpower don't have. We are much better able to assess the real need of each individual; we can establish with each man the rapport necessary to give him the motivation and confidence he needs; finally, we can provide the necessary information about what is available and what can really help him. Most men will need an upgrading of their basic skills (mainly math and English) and this we can provide in our classes.



At present we are failing to develop this supportive role and if we are to be effective, we must concentrate more on this aspect of our effort. In your own program you should try to have as much vocational literature available as possible. Set up film-discussion groups on the present economic pressures facing the work force (unemployment, inflation, automation, etc.). Contact the local vocational and Canada Manpower mandarins in your area and get them to visit your location. (You may have to give them a good boot in the ass to get them to *really* help your men in a significant way.) Finally, do your best to help motivated men brush up on their educational skills. To be effective our efforts must be directed toward an evident attainable goal that will be of real benefit to the men we are trying to help.

TED SMITH





This letter was written in response to Ted Smith's (page 75). It was written by Norman Mcleod, who was an LT working on a community education program.

Hawkes Bay, Newfoundland 1970

The whole point in writing this letter is to have it printed in its entirety in the 'Free Press,' as a start towards sincerely including the Labourer-Teacher himself in the dialogue over Frontier College programs, and in the overall evaluation process. To that end, here are some more specific comments on some parts of your article in issue #4.

1. Personal encounter: Yes, I agree that the only meaningful starting point for any real process of education is personal encounter; but I would caution that this means primarily listening, and not giving a sales pitch. If you're really going to listen to another guy's concerns, you have to be truly open to whatever you hear; and you won't be open that way if all you're really doing is trying to figure out how to get this guy into your already-conceived program. His felt needs may prove to be very different from your conception of his needs.

2. Who are the guys who need our help most? In fact, nobody needs our help. Everyone has needs, though, of course. The process of education is a process of finding better ways of meeting our own needs. If there's some guy you figure needs your help, stop for a moment: he's the only guy who really knows what he needs, and he's the only guy who can judge what's best for him. The job of the educator is to help him figure out how he can best meet his own needs: if you're meeting his needs for him, you're doing him no favour. I don't think you'll disagree with that, will you, Ted? But you see, as soon as I start judging for myself what's best for another guy, I cut myself off from hearing that his real, felt needs are. And when you talk about identifying the guys who "need our help most," you set yourself up for that kind of arrogant attitude.

3. Leadership: I disagree that Labourer- Teachers should conceive of themselves as "high-profile" leaders. The fact that you'll be leaving camp after a short stay is surely a very good argument *against* carrying the ball too far: you may do more harm than the good in the long run if all you leave behind you is a leadership vacuum. Surely you're doing people a much bigger favour if you can help initiate a program which will carry on without you. You might be able to help *develop* leadership.

4. Rocking the boat: Of course, you've got to be careful, as an outsider, young, with only a short stay, not to jeopardize your whole program by challenging the wrong people. But if there are real concerns, if a large number of people want something they're not getting, and you can help them figure out how to get it, if that rocks the boat, why not?

5. Advertising your availability: I couldn't agree more that the labourer-teacher should be absolutely and actively available to all the men. That is where the personal encounter comes in: you actively demonstrate your presence and availability by listening to individual men, and taking seriously their concerns. But signs and publicity are mere props and aids, and everyone has his own style of operating: it's actively getting out and getting to know people, whether by working with them or by visiting them or by just circulating, that counts. Right, Ted? And the hard sell, the carnival style, is not everyone's style, and that's just as well.

6. Classes, students and "recruiting:" When you talk about the "DP rut", Ted, you go on to talk about the "problem" of "getting these men (non- DP's) interested in adult education." To me, that implies a very mistaken idea of what adult education means. Again, if you approach these men with the idea that your job is to "get them interested" in a specific type of formal education, you're making an arrogant and unjustified assumption: namely, that you already know that what these guys need is a good dose of "larnin." Balls. What if

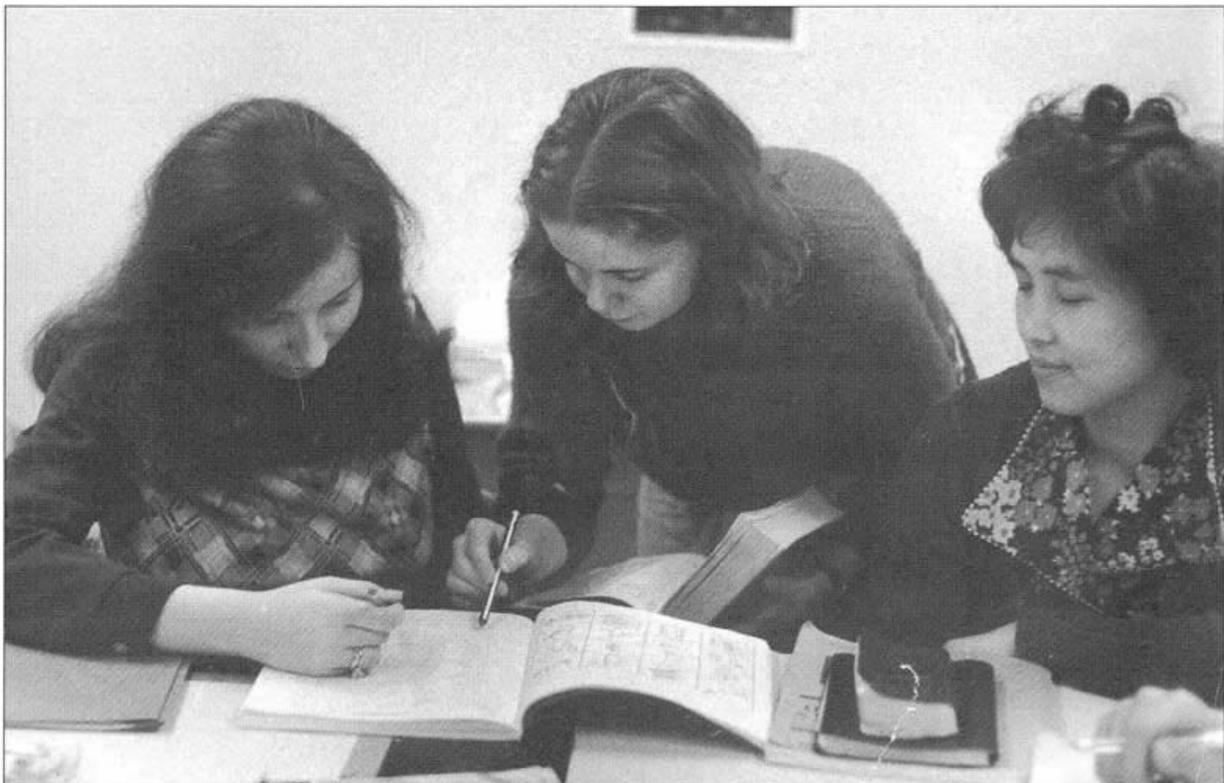
they don't want it? Are you going to make them want it? Why not find out what they do want, if they're willing to tell you, and help them figure out how to get it. That's what I call adult education.

Let's not fall out of one rut, into another. The "classes" rut can be just as insidious as the "DP" rut. There are an awful lot of people in all our locations who don't seem to want to come to our classes; instead of being made to feel guilty that we're not getting them out, why can't we all have a mandate to find out what they *do* want, and help them figure out how to get it? I submit that a Labourer- Teacher might very well accomplish more in one location without any formal classes – perhaps without even a structured program - than another Labourer- Teacher might accomplish in another location with 200 registered "students."

That brings us to alternative roles for the Frontier College. You said in your letter to us that your description of a supportive role for Frontier College for such agencies as Canada Manpower was meant as a suggested alternative. Fair enough: let me suggest some other alternatives. One of these is to begin the Labourer- Teacher program with the broad view of education as a process whereby people gain increased control and influence over their own lives and their environment. The specific role of a specific Labourer-Teacher could then vary from that of teacher and counselor to that of social animator and organizer, with a varying emphasis depending on the location. There are plenty of other alternatives too, and anyone of them would require a different emphasis in the orientation program, a different type of supervisory service, and, quite likely, a different structure for the whole organization.

The point is that there is plenty of room for discussion of all these alternatives by everyone connected with Frontier College. More immediately, there are many alternative ways of assessing the work of each of the Labourer-Teachers in the field now: maybe my assessment of some of the camps you've visited would be very different from yours. Maybe another Labourer-Teacher in the same location would do something totally different. Maybe there are some places where we shouldn't go at all. What I would like to see - and I gather, Ted, that you'd agree - is a serious, open-minded, completely frank assessment by the Labourer-Teachers of their own programs. Not "Was I a good Labourer-Teacher, and did I do all the things that Ted Smith, or Ian Morrison, or Norm McLeod, or anyone else, said I should do?" but "What have I accomplished? What could I have accomplished? And what could we all the Labourer- Teacher, the supervisor, the head office, the whole program - do differently to really assist people in meeting their own needs?"

Your very truly,
NORM McLEOD



Benson Lake, B.C.
April 20, 1972

I decided on Wednesday to quit. The clearest reason I can give for this is that I'm bushed, exhausted, depressed and confused about Frontier's place here as well as being fed up with the lack of cooperation extended by Cominco and some of the organizations which operate in the North Island area. While I'm sorry to leave so suddenly and with no notice to Frontier, I don't really think this matters at all. What has been done here by Frontier at Benson Lake could very easily have been accomplished with more significant results by any member of the community here - if anyone stayed long enough to be bothered trying ...

In the spring of 1972 the College received this letter of resignation from an LT. This letter also elicited a flurry of spirited pieces in response, one of which follows.

Well things have been done, but my impression of work like this has always been that one should help people to understand the effective choices which are before them, not merely to present an anachronistic programme of folk singing and little-red-schoolhouse English classes; Christ, people drive XKEs here in camp, and yet we still insist on maintaining an ineffective and dishonest approach to 'problems' and situations. While anything is better than nothing in the eyes of many, the sanctimonious wishy-washy liberalism ushered in by the short and sweet letter of introduction to the company on arrival is wrong.

I seem to have been effective here so far, and am well-liked, but each day my fucking conscience hits me about the point of all this banal activity on my part. It's missionary work, that's what it is, just as destructive as the Salvation Army band playing "Shall We Gather By the River" at King and Yonge every Christmas. Frontier's effectiveness as an 'educational' enterprise is highly doubtful as well as being deceptive and illusory; it draws its results from a denial of the real difficulties and situation here. I'm absolutely sick and tired of defending such an obviously dishonest approach to those here who attack it, either openly or implicitly in the attitudes they display. (eg. tearing down signs.) Any initiative brought for support to those with some power and effectiveness in the camp has been turned upside down. I am disappointed, and it's a sad ego-shock to realize how futile this Frontier thing is. I'm also tired of being a saccharin madonna, a kind of butch Julie Andrews singing my nuts off for peace, hope and charity.

Naturally when I first arrived there was curiosity about the classes I'd set up, because no one knew of anything else Frontier had ever done. The curiosity was rather catty, back-biting and taunting, and what little there is left is of the same nature. It's a good reaction: according to everyone, classes have been a dismal failure in every case in the past. Frontier's efforts have met with the overwhelming reaction that they're innocuous but a little silly. If men go to Port McNeill to drink rather than to attend classes, it is obvious that in so doing they are expressing a preference. This should be accepted, and classes should be discarded. It is a fraud to perpetuate them when no other alternatives for free-time activity are present. It's an unreal choice - classes or boredom - as it stands now.

Feedback is impossible, since there is nothing to feed back. We have access to nothing but wishy-washy, impressionistic glimpses of alienation at work. Log books are trite and totally useless, for Board Members (do they really care anyway?) or anyone else. Whether or not they are actually read by anybody is probably questionable: they tell nothing of interest or importance, and are another sop thrown to the necessary conviction that something - anything - is being accomplished. The more the "work your ass off for us" line is propagated, the more ludicrously mock-romantic it sounds and is.

Well, I'm sick of this place and working underneath the conveyor belt. I asked for a better job a week or so ago, but was refused because my shift-boss apparently reported that I fucked the dog constantly; the best that could be done was a transferral to the same activity on surface. Fourteen weeks of the belts, alone, is enough, especially when I stay up until about 4:30 a.m. three or four nights a week trying to work for Frontier. The only means of transferral or getting help in this place is threats, and one works under them constantly as well.

PETER FARNCOMBE

June 9, 1972

Farncombe sounds like a cry baby to me. I wish I could buy his line, but I can't. I won't try to defend my position or Frontier's position, but to him, I say "Good Riddance ... and I hope you enjoy life in Utopia."

We could debate for hours with Peter on some of his remarks about "banal activity" and "missionary work," but judging from his letter, we would soon find ourselves in a shouting match, hurling obscenities at each other. Don't address yourself to any of the people (new Canadians or otherwise) across Canada who have been helped in some way by Frontier's work. I'd like to see you convince the guy who has just received his plumber's certificate, after having spent the first forty years of his life without knowing how to divide. Try to tell him that L.T. 's are "missionaries."

PAUL STINSON

CFI, The Pas, Manitoba
April, 1970

I managed to plough off part of the lake for broomball only to be greeted by a monstrous thaw two weeks later. We played only 5 games - good ones too - and will resume if the ice stiffens up a bit. Perhaps by taking the broomball thing as a case in point, I can give you an idea of my basic modus operandi up here. Paul Lemay pointed out to me, (after my first week), that Conlin Lake had a broom ball league and suggested that I start the same at Halfway, Well, I asked around camp and discovered there wasn't a soul who wanted to play. They looked at me with a look of utter shock when I suggested the idea: "Play broom ball, Jesus Christ, I work my ass off in the bush and then you expect me to play broomball?"

