Paradise in the Mountains

From its beginnings 60 years ago as a small Alberta theatre school, the Banff Centre for Continuing Education has built an international reputation as a cultural Mecca for professional artists throughout the world.

By Wynne Thomas

A few minutes' drive or a half-hour uphill foot-slog from the cheerful lethargy of downtown Banff, a resort town in the eastern Rockies, brings one to what has a fair claim to being the most scenic campus in Canada. Comprising a dozen or so major structures and scores of smaller ones sympathetically set on the pine-clad slopes of an alpine valley, amidst towering snow-capped peaks, the Banff Centre for Continuing Education strikes one as a needless dreamy name for an exciting and, indeed, unique institution. More poetically but unofficially, it has been dubbed "the paradise in the mountains."

In some ways the centre, which celebrates its 60th birthday this day, is quintessentially Canadian. Like the transcontinental railway of an earlier era, it represents the triumphant consummation of an improbable dream. It really shouldn't work, and yet, having overcome myriad obstacles, it does--for the most part brilliantly. (And another characteristic) it is probably better known outside the country than within our own national boundaries.

The centre's mandate is breathtaking in scope. Like all Gaul, it is divided into three parts: the centre for the arts, the centre for management, and the centre for conferences.

The centre for the arts, the oldest and in many ways the institution's priority, is dedicated to providing experienced professional artists from throughout Canada and the United States and from a score of other countries with the very best in training and development. It is likely the only place in the world where top-flight musicians, actors, singers, writers and students of the ballet have access to top teachers and facilities in a single location.

In another area of the campus, the centre for management pursues the same goal of professional perfection in the area of business, with students tackling such management issues of the 1990s as the environment, aboriginal rights, changing business philosophies and practices, and conflict resolution under the tutelage of leading practitioners from the private, public and academic sectors. The centre for conferences hosts provincial, national and international symposiums for a broad range of interest groups.

But it's in the field of the arts that the centre first shaped and nourished its international reputation, and it's that reputation that draws artists of every stripe and many nationalities to the campus every year. They come not so much to learn their craft but to hone their already formidable skills; most of them have already made some kind of mark in their particular discipline. Even so, it's hard to get accepted: a couple of years ago, for example, more than 500 aspiring participants applied to fill 15 vacancies in the advanced actor workshops.

Those who are accepted face a daunting schedule, frequently working around the clock for extended periods. The intensity of the Banff experience was well summed up by one former student: "When I went to the Banff school," he says, "I expected to work all my waking hours--but I was unaware that all my hours would be waking ones." But there are compensations: the quality of the instruction is unrivaled, tuition and accommodation are free for most programmes, and many participants receive a stipend to offset their loss of earnings during the time they spend at the centre.

A good way to get at least a glimpse of the range of cultural and artistic endeavours that are encompassed by the Banff centre is to take a walking tour of the campus, stopping at various points to eavesdrop on the activities of the day. So let's do that--on a crisp, bright day in June, when life at the centre is in full swing.

It's going to be a long afternoon so let's fortify ourselves with lunch at the cafeteria. The food is a good notch above standard cafeteria fare (although W.O. Mitchell, who once headed the writing programme, complained about it constantly), and if we're lucky we might catch a glimpse of the greats and near-greats from the world of literature and the arts. Over there in the corner, for example, deep in conversation with half a dozen Canadian writers and critics, is the famous Argentine novelist Tomas Eloy Martines. He's here to deliver a lecture to those in the arts journalism course.

If you don't mind, we'll make our stroll a leisurely one. Everything at the centre is either uphill or downhill, and, at 1,350 metres above sea level, Banff can be a breath-taking...
IF WE'RE LUCKY WE MIGHT CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE GREATS AND NEAR GREATS FROM THE WORLD OF LITERATURE

Let's make our way now to the more tranquil environs of the music programme—quiet but nonetheless intense. Music of many styles and traditions has played a major role at the centre for many years. On this occasion a chamber group is hard at work. Next door, Thomas Robin, director of the summer music programme, has rolled up on a 27-year-old motor scooter to audition a European trio that, attracted to the centre's international reputation, wants to study here. Robin and his wife Isabel Moore Robin, director of the winter music programme, have been described as the "heart and soul of the centre's music programmes." Vancouver-born Robin, whose career as a violinist in Canada and the United States, Europe and Japan demonstrates, last year the centre received a hefty federal government grant to explore this new boundary between technology and the arts. Then there's the music theatre programme, the publishing workshop, the management and conference facilities and goodness knows what else.

THE IDEAL WAY TO APPRECIATE BANFF IS TO SPEND A BIG CHUNK OF A SUMMER HERE TAKING IN THE FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

Now we'll partly extricate our steps and head for the theatre complex, unquestionably the most comprehensive facility of its kind in Canada, containing two theatres and a teaching wing with a plethora of supporting facilities, allowing production skills to be honed in a wide variety of areas including stage costume and painting, sound, video and stage make-up, wardrobe, electronics, technical direction and stage management. The centre is supported by a core of full-time staff, participants from every corner of the theatrical world mount professional productions ranging from opera, drama and dance to music theatre, film and touring concerts. Drama was the reason for the centre's inception 10 years ago, and it still lies at the very heart of the operation, with a particularly important role being filled by the advanced actors workshop. This is an intensive programme for Canadian actors with a minimum of five years of professional stage experience who want to sharpen their skills under the best available instructors.

Participants are drawn from across Canada, with auditions being held from Victoria to Halifax. Once chosen, the actors spend two months in the summer (the centre is currently conducting an experiment that involves the participants' remaining for three successive summers) in an intensive examination of a difficult work (one by Ibsen, say) under the guidance of a director of international repute. Later this year, the highly regarded Canadian Shakespearean actor William Hurt directed Twelfth Night.

In fact, says George Russ, manager of the theatre and literary arts programmes, Banff is the only remaining facility of its kind in the country. "In Canada we do a good job of training new actors but we ignore the development of our existing ones. That's where Banff's professional development programme comes in.

Today, as usual, apparent chaos reigns in the centre's Teapot circles. The counter has begun for the staging of two major works, and the activity is frenzic.

In the Eric Harvie Theatre, a scant 30 days from the premiere of a major new dance work by Judith Marcuse, one of Canada's best-known choreographers, the first rehearsal is being staged. But alas, dancers are scarce. A few hours ago the principal dancer suffered either a sprained or