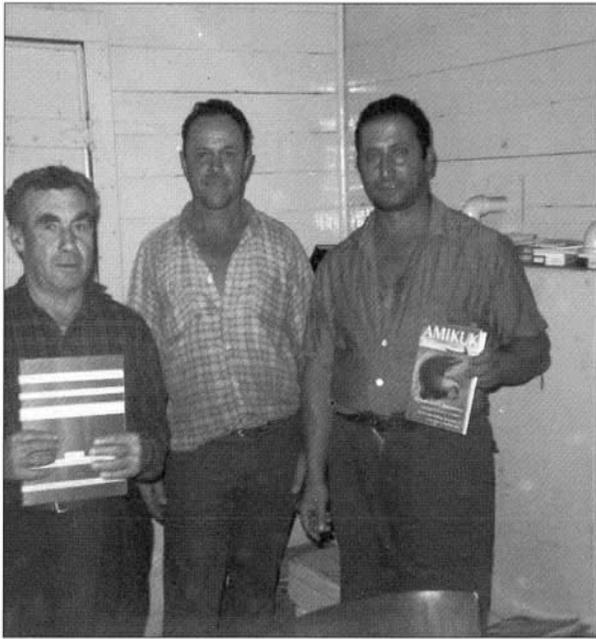
The great majority of guys had never even played before. I remembered what the guy with the red beard (sorry, can't remember his name) said: "Respond to community needs, make sure you have a definite and real need before proceeding, etc." Broomball and related physical stuff didn't seem to be a need of the community. I waited for about a week trying to establish some justification for setting up the broom ball thing and then (mainly because I myself wanted to learn how to play) I uttered those fateful words of homo frustratedus "Fuck it!"

Bought brooms in town (at a sizeable discount - I'm a haggler you know) and began negotiating with the foreman and mechanics in earnest to let me bring one of the machines into camp and plow off the rink. Their hesitancy in granting permission was probably well founded as I was still pretty raw on the machine and it was close to a 45 mile round trip. But things got worked out and I brought the machine (skidder) in one weekend and did the deed. This caused a wave of mild interest among the men - comments on my abilities as a skidder operator rippled back and forth amidst the occasional mention of the word broom ball. Finished the job Sunday. At lunch the men asked me "Are you going to play broomball today?" Interest was perking. But that afternoon I still had to walk from room to room rousting guys out - we had our first game. Since then its just been a matter of telling the eager ones there's going to be a game and the thing snowballs. There's an average of 15 guys out for the games now (including the foreman) and we have a ball.

Conclusion. Either this community is too docile to express its needs (directly or indirectly through dem' vibes) or I am too unperceptive to pick them out. If I believe something will work out I'll try it - needs or no needs they're going to get it. I try a lot of the things I read about in F.F.P. and use my imagination and intuition for the rest (thus the stag films, Owen). This gives me lots of opportunities to make colossal boobs but I believe, in this situation, it's the only method I'm suited to. Fortunately there are some of these "natural leaders" here who are very helpful in making some of the decisions.

SCOTTALEXANDER

Otherwise, it was business as usual. The first of the following series of letters from LTs out in the field in the mid 1970's, comes from Scott Alexander, who spent a winter cutting pulp for Churchill Forest Industries at The Pas, Manitoba.



Pine Point Mines June, 1972

My English class is meeting twice weekly for about two hours a session. I hold them two times a week since the guys feel this is enough. I guess it's just an excuse so they can go to the bar for a few extra evenings. Presently we're doing reading and pronunciation. By using the Reader's Digests they can see a word, learn to spell it, and say it correctly. The Reader's Digests are also useful in enlarging their vocabulary since they increase in difficulty with each new story. Thanks for the dictionaries. I distributed them and taught a lesson on their use. The phonetic guide to pronunciation is quite useful to recent arrivals. My class size fluctuates something like the stock market. The most I've had is six, while the smallest was myself and one other person. A poor turnout can be very frustrating especially if I've spent a half-assed amount of time trying to cook up a good lesson.

GARY GOLDSTEIN

Fortune, Newfoundland June, 1972

Only sore spot of situation is *my* living conditions. Much to our surprise, we discovered that Booth decided to find us boarding houses. Roman didn't get a bad deal - he is the only boarder with a family of 3, but get this, I'm in a house of the same size with two other boarders and a family of 7 (including a bad-tempered grandchild) - not only do I not have my own room but not even my own bed - and would you believe that while Alice and I are at work (yes, my bed-mate is female, at least) the bed is occupied all day by one of the other boarders who works the night shift, i.e. the room is occupied by 3 of us. I could go on and on listing the disadvantages of this place. Must admit it is one way to meet people - but if it is the only way, I never should have come. Anyway, I'm desperately trying to find another place - both Marg Mutch and Roman think I'm crackers to have stayed this long.

DEBBIE SCHAEFER

**CN 156, Manitoba
July, 1972**

I encountered what may qualify as one of the problem situations we were asked to discuss in the briefing sessions:

The Canadian cook on the rail gang can't communicate with the Portuguese bull-cook, as he speaks little English. The cook prepares excellent meals and the men are very happy with her. The foreman fears that she might get frustrated with having to explain everything to the bull-cook (and then his not understanding it after it all) and quit. He replaces the bull-cook with an English-speaking labourer and puts him out on the track with the others.

My solution, and I'm sure it is the right one, was to do nothing at all. The bull-cook is in my English class and is very interested in learning English. I could have given him special tutoring and drilled him in the basic words and phrases he needed as bull-cook. But the real matter is that the cook would still have to labour over communicating to him the "regular" duties plus anything that was new to him. Now this cook is very good and works extremely hard at her job, baking all kinds of goodies that aren't on the menu and which she is not required to do. I don't feel she should have to contend with what is for her a struggle such as the one she was dealing with ... The bull-cook did not get fired (otherwise a different matter) and this way everyone is happy. I think the foreman made the right choice and I left it at that.

GORD QUEEN



**Sail Lake Mannix Co.
Churchill Falls, Labrador
29 juin 1971**

Les débuts ont été assez difficiles, jusqu'à que les hommes s'aperçoivent que j'étais ici pour eux. Tout le monde m'appelle "son" ou "français", je suis à la veille de me faire assimiler.

Avant chaque projection, je dispose sur une table de la cuisine les cent livres que je me suis fait envoyer de St- John, et j'ai la vive satisfaction de voir les livres d'histoire, de géographie et de science se lire aussi bien que les romans d'aventure. J'en ai malheureusement déjà perdu quelques-uns.

J'avais commencé un cours de français qui allait bien jusqu'à ce que deux de mes élèves soient transférés de nuit et que trois autres soient mis à pied. Le termine en suggérant que la séance d'information soit portée à cinq jours et soit davantage axée sur des méthodes pédagogiques ainsi que sur une étude beaucoup plus poussée des matériaux mis à notre disposition comme les films de l'O.N.F. de façon à ce que les anciens expliquent aux nouveaux et s'expliquent entre eux le contenu et l'utilité des films qu'ils ont projetés!

Il serait également très souhaitable qu'on établisse des schémas de cours comme français, anglais, histoire, physique et chimie usuelle, et qu'on nous explique quelques expériences simples propres à intéresser les hommes. Je me suis rendu compte que, à Sail Lake du moins, il était faux de prétendre (comme on l'a fait) que l'ouvrier-instructeur n'a pas l'initiative et le choix des matières à enseigner. Je crois que s'il présente des cours bien structurés et attrayants, il y attirera les hommes et qu'il ne doit pas attendre que ceux-ci manifestent des goûts particuliers, ce qu'ils ne font pas, ici du moins.

FRANÇOIS TERROUX

~

**Port Hardy, B.C.
March, 1973**

For a bunch of do-it-yourself teachers, we have very little exchange of teaching ideas. One which has stood me in good stead is I find it helps to become very conscious of the way in which we manipulate our mouths when making sounds. This concept has come in very handy when helping students with heavy accents. The idea is to try to imitate a given sound as the student makes it, noting mentally the position of your tongue, teeth, and lips while performing the sound. Repeat this while making the sound properly, again noting mentally and detectable differences. Now, using both yourself and diagrams, explain the correct way to the student. Nine times out of ten this will solve any pronunciation problems. The tenth time is often an Oriental student. I have found that if you ask him to speak in a deeper voice, his pronunciation will be improved.

JIM PELTIER

Island Lake, Ontario
May, 1973

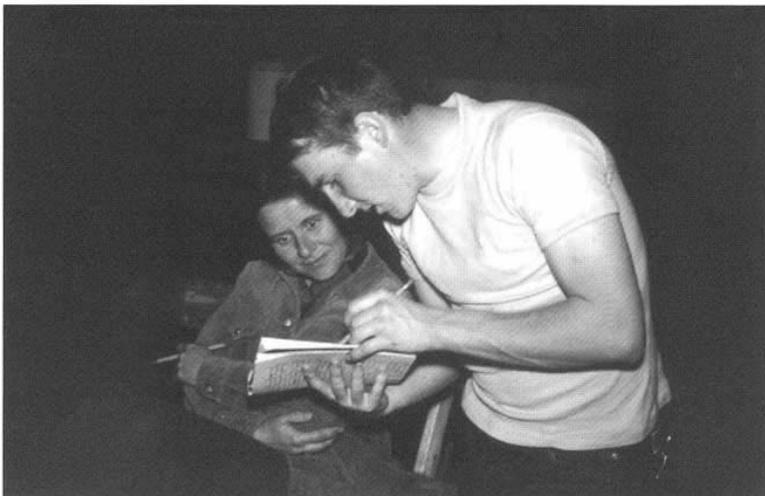
It seems to me that I was told a long time ago (in the midst of a briefing session) that I could, if I saw fit, set up crafts classes for the women and children of the town I was about to enter. Let's have more discussion on the topic of crafts!! I feel it should be given its own little time slot in the course of a session. After all, look at all the time that's devoted to video tape. Some might shy away from the subject - especially the ones who are going to rail gangs (the origami paper objects would surely get ruined once the train started rolling). But if you're going to a place where there are children and young women you'll have a good time if you set up simple craft workshops. A "simple craft workshop" can be anything from an open fringes-painting session (what a mess) to making valentines cards. We did quite a few of them at Island Lake - they were all very spontaneous and nonchalant. A few of the married women were very interested in simply reading the Lewiscraft Catalogue. Remember - if you can teach English, or cut the heads off fish, you can also do crafts. A craft session has definite advantages - people enjoy themselves; some of the little boys who run about causing trouble turn out to be unusually creative; people are proud of what they can make with their own hands.

JANET GIBSON

Fort St. James, B.C.
August, 1973

I lost almost all my students a little while ago - the Immigration Dept. showed up and promptly five Punjabis let out into the bush. They didn't have their papers, as they came to Canada as visitors and then applied for jobs. Four of the five were regular students of mine, another student got transferred to another camp, another student took a two-week holiday, leaving me with a grand total of one! I appreciate the lull, for it gives me a chance to concentrate my time on a Greek fellow and the Portuguese and try to see if I can be of any help there.

JOHN McCAFFREY



Tasu, British Columbia
December, 1974

After 3 days in Vancouver digging up contacts, etc. I arrived at the ABC Employment people, took my medical, was given plane tickets, and wished a happy trip to Tasu where I was to be the first and only female worker in the mine site! As it happened, the other women who had applied had for one reason or another not been hired, and I found myself in the position of being the history-maker, standard bearer or whatever here in Tasu. Despite my apprehensions (which were slight to begin with) on that score, I thoroughly enjoyed the trip up - especially the last hop from Sandspit, in beautiful weather on Sunday, complete with that heart-stopping ride through the mountain pass in the bush plane.

... By this time, of course, I'd met some of the guys in the bunkhouse and was greeted with great cordiality (to say nothing of interest) by everyone. Despite the friendliness, however, walking into the cafeteria for breakfast on Monday morning at 7 a.m. was perhaps the most harrowing experience I have yet had: evidently there was a stunned silence, but I was so scared I didn't notice, my hands merely shook and I could hardly get words out of my throat. Everything else that has happened since seems mild in comparison.

... As for the work, that too, is a funny story. On Monday I really went at it (shovelling rocks falling from under a conveyor belt onto it, in the cobbing plant) because I felt that I had to show I could work. Little did I know that I was establishing a reputation as the female wonder: one of the old miners at breakfast Tuesday morning advised me to take it easy as rum ours were flying thick and fast around camp that I was doing the work of two men. This had been repeated in one form or another over the past couple of days, but I wonder if people aren't just trying to be encouraging. But I think you can understand the pressure I feel under (or perhaps it's self-induced pressure?) to prove that I can work just as hard and produce just as much if not more than the men. Perhaps the old adage about women having to work twice as hard to get half as far is applicable here! (only at least I'm getting equal pay). Naturally, I am regarded as something of a freak, but my working and social relations with the men are very good.

As the sore muscles ease and the blisters turn into calluses (which they seem to be doing with remarkable speed) I am gradually getting things organized for teaching. Already 4-5 people have spoken to me about starting classes in the evenings and I have to get ahold of another person whom I've heard is interested. Tuesday night went to see the school principal and I'll be starting French with the 8's and 10's next week, an hour a day for only 2 days per week (but nevertheless a brief reprieve from the man!)

Some of these guys (more accurately, most) are just dying to talk to a woman and I think it will be an entirely good thing if the company can get more of us up here (to say nothing of the fact that that will relieve the strain on me!) funny how revealing some people are early in the morning over breakfast, but one of the bull-cooks told me this morning that he felt it was a good thing they had a woman in the bunkhouse - it seemed to increase morale among the men, spruce them up a bit, etc. Of course, I have no doubt that the novelty for them will eventually wear off, and then we will really get down to the nitty-gritty. So far, of course, everyone is on their "company behavior."

JANE HENSON



So far, I am still the only single female in the bunkhouse, though there are now 2 of us in the mine site workforce, the other being the wife of one of the engineers. Since the departure of my good friend, the nurse, this means that I am the only woman eating in the cookhouse as well. My greatest disappointment of all is to realize that after 4 months and all my efforts to blend in (ha!) I am still regarded as a conversation piece, to say nothing of a freak, probably and am still *constantly* watched. It is this watching, the constant unwanted and unavoidable attention that is the hardest of all to cope with. It has taken me this long to realize, much less accept the fact, that my private life can not be my own, that comings and goings at work are open to question by absolutely everyone, and that I am in a position of great emotional vulnerability. Perhaps the last needs a bit of explaining.

It seems to me that I am emotionally vulnerable because of my personal relationship with the men are constantly changing, and it is I, who has to make the adaptation. Come to think of it, it is this adaptation too constantly shifting ground that causes the greatest emotional drain. As an example, one hour say Saturday night at a dinner, I can be buddy-buddy with the guys as we eat; two hours later at the sing-along or in the bar, I have to relate to them in a totally different way; and Sunday morning I have to play the role of Mother Confessor and grant dispensations to the hung-overs and still-drunks who beg my forgiveness for stepping on my toes at the boogie last night. And so it goes. It seems sometimes as if everyone in Tasu has taken shares into the Jane Henson Corporation - some hold preferred stock, others have first option for a renewal, and everyone has a controlling interest but me, I'm just the figurehead chairman of the Bonds who signs the cheques and makes the speeches as the occasion warrants. I fight to gain some measure of control over my life in Tasu but it seems impossible because I am constantly being manipulated by the need to respond - in any fashion at all - even to all the situations, incidents and personalities that clamour for my attention.

I think the central question - and I hope I'm not labouring the point is this: Just how much garbage does a person have to take because she is female and because she is vulnerable?

Four months later, in April, 1975, Jane Henson was in a position to have further insights into her position as a woman working among a huge group of men in a big mine. She would later become Western Regional Coordinator for Frontier College.

PART THREE
1974–1999

Education
and
Survival





PART THREE 1974-1999

Education and Survival

In 1976, when Frontier College began a series of projects with inmates in the Manitoba prison system, the program was called "New Frontier." This was appropriate and prophetic: the old frontier, a physical, geographic place on the edge of the hinterland was disappearing; displaced, as much as anything, by collapsing distances, by revolutions in transportation and communications. People who lived and worked there, as letters and reports from the field began to point out, no longer were as removed from educational and social resources -or from the material comforts of life - as they would have been in an earlier time. Frontier College had seen a substantial part of its mandate fulfilled.

Yet there was still a frontier, a place isolated from the rest of the world where few wished to venture. Over a million Canadians, a report in 1967 had pointed out, functioned at less than a grade six level of literacy. In a world increasingly dependent on communications skills, these people were often impoverished, marginalized, and largely ignored. Many of them lived right in the middle of Canada's biggest cities. Their social standing, economic opportunity, and political power were frequently at low ebb as well. This was the new frontier into which Jack Pearpoint, who became president in 1975, and John Daniel O'Leary, who followed him in 1991, now wanted to steer Frontier College.

The College started to pour energy into the support of literacy programs for prisoners, homeless people, new immigrants, people with disabilities, and children. A program called HELP worked throughout most of the 1980's with inmates and, when it folded, was followed up in the Kingston area with a prison literacy program. Partners in Learning brought literacy programs to the workplace and Beat the Street worked with homeless youth in downtown Winnipeg and Toronto. One-on-one ESL tutoring and Independent Studies Programs worked with individual learners, while Students for Literacy matched thousands of university volunteers with children, teens, and adults in a variety of school and community-based programs. Thousands were offered the opportunity to read when books were distributed by Read Canada and other family literacy programs into the eager hands of children and young students.

The geographic hinterland didn't disappear entirely from view. The traditional Labourer- Teacher still went out to work shoulder to shoulder alongside his or her (increasingly Frontier College was now sending out women) students. But throughout the next twenty years, many aspects of that tradition would be in the process of change.

Grey River, Newfoundland October, 1975

Within the space of twenty-four hours we: came, used a real toilet (a surprise), met everybody, rang the church bell, led the singing of the hymns, saw our house (I cracked my head on a door – blood everywhere - don't send any six footers in the future to River - I'm only 5'9" and I've broken five light bulbs already), went to a real shotgun wedding plus the reception complete with 'white' rum from St. Pierre, slept in a real feather bed for one night, shook the hand of every man in River, had salmon steaks for breakfast ... the people of River went out of their way to welcome us. "Do you like it here?" "Do you think you'll come back next year?" - hard questions to answer after less than a day, and what a day!

What We Been Doing With Ourselves: The pace from the beginning has been hectic. People come to the door at all hours of the day and night - just to visit, to bring a loaf of bread or a piece of moose meat, to ask for the frizbee, to borrow matches or a cardboard box, to ask if we'd like to come up the bay berry picking It has been a major adjustment for both of us, who are used to a large measure of solitude.

Teaching has occupied us both, for most of our waking hours. Lynn is teaching the grade ones (eight kids) in our kitchen every morning. And in the afternoon she comes up to give me a hand with the grade two kids - most of whom do not even know their alphabet, let alone spell or read even the most basic words. I am teaching English to grades 2-8, but since the school is not completed yet (won't be before January) we are holding classes in the church. This means that only one group of kids can be taught at one time: every morning the grade 5-8's came from nine to twelve; every afternoon the grade 2-4's come from one to four; every Tuesday and Wednesday night the older kids come from six to eight; and every Monday and Thursday nights the younger kids come from six to eight.

The kids are keen to learn but are way behind - grade three kids can identify (just barely) mind boggling words such as 'the' and 'went' ... Lynn and I get excited, frustrated, elated, and deflated - a continuous cycle which makes us love teaching one minute and hate it the next. We have learned to measure success with a centimeter yardstick - one that measures smiles of accomplishment when Bill or Charlie can say what 'the' spells three times out of five.

Our evenings are spent preparing work sheets for the next day. The text books are usually worse than useless (List 5 Safety Rules for crossing busy streets etc. - which the kids can't read anyway). The picture that I've painted looks pretty black - it's really a bit better in reality. The kids really want to learn! That is something I really appreciate.

DALE and LYNN PETERS

In the 1970's, community-based education became established as a specialty of Frontier College. The following letters recount the settling-in of instructors to new postings in Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories, and British Columbia as well as to the college's first placement in a minimum security prison camp in Manitoba.

Igloolik, North West Territories August, 1976

Settling ourselves into our house has been less of a hassle than we expected. The house has been redecorated since the Denker's departure. Although we were told in Frobisher, on our way through, that the Bay and Co-op in Igloolik were out of everything, provisioning ourselves until the sea lift arrives has proven to be fairly easy. The caribou and char are delicious. Our house is the best in town - at least it's the best located. So even if we are not involved in a whole lot yet, we are in a key situation to watch much of what does go on - on the beach, in the Territorial and Hamlet offices, at the post office, and the Anglican Church.

In our first few days we did the rounds of most of Igloolik's officialdom - territorial and hamlet offices, churches, school, nursing station, etc. So we are known to, if not really acquainted with, most of the young persons who hold positions in these institutions. We have yet to find opportunities to meet the older elected leaders of all the committees which make Igloolik tick.

We have had to spend a good deal of time cleaning up the Adult Education Centre which had been without supervision or good locks for five months. It isn't "Federal-Research-Station-spick-and-span" yet, but it is comfortably ready. We have sought and received approval from the Department of Education to hire a part-time janitor for the period of the BTSD course.

In cooperation with the Manpower Outreach officer we have advertised our BTSD course on the radio. A week or so ago, eleven persons had registered. Several others have told us they intend to do so. So we should be able to utilize our 15 places allotted by Manpower and the Territorial government. Unless a number of men come forward at the last minute, the group is going to be almost all mothers. Of those registered so far, two have had no previous schooling, one has completed Grade 9 and the rest have attended previous Adult Education courses. We are looking into the possibility of conducting a programme with a Grade 10 equivalency for the advanced students. The BTSD programme will start in the first week in October when most people will have returned to the settlement and we will have returned from Frobisher.

I have asked Joe Iyerak to give me a couple of hours of Inuktitut instruction each day, however, since I made this arrangement, Joe has been out hunting.

We have worked on arranging further training outside the settlement for two people - Moses Kalliraq, an officer with the Hamlet Council, and Ika Irngaut, a secretary/bookkeeper with the Co-op. This has given us an opportunity to meet most of the people in these two offices.

Barbara has approached the secretary of the radio committee about becoming a member, and she has also been "warned" that she will be approached by the ladies of the Home Management who evidently have a problem.

We are off tomorrow for Frobisher for an in-service training/adult educators meeting. When we return Igloolik should look and feel like home.

PETER HOFFMAN

Good Hope Lake, B.C.
November, 1976

Heavy drinking and violence have been the order of the day for the past three weeks. In the south village (Sesame Street) there have been several beatings and property damage, with of course the children being neglected. In the north village (Gas Town) it has been even worse with shooting, arson, rape and an accidental death. This set the ball rolling where we almost lost complete control here. It has taken ten hectic days to bring this situation to a point where we finally have order and can now continue with the business at hand.

The accidental death of a nine year-old native boy, who strangled himself on a home made swing, happened in the midst of all this confusion. The events that followed this incident caused some of the agony suffered by this community. The RCMP sent the body out for an autopsy to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory; after which it was left for the family to return the body for burial. The family being on welfare did not have the funds. The community raised the money to bring the body back, but, with interference from the Ways and Means this delayed and the war was on. Several events took place, to numerous to mention, and after it was settled the boy was finally buried ten days after his death. (Note: This was the first time our new church has been used for any type of service.)

The shooting and arson resulted during a heavy drinking spree. The husband threatened to shoot his children and shot the house up. The mother took the children to safety and returned and set the house on fire. The husband got out, so no one was hurt. The whole thing is under investigation by the RCMP.

The attacker in the rape has been apprehended but, the authorities are afraid the victim will not give evidence in court. One other resident has been flown out to Whitehorse hospital in critical condition as a result of a beating, etc., etc.

Well on the brighter side of things. Believe it or not through all this we are really making some headway. I arranged a meeting between the Natives and the local Conservation Officer. He explained the rules and regulations as they pertain to Natives. This was done as the Natives did not understand their position with reference to hunting and fishing laws. The meeting went over good, and the Natives expressed their thanks and commented that no one had ever taken time to explain the laws to them. All they ever got was harassment. As a result a good line of communication now exists between the Natives and the local officer.

The teachers at the public school are a great help with problems here in the community. They have set aside a two hour period on Friday afternoons for resource development. People in and out of the community are invited to use this time to provide information or demonstrations on any subject that may be beneficial to the students. I gave a talk and slide presentation on the differences between the Natives here and in Ontario where I come from.

GEORGE HOLMAN

Spence Bay, North West Territories December, 1976

This second stint in Spence Bay was even more enjoyable than the first, though I had a rather rugged time with my "class" - all of four young women, two with nursing babies in their amantoks, one with two pre-school children hanging around.

My school-teacher host in Baker Lake, teaching a nominal grade VII - kids 14-16 - tells me that half the class don't turn up till the afternoon and the other half are too dopey from staying up half the night to be of much use when they do attend! Parental discipline is almost unknown here. Still, my remaining activities with the LEAP craft shop, run by a couple of highly capable and dedicated women, were most enjoyable, and while we averaged a 55 hour week for the three weeks, the time simply flew. I think that, knowing the hours I had put in, they were a little sceptical when I referred to it as my Spence Bay "holiday," but compared to some of the problems of Baker Lake, it was just that.

Baker Lake is a very different cup of tea, and sometimes a rather frustrating one. If I were a high powered executive, I would be climbing walls, and even as it is, I sometimes wonder what I'm achieving. I think it's fatal to try to apply Southern standards of efficiency, but the problem is always how far to let things go, especially when you feel they've gone too far already. The problem is that there is often no alternative solution. Thus, the young Inuit manager I'm supposed to be training, is quite articulate and intelligent, excellent command of English, but doesn't turn up about 30-40% of the time, and I'm not exaggerating! He's reasonably effective when he does, though not with a terrible lot of initiative - I don't think I had much at that age either, now I come to remember.

I think we are making some progress, but in the Arctic where supplies come in once a year by barge, otherwise air-freight, and there's no pool of skilled labour, everything is an effort. Just two examples, we need an electrician to hook up some power tools and give us a better light in the office, at present graced by a single naked bulb - but try and find an electrician; we need a little more plywood for displays - try to get it, and so on and so forth! However, we have our small triumphs and surprises, a forthcoming brochure with photos taken locally promises well, and wonder of wonders, the Tax Dept. are not interested in our income (or rather, loss) until we incorporate! They even wrote a half-human letter ... "we *don't want*: a tax return ... " instead of something like the more usual, stilted "It is not the Department's policy to require ... etc ... "

HENRY GREEN



Beattie Anchorage
Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C.
July, 1976

I never anticipated how difficult it would be to explain Frontier College to the people I'm supposed to be "helping." How do you say it so that it doesn't sound like an insult? These guys don't like some new guy coming into camp saying, "Well, I'm here to act as an educational facility and resource person, and I'm hoping to be able to organize educational or recreational programs here." I mean, I'm not even qualified to do this stuff, and this really mystifies them. I can't even offer them any ideas or examples of what I might be able to do, as I am as yet uncertain of my limitations, and to say that I can help them with access to retraining programs and to learn to read and write when I'm not sure they want or need anything like that might be a bad move. Anyway, I've kept Frontier very low key for now, but already I have a few ideas that might be a good start. First of all, there's definitely room and probably quite a demand for a library here, and I have another idea I'm going to start on as soon as I feel accepted enough to start proposing recreational projects.

QUENTIN STRUB

Bannock Point Rehabilitation Camp,
Seven Sisters Falls, Manitoba
January, 1977

I have been here for three and a half weeks. The initial difficulties of meeting people, settling in, of seeing and being seen, seem to have passed. I encountered a certain amount of suspicion upon arrival ... who is this guy ... why is he really here ... etc., but this was expected and it was easily overcome as I became known around camp. That is, everyone now knows who I am and what we're trying to do; it does not necessarily mean that they'll support the programme. Such support will depend on the quality of the work we do.

Most of the men who have come forward are young, and interested in continuing with school after their time here is done. There are not very many men in the rehabilitation camps over 30, so we can expect to be working with people of a regular high school and university age level. The men seem to like the idea of Frontier College (our not being attached to the Ministry of Corrections). The staff have been kind.

There may be difficulties with other types of programmes that I've planned. But for now it seems wisest to establish a good working relationship with the staff, and avoid any disputes. Camp discipline and the daily routine are sacred. I have been reprimanded for making my bed improperly, and for wearing my old jeans. It is a matter of pride with the staff that the camp is an efficiently run institution. This accounts for my apprenticeship in rules and regulations. Obviously it would be pointless to incur the administration's wrath over some wrinkled sheets, so I've been appropriately submissive.

There are nine people now involved with the educational programme. Six of them are taking correspondence courses towards completion of high school; one is working on basic reading and writing skills; one is a Quebecois who is learning to speak English; one is taking a business course for personal interest. We are using a vacant lounge as a class. Classes are being conducted each evening and on weekends. One of the happiest aspects of the programme has been the assistance I've received from two residents. Together we have formed a teaching team and we meet regularly to discuss students and courses, make plans etc. Each of them works most days with one or more of the men, and their efforts will make the programme much more effective. One of us is always available. There will likely be some administrative resistance to my request that these men be granted certain privileges related to their teaching (access to classroom; correspondence, etc.). We are now preparing classes for the new year, including a metric course for both residents and staff.

Plans for the future include: live entertainment ... there are local groups that provide music, dance, etc. for those living in institutions, and I'd like to get them here. This idea will almost certainly go over like the fabled lead balloon. This project will require some delicate negotiating. Native peoples' projects ... though there is always a large number of Indians here ... if it were approved, I'd try to bring in Indian speakers, films and cultural groups, etc. Local needs ... I'd like to look into the possibility of a role for Frontier in the local community. One of the men at work has talked with me about upgrading. There may be a need here. And is there a way to improve relations between the camp and the community?

There was a problem at work with the guys on my crew. They were never told why I'd been hired or what Frontier was doing. They thought it was odd that a man would be hired now, when others have been laid off, and before long suspicion was growing and rumours were circulating (at one point I was reported as being a spy from Ottawa). For four days no one spoke to me and I ate lunch on the floor ... no chair being provided. I then spoke to the foreman and to the union steward (who was taught English by a Frontier teacher many years ago) and it was all cleared up. I would suggest that in all our other placements out here, the local people should be adequately briefed.

*"Eternal Spirit of the chain less Mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art,
For there thy habitation is the heart ... »
Lord Byron*

*JOHN O'LEARY**

** John Daniel O'Leary would later become President of Frontier College.*

Northern Alberta Railways
Lac la Biche, Alberta
July, 1976

I've been working mainly on the track with the rest of the gang. This was good, because it's on the track that the best rapport is possible. I've also been working a little as timekeeper, but this took up little time. Then last Friday, I was pulled off the track by the foreman and made to stay in camp. This is absurd. Timekeeping usually takes about 2 hours a day. This leaves me with a lot of time to do nothing. I help out in the kitchen occasionally but they have little need of me there. The effect of all this has been to cut me off from the men to some extent.

The foreman is a rather miserable man in his late fifties. He doesn't talk he growls or shouts. He is rarely pleased. I've come to the point where I want to run every time I see him. He has nothing but criticism for me. To make matters worse, as the timekeeper, I have to share a bunk car with him and sit across the table from him at meals.

I feel as though I'm being systematically stripped of all my dignity. Any attempts on my part to say anything about my position have been shouted down. I've been told that if don't like it I can quit. That's all.

Anyway, I let all this get to me at first. It was crushing. I've found a little spark of hope deep inside, however, so I'm not ready to give in yet.

My one student (prospective anyway) to learn to read and write told me yesterday to forget it. I suspect he doesn't want to be related to the flunky. My position has become pretty ineffectual.

I feel a little empty right now, but think that with a little time I stand a chance of turning things around. I'm starting to get a different perspective on the situation. I'm not totally caught up in it. (That's part of the purpose in writing this.) I'll keep working on the foreman.

Of the gang itself I've never seen men take so much bullshit. The foreman continually screams at them. They can do nothing right for him. Half the labourers that were here 25 days ago, when I started, are gone. Our cook cracked up and has been replaced. The workers are quitting next month. They can't take the constant intimidation by the foreman.

DICK GRAHAM

British Columbia Rail Gang June, 1978

It's a nice feeling being here-the mountains are all about me, the trees are on top of me and the air is in me - its a great feeling. The mountains goose the clouds (which tends to tell you where my head is at). The mountains must be monuments to something - perhaps to God - I prefer to think of them in such terms rather than a fault in the earth's crust that erupted by glacier pressure da-da; da-da. Aren't us romantics disgusting?

The gang is divided quite evenly into lifers (perennial gangmen) and young people with little other opportunities; of that group you have dopers, "drinkers" and those middle class people that want to see some country. The old timers are immigrants to a small degree (Cubans, East Indians) with whom I hope to pursue English lessons. The bulk of frontier work will be to set up some sort of make shift library and recreation activities (games, etc.) and interact within that gap of generations as best I can.

The roadmaster must work on a commission basis because each day is long and the men are literally worn out, so Sunday is indeed the day of rest.

National Film Board movies go over like a punctured whoopee cushion, so the major movies from paramount distributors are the answer - I'll soon get a reply from them. Recreation is around soccer and football both of which take their injury toll when played in work boots. Language aid is mostly done to the Cuban workers (2) that pronounce English as it's spelt - you can imagine the confusion!

My most crucial assistance to date was the swaying of a youth entering a tattoo parlor-he wasn't sure if an eagle or a parrot would be distinguishing enough. I convinced him either a chess board or a map of the world would be more practical although the tattooist wanted \$100.00 for a chess board and over \$300.00 for a map of the world. So I said that I'd do it - it worked out badly - seriously he didn't get one which made me feel dandy. I find the most pressing thing is to spend at least ½ hour talking to each and every person and so far it's worked well - needless to say it comes easy talking for a couple of hours yet even when people are difficult to speak with usually the next day is easier and when you show interest in them (more than ten minutes) they respond very well.

DAVE NEIL

Tasu, British Columbia
October 14, 1977

If one briefly scans the previous reports of former LT's in Tasu one thing becomes quite obvious: the role of the LT is firmly established. By this I mean that for all intense purposes he or she is considered primarily an instructor of English for those who need second language training. Certainly one is not solely confined to this alone. For example, subjects such as French and mathematics have also been taught on a regular basis in the past. Yet the LT is still fairly restricted in the type of activities that he or she will perform. I don't mean to belittle this for it is of course an important gap which has to be filled. My point here is to show that other possible areas of Frontier such as community development are not really needed. The reason behind this is quite simple. There are a number of very capable people in Tasu whose jobs pertain specifically to community development.

Mr. Terry Ford, the recreation director handles everything from movies to camping expeditions - to a wide variety of sports programs. As recreational director he devotes an enormous amount of time and energy to planning social and community functions. Along with this - there is a very active Teens Club which also helps sponsor and organize special events - such as fishing derbies and fairs for the children.

In essence then, Tasu has a well established sound framework which the LT must fit into.

Probably the most constructive recommendations I can make for future LT's concerns the use of language tapes to enforce their English Teaching. Tasu is an ideal situation for this type of facility, since there is a permanent classroom in which some sort of tape recorder and library of tapes maybe kept. The citizenship office which publishes Carson Martin English texts has also developed accompanying tapes for Books I and II. In addition to this other tapes can be found, and an LT may even make his own tapes as he needs them. I believe this would be a big help to many of the people now in Tasu.

The second recommendation I would like to make concerns the actual need of a Frontier College LT in Tasu at this time. The number of foreign workers and their families has been declining substantially in Tasu over the past six months. They have been replaced by a younger - English Canadian social group which have little use for Frontier College work. I think it is important to keep track of our utility in places like Tasu, and that the services that are being offered are actually used. It is wrong to be in a certain place just for the sake of being there. All that I can say is that I observed this decline in the foreign population of Tasu, which is after all the major stimulus for Frontier activities. This is not to say that this situation will change once again - I am only making an observation based on our experience at this time.

I have spoken a lot about "them" or "this", but little about myself. I learned a lot about my own inadequacies as an LT this summer. This is especially the case with my experiences in teaching English as a second language. Someone once said that teaching is an art: (I think someone once said this!) it requires a great deal of sensitivity to others' problems as well as a good deal of spontaneity in order to treat each class as a new challenge. **It** is very easy to get bogged down if you are not careful.

Three and one half months is really just too short a time to see any results. Relationships are established not on the basis of longevity (I'm here like you are for awhile) but more on the fleeting notion of just passing through, I found that my relationships with certain students grew as my stay in Tasu drew to a close. The safety valve of time was I think the reason behind this.

As I look over this report, I can see I have omitted a lot. The small things have been left out - the conversations, the small talk which I learned from. This summer I was once again confronted with the problem of swallowing my pride. If the foreman yelled at me or if it was done in a little bit more sophisticated way - I was affected by it. I hope that some day I will be able to turn the other cheek and take all this sort of thing in stride.

IAN SHORT REED

The following, segments from a general letter called *A Look Ahead*, by College president Jack Pearpoint, heralded a shift in the way Frontier College wanted to work in the 1980's and 1990's. The College was ever mindful of its limitations, both those of size and resources, but also strictly imposed limitations as to its purpose.

If the College was small and felt limited, however, this might also somehow be its strength. Pearpoint observed that Frontier College enjoyed the luxury of Flexibility. Throughout a long tradition, its volunteers had become among the best anywhere in the world, one might argue, at becoming self-reliant. Frontier College had a strong tradition, but that tradition was itself somehow a vehicle of liberation; it was not the type of stultifying tradition that would Freeze the institution into inaction.

July 17, 1978
FRONTIER- A LOOK AHEAD

I am writing this letter to inform everyone associated with the College of staff changes, new structures, and future plans for Frontier College. Change is never easy, but change is always inevitable. When some people leave, new faces appear. This letter will introduce you to one new face, and will tell you about an exciting new plan for yet another phase in the history of Frontier College.

A brief historical perspective is essential to put events in order. When I joined Frontier College just over three years ago, there were no regional coordinators, and part-time personnel did their best to respond to requests from the field on the basis of "who's available." There was no organizational memory, i.e. records, other than a collage of incredible stories collected by individual staff members. To make the jobs more feasible, and to ensure that the organization learned from its successes and failures more efficiently, the concept of regional co-ordinators was introduced. These positions greatly improved our responsiveness to field requirements, as there was now a person who knew the region and the people more than superficially.

Two years later, the weaknesses of that structure became evident. Because they knew their regions better, the co-ordinators gradually began to explore more complex long term placements which resulted in increasingly unrealistic demands on them. They needed more time to develop their special placements, more time to respond to requests from fieldworkers who now expected more, and an increasingly broad range of skills to cope with demands - from counselling on a rail gang, to running a small business development workshop. The strains increased as the jobs became more unrealistic as time went on. Various attempts have been made to lessen the load and improve effectiveness, but each change seemed to make the frustrations of the jobs more acute. A special recruiting co-ordinator was hired to relieve some of the pressures. The result has been better handling of all applicants, and with it a greater expectation from fieldworkers for more professional support and resources. We have worked to create local life member associations to add support for fieldworkers and co-ordinators. They have, but they have also increased demands. Regional workshops for fieldworkers were attempted. They have been a success, but they have to be organized and increased follow-up is required. In short, the job of regional co-ordinator has become impossible as presently constituted. The problem is not how to maintain particular jobs. Rather, it is how does Frontier meet the support requirements for fieldworkers *in order* that they may carry out their work with less advantaged Canadians more effectively. Clearly regional workshops, life member groups, and recruitment co-ordinators are moves that enhance support. The problem is how do we maintain field support in key areas *and increase* support in areas in which we have never been able to provide it.

This brings us to the present and future. I do not believe that any answer is permanent, but clearly the time and opportunity for a shift within Frontier has arrived. Your feedback and suggestions will be critical in maintaining a good process of communication which will keep the College alive and relevant. Frontier has not survived for 79 years by being brittle; it has been flexible to the times. It has also retained its essential role as an educational institution with limited goals and objectives. Those principles must remain stable.

Trying to look ahead and envision a structure that would maintain the principles and personal style of the College, and also add to our capacity to support you and meet the needs of individuals and communities, several thoughts were prominent. First and foremost, Frontier College is an educational institution - different than most, but still an institution. It pioneered the principle of *working with people* as teacher-learners, and learner-teachers. It is soundly based on the principles of equal rights and opportunities, and on the fundamental dignity of human beings. One of the ways the College has been able to maintain those principles is by staying relatively small. If the College grows uncontrollably, it will inevitably become like any other large institution. Instead, we have consciously encouraged each of you, by relying on your own resources, to build an ethos of self-reliance wherever you work. Thus, ideally, the College works with individuals, groups or communities for short periods, then formally phases itself out, leaving a core of self-reliance that can maintain itself. Clearly we have been less than fully successful, and it is for this reason that we are changing.

Two levels of change are required. First, in each of us personally, we must abandon the idea that working for Frontier College is a "neat, macho, summer job." The College is dedicated to principles, and if you work for the College and accept those principles, you do not pack them up and ship them back to Frontier at the end of a placement. Rather, you take those principles and try to implement them in whatever way you are best able, wherever you are, as long as you accept the principles. That is what the concept of "life member" means, and it is what I hope you become - whether you maintain a formal affiliation or not.

The second level of change regards our programme delivery. Historically, Frontier College had Labourer-Teachers. Today we have Labourer-Teachers and a limited community education programme. We have attempted to integrate them and treat them as similar programmes. They are related, one follows the other and they are not the same. The Labourer-Teacher programme is Frontier College's an excellent programme. It meets many needs that could not be met by any other programme and is excellent for both teachers and learners. It is the basic delivery system of Frontier College and should be strengthened and increased. However, community education programmes are also important and they have made increasingly complicated demands on the organization to which we were unable to respond effectively. Thus, the organization must move to a more formal recognition of the two levels of programme delivery: a general broad based Labourer-Teacher programme which requires one type of support; and a smaller, more specific community education programme which demands highly skilled professional backup. We must now build in an organizational capacity to provide that level of support. This means becoming more effective at gathering the resources and providing the skills to build real self-reliance, so that people really are taking control over their lives.

JACK PEARPOINT

In 1976, figures showed that the educational attainment of the average of Canada's 20,000 prison inmates was grade seven, and that 80 per cent had no skill or job training. Jails were becoming identified as communities of great need. Engaging a former CUSO volunteer, Neil Webster, to set it up, Frontier College took on a five-year pilot program with the federal and provincial corrections systems in Manitoba. "New Frontier" eventually employed twenty-five people working in seven different corrections facilities.

A National Parole Service official at the time described prison inmates as needing service at a very basic level. "By the time a guy falls into our system," he wrote, "he has already been through every agency and has failed at every program." Therefore, New Frontier tried to be both comprehensive and basic. It offered life skills - including driver education - to dozens of inmates. In the end, over its five years, it placed and paid one hundred and two ex-inmates in employment, and was responsible for the creation of three separate new projects each employing and affecting innumerable individuals.



TED STONE

Job Placement Worker, New Frontier,
Brandon, Manitoba

When I came I thought that people didn't need just a job, but needed something that would make them feel good about themselves. So I tried to find out what a person had respect for. If it happened to be an occupation, then I would try to get them into that occupation. It turned out that almost nobody wanted to be on farms; farm jobs were the kinds of jobs they had always had. They were just labouring jobs that they didn't want to have anything to do with. Usually, not always.

By the end we had decided that the value of the program wasn't just in finding a career. In the few cases that people did want a career it was often difficult to work one. One fellow, Hector, wanted to be a plumber. He had something very definite to do. He's dependable as hell and he could handle the job. But it was very difficult to place him in a steady job in a rural area. The employers can't guarantee year-round work because there isn't enough work.

CHARLIE TANN

Ex-inmate, 49, incarcerated for 20 years
Employed through New Frontier job placement
program to counsel juveniles in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Rick Palmer at Stony Mountain told me to give Frontier College a call when I got out. So I phoned Neil Webster and I said my name is Charlie Tann and I just got out of the pen and he said, great, why don't you come on over and talk to me about it. And he gave me an application to fill out. John O'Leary came down, he was on a recruitment trip, and he said: "So what do you want to do?" And I said that I wanted to work with kids but in a different way. I think I have a bit of an idea what's wrong. Basically it's that people get stuck into a job working with kids and they get frustrated. They work once or twice with a kid but the kid buggers up and comes back and then they pass him on to someone else or get him up into the adult system. I think my frustration tolerance level is higher than most people's because I've been frustrated all my life, being in the pen, always trying to work out deals trying to get out and it never working. So he asked what kind of plan I had to work with kids. I said basically none. Just say to a kid, hey, I've been where you have been and part of me is still there. And like it or not, I'm going to help you. And then stick to it. I said it sounds simple and it probably is simple, but it can work.

PAT PIDLASKI

Job Placement Worker, New Frontier
Rossburn, Manitoba

A lot of the people I placed went into jobs where they wouldn't have hired anyone otherwise. It wasn't that there wasn't work that had to be done. It's just that they couldn't afford to take another person on. In one case, the garage in Rossburn, they've agreed now that we've placed someone there that they will hire him on.

BRUCE COMRIE

New Frontier Driving Instructor
Dauphin, Manitoba

A lot of times all a guy knows is that he has ten motor vehicle charges against him. Say three are speeding, four are drinking and driving and on and on. He wouldn't know how many points he has against him, he wouldn't know how those points come down, he wouldn't know how long he had been suspended for, he wouldn't know when he could get his licence back, how much it would cost him to get it back, how he could get a special licence for purposes of work, on and on. The fellow wouldn't know all the legalities around the licencing process. He would just know, "well I drank and I drove and I guess I'm in jail; now what do I do?"

I found there that many people wanted to get their licences but they would just have grade five or six, they would get hold of the driver handbook and find that it was geared to people with a grade eleven; they would get discouraged studying, would give up, and would just get in the car and go anyway. The majority of the people operated this way.

At times I just wanted to chuck the whole thing. For example, I spent three months going through the advanced performance driver courses, I taught five of the courses before I realized that it wasn't doing any good. It was an excellent course but it just wasn't for the people we wanted to work with. It was too advanced in terms of language and all that kind of thing. But I didn't know that until I did it. We went through every single thing that the Manitoba Safety Council offers, that the Motor Vehicle Branch offers; we used all those resources and found that they were lacking. We couldn't use any of those things because they weren't geared to the people we were working with. We realized, "Hold it, we have to develop our own." But by then we could say with a fair amount of authority that we had gone every possible route to reach the people we wanted to work with.

1978

Elsa, Yukon

ISSUES RELATED TO THE ROLE OF FRONTIER COLLEGE WORKERS

The College is not a revolutionary organization but is primarily an educational resource which tries to provide individuals and communities in Canada's outlying areas with some basic tools with which to solve some of their own problems. It is self delusion to think that we can lead these people out of the land of bondage to the promised land.

Various groups which we are trying to serve, such as the Inuit, have their own leaders and ideas and are capable of sorting out their own problems. The College can provide some skills which may expedite solutions to these problems. Such should be its role. I honestly believe that these people actively seek their own solutions to poverty, ignorance, injustice and oppression. We have to have faith in their aspirations and the justice of their cause or sink into becoming missionaries. This was precisely what Rodney Soonias was talking about when he challenged the role of fieldworkers and the College itself at the Dawson Creek Regional Workshop.

There are approximately one million functionally illiterate people in Canada. It is indeed a formidable task to try and assist these people in acquiring some measure of control over their circumstances. Is this not reason enough for the College to exist? Our work in prisons and in community development is still at a seminal stage and it seems to me that we are still "feeling out" these areas. In time however, we will acquire depth here too. We cannot overlook the fact that much of the financial support of Frontier College comes from corporations, private foundations and individual donors. If the senior management personnel of the College were to issue a challenge to the system, there will be no money forthcoming.

*PHIL FERNANDEZ **

**Philip Fernandez would later become a Senior Trainer with Frontier College.*

February, 1981

Frontier College workers in Labrador, more specifically in the Indian communities of Sheshatshit and Utshimasit, find themselves facing and having to deal with a number of issues that can be significant in terms of how well they are able to do their jobs.

The first and most obvious of these issues is that of non-Indians living and working in Indian communities. Both Sheshatshit and Utshimasit have, in their brief life as communities (so-called), had many experiences with non-native peoples and for the most part, these experiences have probably been detrimental to the Indian people. Regardless of how well meaning a person may be, there can be an incredibly fine line between doing things "for" people and doing things "with" people, so they can then do for themselves. Generally most non-native people have been engaged in activities in which they were doing things for the people. The process in which people are taught things so that they can then do them for themselves, seems to be so much more laborious, time consuming, and perhaps even expensive, that most often non-native people will choose to do it for the Indian people.

Certainly it can be a painful experience to be a part of this slow process and that is why there is this invisible push by all parties "to do it for them." This is also complicated by the fact that there are so many non-native people acting in capacities in these communities where their mandate simply is to do



"for the people". There is no process at all whereby any attempt is made to transfer skills to the people and this has become the norm for the way non-natives operate and many Indian people themselves have expectations for this.

This issue is clouded even more if the non-native person happens to be a nice guy and is well liked by the people.

In these communities we, as field workers, do not speak the people's language, and the Naskapi-Montagnais language is definitely the first language of the people. Most people over the age of 30 speak little or no English and their language is the language of the homes and of their work. Most of us, upon coming to these communities, were almost completely ignorant of the unique culture and traditions of the Naskapi-Montagnais people. What makes this important when talking about the issue of non-Indian people working in an Indian community, is that knowledge of the language and of the traditions and culture, are critical to how well a field-worker can manage in the community and this knowledge takes time to learn in the community, which is really the only place to learn. Yet upon arriving in a community, the field-worker is expected to begin their job and it is at that point in time we have to begin to balance doing our job while lacking knowledge of the people and their place and trying to gain some of that knowledge so as to be able to do the job better.

The next issue which we face here is difficult to describe but it stems from the historical developments of the communities of Sheshatshit and Utshimasit. Both these communities could be described as "enforced" communities because there was no slow, gradual development of the community. Sheshatshit, for example, was a traditional summer resting place for people who spent the rest of the year travelling in the bush, but a community by name was created in order to deliver to the people certain services, i.e. school, health and social services.

This has created an incredible problem for the people in terms of their ability to live in a community and to think of this place where hundreds of people happen to live as a community. On the one level it is extremely difficult for the Band to even begin to deliver basic services such as garbage pickup and water delivery, but on another level, it is hard for neighbours to get along well, and be supportive of each other when this may be critical in terms of their being seen as a minority group by outside groups. The issue within this for the field-worker is how to deal with our perceptions of community and "community development," while working in a place where these perceptions almost assuredly are not shared by the people who live there.

There is another issue within this broader one of non-Indians working and living in an Indian community. This is related to the fact that Frontier College field-workers have generally taken their direction from local groups, whether it be a Board of Directors, or the Band Council, and not only has

this been seen as unusual by many other non-natives, but it has been seen as problematic by other non-natives. There are two distinct groups of non-natives who seem to see the idea of taking direction from the local people as problematic. The first group are the non-native people of Labrador, i.e. the settlers, who are suspicious and distrustful and perhaps with good reason, but who, in general, have no use for the outsiders, which we as field-workers would be considered.

It is perhaps more problematic when other outsiders, generally in decision making positions vis-a-vis the Indian people, are distrustful and suspicious of field-workers. Usually these people are trying very hard to

stay clear of any kind of local control over how they make decisions and any people working in a situation whereby they are taking directions locally and having success are almost to be discredited and at the least, to be viewed as a threat and this has been the experience here.

At this point in time Labrador is an area rife with political and social issues and in itself this fact is an issue for field-workers. The people of Sheshatshit and Utshimasit have, for a number of years and are presently in the process of working on a "land claim," and involved in this process are decisions which have to be made regarding every aspect of life for the people here. This process is happening at a time when resource and industrial development of Labrador is a major issue. Consequently the Indian people in Labrador are constantly finding themselves in a position of reasserting the fact that they want a just settlement of their claim before any further development takes place.

This is an issue for field-workers here because it seems that it is necessary to use whatever skills we may have to help the people here assert their feelings about resource and industrial development and about the land claim process. In my opinion one cannot "not be political."

LYLA MacEACHERN

Lyla and several other Frontier College workers chose to remain in Labrador and make their homes in the communities of Sheshats hit, Northwest River and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The communities in Labrador have experienced a great deal of change over the last twenty years. Even the language used to identify and describe the Aboriginal People has changed. Today, those who were once called "Indian" are known nationally and internationally as Innu. In their own language Innu means "Human being."

June, 1981
THREE YEARS IN RED LAKE

If you look on a map you will see that Red Lake is at the end of a Trans-Canada offshoot, Highway 105. Some people here say that as soon as they turn north on that road, they psychologically feel they are headed down a route that eventually narrows to a dead end. In my mind's eye, the road is viewed from Red Lake and I see it as my avenue out if I should so choose.

Knowing the people here is like getting acquainted with Canada's immigration policies of the past fifty years. The immigrant people here are fully cognizant that the extraction of Canada's natural resources was done by their hands. They also knew that the gold mines want strong backs and weak minds and, once injured, they will be discarded as quickly as possible. Worker's Compensation is no special friend either.

Our initial task was to do a six month needs assessment survey of the immigrant population. Upon its completion, it was easily concluded that English classes that met the working and domestic schedules of the students was the most glaring need. After a summer school course in teaching English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) we started an English programme. We are just now completing the second year.

The students of this programme are from Poland, Italy, Germany, Yugoslavia, Panama, Equador, Portugal, French -, English-and native-speaking Canada. Their education ranges from illiterate in their own languages to a grade 10 level.

Over the year we have had 60 students enrolled at one time or another but transience, illness, on job accidents, disinterest, acquisition of jobs, weather, etc. keep the figure in constant flux. It has made planning of lessons difficult but this is a reality of any adult education course.

With the help of student produced materials we are slowly acquiring reading materials and photos which are based on a Northwestern Ontario reality. Mines, the bush, long winters, local affairs, worker's compensation, ski-dooing, fishing - these are subjects of interest not readily available in prepared texts which are urban and southern oriented.

A new addition to the programme which started in February, 1981, is an E.S.L. in-the-work-place class. With the co-operation of the local Steelworker's union and the management, the classes were organized on the basis that the students be financially reimbursed by the mine for 1/2 of the time they spend in class. This programme has enjoyed moderate success (16 students) and we hope with further outreach, it will expand next September.

Monitoring attendance is a constant aggravation as our funding (from the Board of Education and the provincial Ministry of Culture and Recreation) depends on a minimum attendance level. Our base line philosophy is that literacy and E.S.L. classes are people's right, not privilege and, hence, student numbers should not determine the existence of a class. Naturally, the funding bodies don't share our views and we often find ourselves feeling like Truancy Officers. We do not like to put adults in that position.

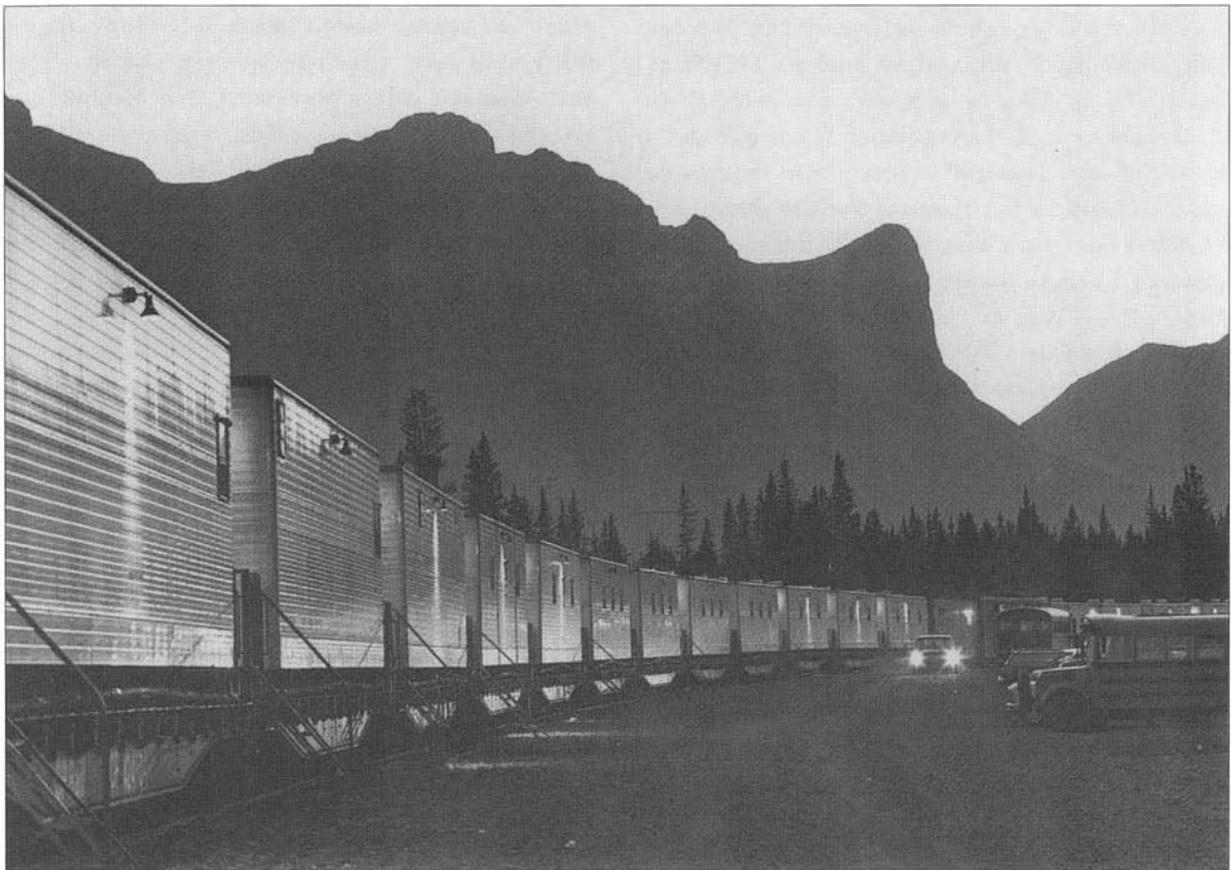
We are only minimally connected with Frontier at this time. Our funding, as mentioned, comes from the province and the programme is run by the local Adult English Education Committee which is made up of students. Because of the Committee's lack of experience and unwillingness to handle a large budget, it was decided that Frontier be approached to handle bookkeeping and bimonthly payments of cheques to the instructors. This, so far, has been a satisfactory arrangement as the students (whose spare time is limited) attend classes to learn oral, reading and writing English skills, not budget management.

In the almost 3 years we've been here, we have seen a dramatic increase in the consciousness of women's issues. Recently there was a Northwestern Ontario Women and Health Conference in Dryden which was well attended by ordinary women (i.e. not all the local professionals).

I think what is most challenging in these "remote," "isolated" communities is the open invitation they offer. The rigidity of time has not rendered the institutions in the area immobile. There is still the excitement that things could change – you just have to be prepared to work very hard for it.

*A UDREY ANDERSON and
RICHARD WHITTAM*

The next two letters, sent from instructors assigned to rail gangs a decade apart, at the beginning and then at the end of the 1980's, represent the last breath of a huge chapter in Frontier College history. The last LT to work on a rail gang went out in 1991. By the 1990's labourer-teachers were working not in industry, mines, and construction, but on vegetable, fruit and tobacco farms where many of the workers are from Mexico and Jamaica. This reinvention was, in fact, barely a step sideways from Frontier College's long-time specialty. Nonetheless many former Labourer-Teachers could be excused a moment of nostalgia for the removal of the last Frontier College poster from the last CN or CPR bunk car.



CNR Prairie Region Gang 800
June 8, 1981

We were given a 20 minute lunch break once a day. Lunch was brought to us (usually 3 sandwiches, fruit, coffee, Kool-Aid) anytime between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. A lot of guys were concerned about the breaks or lack thereof. After lunch one day I asked the same assistant foreman, who thought he was a sergeant in the National Socialist Army, why we didn't have more time for breaks during the day. (Actually I believe I said "When are we going to get somein' regular breaks around here.") His response was that a 20 minute paid break was CN regulation. I replied that CN was mistaken in its interpretation of the legal requirements for break time (again, a bit of poetic licence on my part). Also I wasn't sure what the break requirements were because I was still trying to figure out which parts of the Canadian Labour Code applied to railroads. At that point something funny happened. One of the machine operators came up to me while I was still walking with the assistant foreman and said "Hey college boy, what are you taking at school anyway?" I told him I was going to Law School and he then asked if they could make us go back to work so soon after lunch. I answered "No" rather loudly. I really wasn't sure but I figured the assistant foreman didn't know either. The next day the same assistant foreman told us to take a 15 minute break twice in the same morning. (And who said bullshit never works.)

There was a fair bit of dope on the gang but I didn't see anyone stoned on the job. However, we still hadn't received a paycheck yet and that may have changed things somewhat. No alcohol was allowed on CN property and most guys obeyed that rule. A number of guys however went into town and got drunk pretty well every night. Again, nobody was drunk at work other than the cook and the back-hoe operator who was sub-contracted.

In terms of the usefulness of the College on the gang, the gang I was on was hard to work with since a lot of these guys went home for the weekend and so didn't feel the isolation as much as I'm sure many gangs do.

There was some value in the College's being there, though. Getting guys interested in setting up sporting events is something that needed initiating. I also found the resource function a need that wouldn't have been met without the College (some guys wanted to finish high school by correspondence and just needed someone to egg them on).

There was an older Polish chap on the gang who was the bullcook. The day before I left I'd had a bit of a chat with him and it seemed there was potential there. He didn't read at all because he knew little English and seemed interested in learning some. Supplying him with Polish reading material also would have been helpful. I think the most important function I could have served out there, however, was just to be a friend to the guys who either didn't seem to fit into gang life, or who were victims of the "kicking can" syndrome. There were a couple of guys there who were picked on regularly. I found that starting up a conversation with them would get them talking. Everybody wants to talk to somebody, and simply by coming up to them some day and saying "Hi, where do you come from?" will get them talking about a lot of things *they* want to talk about.

On my first day there the Program Supervisor introduced me to the whole gang as the man from Frontier College and said I'd be teaching there. As I got to know the guys I found that the first impression they had of me from the introduction ranged everywhere from an entertainment rep to a bible school evangelist. The bible school impression was eliminated the first time I uttered an expletive deleted when I missed the spike I was swinging at.

As somebody said at the orientation session, Frontier College is *me*. It's going to a work site as yourself, not as a teacher or anything but a labourer who happens to have some resources and some enthusiasm. I found that it was helpful to some people to try to be a friend to them, but that doesn't mean that you have to go in like some wishy-washy do-gooder. There were some guys there whom I thought were asses or big bullies and I acted toward them the same way I acted toward any ass I'd meet at school.

The environment is different but the Labourer- Teacher is the same guy he is in the city. Except that he has a lot more to learn from the people he's working with.

One or two more points. The books are a big help. A lot of guys were asking about something to read - anything to read.

MARK O'NEIL

**Canadian Pacific Steel Gang
Sparwood, B.C.
Summer, 1991**

My first day ever on the gangs, I was sent to work with the machine operators, who consisted of 10 Newfies and one little spike sitter, who was an East Indian. We moved 20 miles up the track and stopped for a break. The next thing I knew, the Newfies had blindfolded the East Indian man and duct-taped him to one of the machines. They proceeded to poke and taunt him. I was scared as hell, not because it was my first day, but because I had never seen anything like that before in my life. As soon as the Newfies had lost interest in their little game, I helped the man get untied.

* * * * *

My first spiking attempt was an absolute disaster. After a few days of doing scrap I had had enough. I finally grabbed a hammer and attempted (inconspicuously) to drive a spike. EVERYONE stopped working to watch the 'greenhorn' in action. After about thirty swings I had managed to take off a lot of rail, splinter beyond recognition a tie, and got a foreman yelling at me. I'll never forget his words as he ripped the hammer away from me: "Give me that hammer boy you're slowing down the whole gang!"

* * * * *

One of my proudest moments on the gang occurred After a long, hard day in B.C.. A rail veteran who had just been transferred to our gang got on the bus and told me to move from my seat. I lifted up my head and told him I was too tired and to go find another seat. He didn't like that idea too much and started tugging at me and telling me to move., One of the Newfies overheard what was going on and started yelling at the guy, telling him to find his own seat. The other Newfies caught wind of what was going on and started yelling at the guy too. Pretty soon, the whole bus was yelling at him and making cry-baby noises. Eventually the veteran gave in (although not before swearing and throwing his bag down) and moved to another seat. It's funny that something I found so childish three moths before now was very important to me. It felt good to have "earned" my seat.

* * * * *

I remember having a terrible nightmare somewhere in the middle of my second shift. I dreamt that I was in Saskatchewan all by myself with a foreman. All I could see was rail for miles and mile. I looked up at the foreman and he said with an evil laugh "Anchors, boy, anchors".

In my last shift in Saskatchewan, another worker and I put on 12 miles of anchors. The nightmare becomes real!

MIKE FARLEY

To be a Labourer-Teacher in 1999 is, in many ways, not that much different than it was a century ago. At nine O'clock on a warm June evening, Evan Rokeby-Thomas unlocks the door to the lunchroom in the middle of a compound of sprawling greenhouses and machine sheds at Dutchmaster nursery farms just outside Pickering, Ontario and clears a day's worth of debris away from in front of his blackboard. After a thirteen hour-long work day of weeding rows of saplings and re-potting hundreds of manchu cherry shrubs, he's had about forty-five minutes for a quick shower and supper. His students tonight, four Mexican men who want to work on their basic English, are just as weary as he is. But the opportunity is not one they want to pass up. Tomas, who is 38 and comes from a small village south of Mexico City, has been making the trip to Canada every March for six years in order to put in seven or eight months on a Canadian farm or nursery. The work is hard, the hours are long, but if he looks after his earnings carefully during his stay he can manage to amass ten or twelve thousand dollars to send back to his wife and four children in Mexico.

In previous years, Tomas admits, he did his work as he was best able to understand it. He never had the benefit of a foreman who spoke Spanish. And he, alas, understood no English. Until now. His posting this year, with twenty-one of his fellow countrymen, is on one of the increasing number of farms where Frontier College has been invited to place Labourer-Teachers. On this farm, it is Evan Rokeby-Thomas.

"What did you do today?" Evan writes on the blackboard and speaks the question clearly addressing Tomas, Victor, Jose, and Armando. This is a repetition of a method of instruction Evan's grandfather, Howard Rokeby-Thomas, might have used back in 1929 when Frontier College placed him as a "swamper" at the J. R. Booth lumber camp in northern Ontario. Or that Evan's father, Dave, might have employed on the CNR Extra Gang #351 in 1962. Evan, who is 32 and a music student at the University of Saskatchewan, is one of a handful of people who are second or third generation Frontier College volunteers. His commitment, however, is not specifically because his father and grandfather did this before him. It comes, he says, from an interest in literacy that was first sparked when he volunteered at a Saskatoon food bank. "I couldn't help but notice how the people who came there needed much more than food," he says. "Almost all of them had problems dealing with things in their lives, and a good many of those difficulties came out of being unable to read or understand things that our increasingly complex society was asking of them."

The literacy needs of the Mexican workers on the farm where Evan has been placed are not much different. After a session on work-related phrases, like "I want you to do the weeding on this row," they enter into twenty minutes practicing the sort of dialogue they will need to order dinner when they finally all go out together to a Canadian restaurant. At the end of the class another man, Roberto, comes in to enlist Evan's help with a more complicated problem; he fears that the transfer of his paycheck from the local Canadian bank to a bank in Mexico may have gone astray. He needs to trace it and he doesn't understand how to go about doing that.

There are currently some 12,000 migrant farm workers in Canada on a seasonal basis. Half of these come from Mexico. Mike Tillart, whose family owns and operates the 900-acre tree farm and nursery that is Dutchmaster, says he hires Mexican workers because they are reliable and hard workers. The same as immigrants have always been in the hard work locations where Frontier College traditionally found them. "At seven o'clock in the morning they are always there," says Tillart. "And they work until you tell them not to." They are productive workers.

To be among these workers, according to Rokeby-Thomas who shares a bunkhouse and kitchen with eight men, "reminds me to be humble. When I am with them in the bunkhouse, I'm the minority just as they are the minority in Canada. When I'm working with them in the nursery I'm also in the minority. I'm a music student who hardly knew anything about plants and horticulture. They teach me things." The reciprocity is appropriately humbling. The reciprocity has always been an important part of Frontier College's experience. It's always been a two-way street.



Coburg, Ontario 1991

It is a dark and cold early November morning. Daniela and I have just arrived on the farm. We have just gotten our first job in Canada. We are foreigners. We arrived from Europe just a month ago. We have no one here. No family, not too many friends. We learn quickly that we have to take care of ourselves to survive. Our English is limited. I am able to communicate, because I studied English in a refugee camp in Austria for a few months, but I don't feel strong in it. Daniela speaks very little English. Our choices are restricted. Our knowledge of Canadian laws is poor. We know that we have the right to work. We also know that we have to get minimum wage for our work. That is about all we know.

Then one day, a tall woman with dark, curly hair and sparkling eyes appears. We soon learn that her name is Erica and she is a Labourer-Teacher from Frontier College. We don't know yet what "Labourer-Teacher" means, nor do we have a clue about the mission of Frontier College. But we understand that Erica is here to help the Jamaican workers to cope with life and work on the farm and Canada in general. We don't understand yet that she is here for us, too.

When Erica moves into the old farmhouse with the Jamaican guys, we think about her as a very strong and brave woman. Other women working on the farm give her degrading names. They don't understand how she, as a woman, could move into a house full of men.

We start to work in the fields with Erica and very soon become friends. She is a beam of light for us. We are amazed she understands what we are saying without saying "pardon" after every word we say. It is miracle for us. Someone understands our funny English with its heavy European accent. We are feeling like human beings again. She engages in interesting conversations with us. After chatting with other people on the farm about the weather, suddenly we talk with Erica about issues such as education in Canada, literature, art, feminism and employment. We also talk about social issues such as poverty, homelessness, and literacy in Canada. We address issues of violence against women, child abuse - the list is endless. We are challenged, provoked and encouraged by these discussions. Erica listens with great interest to our emigrant story and asks questions about our life in Czechoslovakia. She knows how to ask questions and how to make us talk. We feel comfortable with Erica; her sparkling eyes, smile and encouragement take away the fear of talking with grammar mistakes and an accent. We ask questions about the meanings of words and expressions, and Erica explains. She has a gift of explaining everything in words we know. It empowers us. We feel good and safe with her.

Our world grows bigger every day. Erica shows us that there is a world out there, outside of the farm. She teaches us that the values people hold on the farm are not necessary values which represent all Canadians. Little by little we look under the veil of Canadian culture.

JITKA BERNARDOVA

This piece is from a student of labourer-Teacher Erica Martin. It is followed on subsequent pages by six reports from labourer-Teachers working in the 1990's on farms and in prison situations, the two locations where Frontier College still places its LTs. Things have come full circle from those early days in the Ontario lumber camps when Alfred Fitzpatrick found immigrant workers who spoke little English and who didn't have much to divert themselves from long days of toil.

Hay, Ontario 1994

Because of the language barrier, communication between the farmer and the workers is fairly limited to a few work-related terms, well-established over years of repeating the same tasks: seeding, planting, hoeing, cutting...

Swear words also fit into this category (every guy who came to class asked me what 'chet' meant - you figure it out). To express work orders, the physical gesture is commonly used. Hand signals indicate 'speed up,' 'slow down,' 'left,' 'right,' 'coffee,' 'lunch'....

Hand drawn maps are also used by the farmer to explain where employees are to work. While these universal symbols (gestures, maps) are useful in facilitating communication, they can also prove problematic. Rather than improving long term understanding between the two groups, they replace it. The signals and drawings have become the established and accepted means of communicating, 'crutches' that the farmer and his foreman rely on to express themselves. It had been recognized early on that this method has limited success. A lack of clarity, detail, and the inability of the workers to respond in any way - to ask questions or otherwise indicate that they do or do not understand - are the limitations that members on both sides point out. Even some of the long standing workers have said that most times, they take equipment out to one of the various fields belonging to the farmer, and the specifics of what they are to do with the equipment are *puro divinar*, pure guessing. This common situation has caused a lot of wasted time, frustration and embarrassment.

JOAN WARINGER

Burford, Ontario 1997

August 1. A better day. My second day of priming tobacco. The first was hell. I have never done anything so physically and mentally challenging. I know now that those twelve hours would be hard to top in terms of difficulty in any job; tree planting included. It was very much like jumping a personal hurdle I had with extremely hard work. My experience with public works pales in comparison to this place. That was the kind of job where laziness and boredom were commonplace. There hasn't been much time to think while priming. As I write, I am looking at the dirtiest and most cut-up fingers I've ever encountered. Tomorrow there will be more work to do.

MARK REDWOOD

Brougham, Ontario
1997

Being a Labourer-Teacher is more a life than a job. For me, I did not sense a division between work time and off time. You live the experience every day, all day. I lived this life with Mexican co-workers. In the bunkhouse you get fifteen minutes of privacy a day, when you lock yourself in the shower. When I was working, I did not consider myself a Canadian employee who lived with the Mexicans, although I think that is the way some of the other workers saw me. The Mexicans and I saw me as the "teacher," occupying a distinct place within the structure of the workplace. The way I saw the role of teacher was much closer to being a Mexican than a Canadian worker.

I avoided being forced into a boss or overseer role; instead I acted as a translator, respecting the fact that I often didn't have a clue. I saw the teacher role as one of translator, advocate, companero, friend. I tried to bring my experiences at the farm as close as possible to those of the men I lived with. I think this was key to gaining the respect and trust of the Mexicans. There is a real segregation that occurs on the farm which is a choice made as much by the Mexicans as by the Canadians. There is mingling and joking, but people stick to their own group. I was there to work with the Mexicans, not the Canadians, so I partially segregated myself. This is not to say I was unfriendly to the Canadians, I worked and talked with them and got to know some people very well. But when there was an activity that was Canadian and I couldn't convince the Mexicans to take part, I would fall on the Mexican side of the segregation line.

The gaining of my co-workers' trust and respect was a very different process with different people. With some it seemed almost instant, while with others it took almost the whole summer. The bond of working men is a strange thing; you can form a strong bond with someone by sharing an experience. But my experience and that of the Mexicans were very different. They were not there because they liked the experience; they were in Canada to make money, no matter how distasteful the work. They put up with indignities small and large and endured long separations from their families. For many it was not a happy time, it was a necessity. In the end, everyone was there for himself. Some guys had warm friendships, but others seemed to separate themselves and not really care about anybody else. This is a peculiar environment to live in, because as an LT, you are there to give yourself to other people.

Despite the lack of privacy, the constant barrage of hard-core porn, the 5:45 wake-up call, and watching Jose eat hot dog stew with gobs of mayonnaise, living with my Mexican co-workers was one of the best things about my LT experience.

ANDREW DAVIDGE

**Thamesville, Ontario
1996**

TOP TEN THINGS I LEARNT

- 1) How hard a lot of people work
- 2) How ketchup is made
- 3) How to swear in Spanish
- 4) How tiring it is to constantly defend your gender
- 5) How good a shower can feel
- 6) How boring hoeing is
- 7) That letters are better than a phone call
- 8) That I can work with my hands
- 9) One good female friend can make all the difference
- 10) If the oil light comes on you do not drive to the mechanic, the mechanic comes to you

TOP TEN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1) Pushing myself to work as long and as hard as the guys
- 2) Surviving my one day in strawberries
- 3) Not punching Abel
- 4) Cooking three course meals on one burner
- 5) Doing more listening than talking
- 6) Helping Elizabeth see reading as a fun thing
- 7) Tarring a roof
- 8) Actually getting a monthly report mailed to Frontier College
- 9) Hearing both the guys' and my vocabulary expand over the summer
- 10) Getting Laura to know the difference between a Democrat and a Republican

EMILY HILL



1997
ADVICE FOR FUTURE LTs ON THIS FARM
Bowmanville, Ontario

Do not become a "messenger." It's very easy to relay messages back and forth between your coworkers and the farmers; it may even seem logical based on your possible role as a translator. However, this situation can get very ugly and personal. The best thing to do is to say to either party, "I am more than happy to translate this for you, but you will have to come with me and speak directly to that person." Decide what your priorities are. As well, what is your level of commitment as an LT? Where do your main loyalties lie? Deciding these will determine how much you will be able to benefit from the experience. If you feel loyal to farm management, your experience will be extremely different than the experience I had.

We Labourer-Teachers are not a buffer. I prefer to think of us more as a bridge or "window" for both parties. I think it's very important to always remind both management and your co-workers that a lot of the confusion between the two parties stems from the language barrier as well as cultural differences.

You want to be helpful, but doing everything for your co-workers will not help them in the long run. For example, banking. Your co-workers will really appreciate you and like you if you set up their money wires for them. But what will they do when you leave? They will make you feel guilty, but explain to them that it is *because* you care about them that you won't do these tasks for them. Some of my coworkers would ask me, "Who will defend us when you're gone?" I would answer, "Yourselves, of course," and eventually I held a class on "defense in the workplace."

Practice a good work ethic. You will earn respect from both your co-workers and management if you put forth a sincere effort on the job. You may despise the physical work or consider it mundane, but try to do your best at all times.

Those people who live and work alongside of you - they are not "your Mexicans," they are co-workers.

When in doubt, always ask yourself, "If this person were Canadian, how would this situation be different?"

Empathize with your co-workers. Realize what is at stake for them i.e., the fear of not being asked to return the next year, the accumulation of lost wages due to having an hour lunch break versus half an hour, etc.

Avoid gossip like the plague.

Get to know your co-workers. Find out about their lives/work in Mexico, their long-term goals, the activities of their families, the names of their wives.

KAREN STILLE

**Pine Grove Correctional Centre
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
1998**

At the beginning of the tutoring, some mornings, one of the women would not feel like coming to class and so would come late or "book sick." As I got to know her better, I wondered if her shyness and reluctance to come were due to traumas she was coping with. At the risk of being accused of "enabling" or coddling her, I became more assertive about getting her to come and I would go directly to her cell to talk to her instead of speaking through staff and radios. I would sit on her bed and chat while she got ready, and she would show me her pictures, sketches, and a beaded lighter case she was working on. Other days I went to her cell when she booked sick, and I just sat on her bed and kept her company for a little while, my hand on her feet while she talked through the covers. Or, I would go to her cell to get her before the big full-day class started to see if she wanted to watch a video or participate in a writing circle, which she often would.

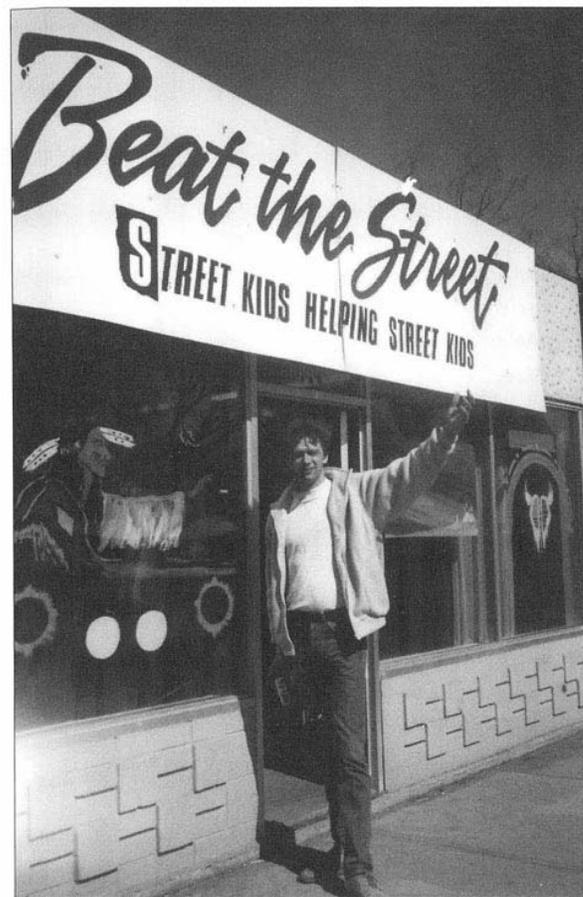
SUSANNAH SCHMIDT

Within the shadow of downtown Toronto's skyscraper office buildings, behind a ragged front yard the sign on an old red brick house on Jarvis Street advertises "Beat The Street." Every morning Andrew, who is 25, leaves his rooming house and walks the two blocks to Beat The Street where he pours himself a cup of coffee and pulls a chair up to the table in the middle of the sunny, book-lined front room. There he sets to work on the writing project his tutor has assigned. Over by the window Jack, a middle aged man who lives in a single room and, except for a few-hours-a-week job stocking shelves, is long-term unemployed, is engaged in a game of Scrabble with Anton. Anton is a volunteer at Beat The Street. A young playwright from Washington D.C., he comes in two mornings a week. When he finishes his game of Scrabble with Jack, another young fellow named John who has just come in, will want help with his math.

Over at the reception desk Jayne Caldwell, the staff person on duty this morning, is helping Donald make a phone call. Donald talks erratically about how he can't understand why a collection agency wants to get \$199 from him. Jayne agrees they need to try to get to the bottom of the perplexing bill and coaches Donald as he sorts his way through a jungle of voice mail recordings and banking system bureaucrats.

Further back, through the corridors of the rambling house, are rooms with computers, available to part-time students, and bulletin boards listing the addresses and phone numbers of a myriad of vital services. If you are downtown and on the street with no permanent address or money, this centre can direct you to shelters, welfare offices, employment agencies, and medical centres.

In 1987 Tracy LeQuyere, himself a former street person, with Rick Parsons persuaded Frontier College to put its support behind an initiative to assist the homeless youth he found gathered around him in mid-town Toronto. Since then hundreds have come through the doors of Beat The Street. The age range is 19-35 and 70 per cent of the clientele are men. But, as the next piece of writing by Jayne Caldwell shows, women are in dire need of the service too



BEAT THE STREET WOMEN'S NIGHT

*On Tuesday nights I go to a special, comfortable place,
an honest place. Everyone is open.
Though we're all from different places,
we have much in common. We all have a strange past,
we've all been victims of other people's madness and fear.
We come in for friendship and reassurance
that we don't have to be lonely
in an ignorant, concrete world.
We learn from each other in many ways.
We feel strength in numbers.
We have seen the best and worst of society
reflected in our pleasure and pain.
We know what hurts and why.
We know how to give and take.
We learn more courage daily
than many others will ever know;
by what we read and write, and by experience.
This time is important on Tuesdays:
a place to come to where we remember
how necessary it is to make each other happy and feel secure,
even if it is only for a few hours.*

JAYNE CALDWELL



The following writings are the words of people who, in large part, have never written before in English or French. Along with *Beat The Street*, Frontier College in the 1980's and 1990's placed its umbrella over a number of groups and people - mostly in the chaotic centres of our cities - who had been left out, overlooked, shunted to the margins: people with disabilities, people in prisons, those with little power to make choices. These writings are expressions of their feelings and their thoughts, their observations and their frustrations.

The progress they've made doesn't mean that their lives won't continually pit them against formidable obstacles. Even after a hundred years, Frontier College finds itself still in a society that wants to retreat from those it thinks of as different. But articulation is the first step on many journeys; independence being only one of them. That's why when the staff and volunteers at Frontier College were asked what message or statement they wanted to use to end this book of the anecdotal history of our remarkable institution, learner writings came flooding out of everybody's collections. Here, to provide the last word, are some of those.



1993
THE "PEOPLE FIRST" MEETING
Toronto, Ontario

I feel good about the People First meeting. It was held at the Constellation Hotel near the airport in early July. I went there Friday night and came back to my home Sunday night. I stayed at the hotel for two nights.

In the morning I was up at 7:30 had breakfast and went to the meeting at 10:00 o'clock. The meeting was all day. I told my story in the middle of the morning. Denise came and helped me with my story. Denise is my friend and a worker in my group home.

I said "Good morning, everybody. My name is Dick Hewston. I came down this morning to tell you how I got out of Riverdale Hospital. One Sunday afternoon Kelly Ratchford came up first, my lawyer came up next and my friend came up last. They put all my clothes in green bags and took my clothes down. I went out to the desk and left a note for the nurses saying goodbye."

Then, I told the rest of my story about how I came to the group home up until now. After my speech everybody gave me a good round of applause. I felt good.

For the rest of the morning other people told their stories. We had a cold lunch. In the afternoon meetings we talked about group homes. I feel good about my group home and I like my group home. I have more friends now.

I went back to the meeting and we continued talking about group homes. We discussed how we could have bigger doorways, halls and bathrooms to get our wheel chairs in and out easier. People in hospitals want to get out of the hospital and into group homes. Sometimes there may be more group homes, but it may be a way down the road yet. I came back to my home at ten o'clock at night. I had a good time. I felt good.

DICK HEWSTON



**Native Women's Resource Centre of
Toronto Inc.**

I would like to thank Cheryl for teaching me how to work a computer, she has taught me things which I never expected.

I know this is only the beginning and I will learn many more things because she is a patient and easy person to work with. Cheryl has taught me how to do my resume and write a letter. In the process of teaching me how to do these things, I also learned how to do **BOLDING** and *ITALICS*. Spell checking, saving and printing my documents are also some of the things I have learned.

About a month ago I knew only how to turn on the computer, but thanks to my tutor Cheryl I may one day be ready to go out into the work force and get a job working with computers.

I am so looking forward to the many things Cheryl plans to teach me in the near future. I wish everyone could have the privilege I have with a wonderful tutor as Cheryl.

ILONA BATA

1999

Dear Dave,

We love the reading circle. We think its cool and fun. I come here every Thursday because I love to read! I come here looking forward to read. I think books are the best. I also love winning books. I've only won one but I hope to win more.

I love Fear Street books. I read them all the time. I think they're the best! I love horror books. I can read two a day. I won't read anything else.

So thanks for the Fear Street books. Keep sending them or other horror books cuz I love them and nothing else.

AMANDA

1999

I was born in Sarajevo (Yugoslavia). After I finished my education, I worked for twenty years as a puppet maker in the Puppet Theatre.

In 1995, I came to Canada with my family. The beginning was very difficult because I knew only a few words of English. But I was ready to start with the alphabet like a kid. When I got a tutor for English at Frontier College everything became easier. I got my first chance to show my skills in making puppets at Frontier College. The staff at the College asked me to make a presentation. My English still wasn't very good and I was very nervous and worried. I had planned to show people how to make a simple puppet quickly. I thought I wouldn't be able to make my demonstration interesting. But the people who were there were more interested in my work than in my English skills. That helped me a lot. I was very happy with my first public presentation. Shortly after, I was hired by the Santa Claus Parade. My life changed

rapidly. Now I'm satisfied with my life in Canada. I'm learning English very studiously. I hope one day I'll be able to say this sentence to myself: "The roots of education are bitter, but the fruits are sweet."

MISHO KLACAR

**Quebec, Quebec
1999**

Je m'appelle Mélanie et j'ai vingt ans. Quand j'étais au primaire, j'ai fréquenté plusieurs écoles, même des classes spéciales de TGA. Ce sont des petits groupes d'une dizaine d'élèves qui ont des troubles d'apprentissage. J'en ai vu de toutes les couleurs dans ces classes-la. J'ai été dans ces groupes pendant deux ans puis je suis enfin sortie de la.

Vers l'âge de douze ans, ils m'ont annoncé que je changeais encore d'école parce que j'étais trop vieille pour rester là. Ils m'ont envoyé à l'école Marie de l'incarnation pour faire des cours de cheminement particulier pendant trois ans. À ma dernière année dans cette école, mon professeur m'a dit: "Mélanie, tu vas aller à Wilbrod Bherer pendant deux ans pour apprendre un métier et faire des stages". J'ai suivi un cours d'imprimerie la première année et l'autre année c'était un stage à l'Armée du Salut pour quelques mois seulement. Je plaçais les étiquettes sur les chaussures et je triais les vêtements. À un moment donné, j'en avais plein mon casque parce que l'homme pour qui je travaillais ne savait pas ce qu'il voulait. J'ai lâché mon stage et l'école. Ce n'était pas facile sur le coup parce que mes parents avaient peur que je reste à la maison à ne rien faire, mais ce n'était pas mon intention.

C'est pour ça qu'après toutes ces années d'enfer, j'ai fait des démarches pour aller étudier au adultes, au Centre Louis- Jolliet. Au début, j'étudiais à temps partiel mais après quelques mois j'avais des cours à temps plein. J'ai été classe en alphabétisation. Pendant deux ans j'étais à l'étape 3 et la c'est ma deuxième année en étape 4. Je vise le secondaire et j'espère que cette année sera la bonne. C'est pour ça que je travaille fort et qu'en plus de mes trente heures de cours par semaine, j'ai été chercher de l'aide individuelle. En fait, c'est quand j'ai commencé mes cours en alpha, j'ai demandé à un professeur si elle connaissait des personnes qui pourraient m'aider. Elle m'a parlé de Collège frontière. C'est là que j'ai rencontré Véronique qui m'aide depuis trois ans. Ça prend beaucoup de courage pour revenir à l'école surtout quand tu as toujours eu des difficultés à apprendre. Si tu veux réussir il faut que ça vienne de toi. Mais surtout il faut y croire pour être capable de ne pas se décourager par tout ce qu'on s'est fait dire au primaire et au secondaire.

MELANIE GOBEIL



**Prison for Women
Kingston, Ontario
1999**

WORKING ON MY NEW BEHAVIOR

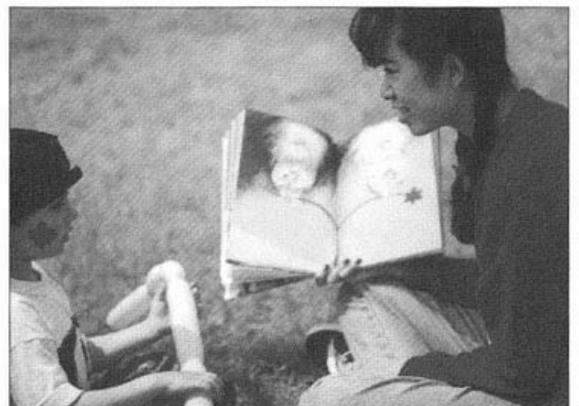
I was busy in my room. I was in my washroom and there was a fight going on. I missed all of the action. Somebody got punched. Everybody got locked in for a couple of minutes. Everybody was talking a little bit about it afterwards.

I am doing good on the range, though. I have been charge-free for four months. There is more freedom on the range and there is more we can do. For me, I find it closer to work.

The range is very quiet. There are only three women with me on the range. When I am on the range and not working I am locked in my cell watching tv. I am also bored sometimes, so I like to go to work.

I like working in N and D. It is where they book you in and out when you enter and leave P4W. I work for Mme Petite and I like her, but I don't work there often.

CLAIRE LEDUC



**Toronto, Ontario
1999**

**THE HISTORY OF MY LIFE AT
FRONTIER COLLEGE**

My first goal working with Frontier College was to complete my grade 9 math with the correspondence course with the Board of Education. My tutor and I tried to complete an assignment once every month, which we did. I also completed half of my grade 10 math course. I also studied grade 10 English which I completed.

I spent the first hour with my tutor working on my math course. The second hour was to write a journal on the things I was learning like writing letters and short stories about my dog, I would write in my journal and we would correct the stories together and then I would re-write the stories. I wrote short stories at first but then I asked my tutor to help me write longer stories.

In 1996, my tutor Diane and I started a writing workshop for the learners at Frontier College's Independent Studies programme. The stories that we wrote at the workshop were printed in the newsletter, *News and Views*. Diane and I are coordinators of the writing workshop.

MARY BAILEY



Conclusion

It occurred to me at one point during the summer, how much Frontier College has changed me, and changed the way I see the world. Between Students for Literacy and the Labourer-Teacher program it taught me to always see what is positive, and never to focus on the negative. One of my favorite parts of the training was the writing sample. The first sample was just scary the first time I saw it. But after we went through it and picked out what was good about it, the second time I saw it I actually saw the good points before I noticed the mistakes. I didn't see this as really having an impact on me until one day in May when I saw the time sheets belonging to one of the guys I was working with. We had been planting tomatoes, and on the sheet under job description he had written 'plantin'. My first reaction was that this was *absolutely brilliant!* That was exactly what we had been doing, putting the plants IN the ground. To me it showed such an amazing grasp of a language he hardly knew, and I was very impressed. I didn't even notice that it was technically a mistake.

They told us at the training that when they'd gotten us, they'd gotten us for life. It wasn't until that day that I truly understood what that meant. It was then I realized that truly belonging to a group doesn't mean having your name on their membership list. It means seeing the world the same way they do. That's how Frontier College gets you for life, they teach you to think the same way they do, and then there's no turning back.

GABRIELLE SHALLOW
St. John's, Newfoundland
1998

** Gabrielle Shallow was a Labourer-Teacher in 1997. She has also been a member of the Frontier College campus-based tutoring program at Memorial University.*

Index of Contributors

Alexander, Scott	83	Godfrey, Dave	62
Amanda	131	Goldstein, Gary	84
Anderson, Audrey	113	Graham, Dick	100
Ashton, E. C., Maj. Gen	42	Grant, George, Prof.	5
Bailey, Mary	133	Gray, Angus	12
Bata, Iona	131	Green, Henry	97
Bennett, L. Gordon	48	Harkness, LiC.	17
Bernardova, Jitka	121	Henson, Jane	88, 90
Bethune, Norman	6, 22, 23	Hewston, Dick	130
Bomba, Tom	74	Higgins, Bart	72
Bradwin, E. W. (Edmund)	6, 7, 23, 33, 38,40,43,57,61,70	Higgins, Julie	72
Brezicki, Colin	75	Hill, Emily	124
Byrne, Jim	75	Hoffman, Peter	95
Caldwell, Jayne	127, 128	Holman, George	96
Chisholm, Miriam	27	Hornal, John	20
Clairmont,, J.....	9	Howe, C.D	33
Cockburn, G. H.....	50	Hughes, Mary G	28
Comrie, Bruce	108	Jackson, R	10
Davidge, Andrew	123	Kilgour, David	23
Dewdney, Keewatin	69	Klacar, Misho	131
Dube, Jean-Maurice	52	Leduc, Claire	133
Evans, G	19	Lee, Dennis	61, 62
Farley, Mike	118	LeQueyere, Tracy	127
Farncombe, Peter	81	Lucas, Jessie	27, 31
Fernandez, Philip	109	MacDonald, J .F	11
Fitzpatrick, Alfred	5, 7, 27, 29, 33, 61, 121	MacEachern, Lyla	110
Geo Gordon & Co.....	9	Martin, Erica	121
Gibson, Janet	87	McCaffrey, John	87
Gobeil, Melanie	132	McDonald, D. Fraser	21
		McDonald, Hector	10
		McEachen, John	13

Index of Contributors

McKay, Stanley	23	Rokeby- Thomas, Evan	119
McLeod, Norm	75, 78	Rokeby-Thomas, Howard	119
McMurtry, Roy	23	Schaefer, Debbie	84
McNaughton, Francis	23, 26	Schmidt, Susannah	126
Miller, Fred	12	Scott, Alex, Mrs	27
Morrison, George	23	Shallow, Gabrielle.....	135
Morrison, Ian.....	61, 70, 71	Shortreed, Ian	102
Morton, Christine	27	Smith, Fred.....	16
Moyer, F. C.	14	Smith, Ted	75
Mutchmor, J.R	23	Spock, Benjamin	23, 25
Neil, Dave	101	Stephenson, William	58
O'Leary, John (Daniel) v,.....	93, 98	Stille, Karen.....	125
O'Neil, Mark	116	Stinson, Paul	82
Ongley, F. G	44	Stone, Ted	107
Parsons, Rick.....	127	Strang, E. Margaret..	30, 31, 32
Pearpoint, Jack	93, 104	Strub, Quentin	98
Pearson, Lester B	18	Tann, Charlie.....	107
Peltier, Jim	86	Terroux, Francois	86
Peters, Dale	94	Tetley, William A	55
Peters, Lynn	94	Tillart, Mike	129
Peterson, David	23	Victoria Harbor Lumber Co. - <i>see R. Jackson</i>	
Pidlaski, Pat.....	108	Waite, Clifford	53
Queen, Gord.....	85	Waringer, Joan	122
Rathburn Co., The - <i>see J. Clairmont</i>		Weaver, Bruce	61, 67
Redwood, Mark.....	122	Webster, Neil.....	106
Reid, Escott	18, 23	White, G. A	41
Richardson, E. A	17	Whittam, Richard	113
Roberts, Charles G. D	33	Wickwire, Marjorie	27
Robinson, Eric.....	58, 61, 62	Wilkins, C. Hume.....	51
Robinson, Svend	23	Yonemura, James H	50
Rokeby- Thomas, Dave	119		

Index of Locations

Abbotsford, British Columbia	50	Hawkes Bay, Newfoundland.....	78
Armstrong, Ontario	72	Hay, Ontario.....	122
Banff, Alberta ""	20	Hornepayne, Ontario.....	21
Benson Lake, British Columbia	74,81	Iglookik, Northwest Territories -	
Bowmanville, Ontario	125	<i>see Iglookik, Nunavut</i>	
Brandon, Manitoba	107	Iglookik, Nunavut	95
Brougham, Ontario	123	Iqaluit, Nunavut	71
Burford, Ontario	122	Island Lake, Ontario	87
Cache Bay, Ontario	9	Kaministikwia, Ontario.....	14
Carleton Place, Ontario	11, 27	Kenora, Ontario	23, 25
Chapleau, Ontario	26	Kingston, Ontario	93, 133
Churchill Falls, Labrador	86	Lac la Biche, Alberta	100
Cobourg, Ontario	121	London, Ontario	30, 31
Dauphin, Manitoba	108	Long Lac, Ontario	51
Deception, Ontario	17	Missanabie, Ontario	68
Edlund, Ontario.....	32	Moose Creek, Ontario	52
Elliot Lake, Ontario	71	Nairn Centre, Ontario	5, 10, 12
Elsa, Yukon	109	North Bay, Ontario	41
Fort St. James, British Columbia	87	Pass Lake, Ontario	58
Fortune, Newfoundland	84	Petawawa, Ontario	43
Fredericton, New Brunswick	61, 67	Pickering, Ontario	119
Frobisher Bay, Northwest Territories -		Pine Point Mines	84
<i>see Iqaluit, Nunavut</i>		Port Hardy, British Columbia	86
Good Hope Lake,		Prince Albert, Saskatchewan	126
British Columbia	96	Quebec, Quebec	132
Gravenhurst, Ontario	9	Queen Charlotte Islands,	
Green River, New Brunswick	55	British Columbia	98
Grey River, Newfoundland	94	Red Lake, Ontario	113

Index of Locations

Rosburn, Manitoba	108
Salmo, British Columbia	48
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	119
Seven Sisters Falls, Manitoba	98
Sheshatshit, Labrador	110
Southwold, Ontario	18
Sparwood, British Columbia	118
Spence Bay, Northwest Territories - <i>see Taloyoak, Northwest Territories</i>	
St. John's, Newfoundland	135
Stewartville, Ontario	53
Sudbury, Ontario	10
Taloyoak, Northwest Territories	97
Tasu, British Columbia	88, 90, 102
Thamesville, Ontario "	124
The Pas, Manitoba	83
Tisdale, Saskatchewan	13
Toronto, Ontario	18, 23, 29, 31,43, 57, 62, 93, 127, 130, 131, 133
Touchwood Hills, Saskatchewan	16, 17
Utshimasit, Labrador	110
Vancouver, British Columbia	19, 50
Vermillion Bay, Ontario	44
Victoria, British Columbia.....	42
Wellesley, Massachusetts (US)	28
Whitefish, Ontario	6, 22, 27
Winnipeg, Manitoba	93, 107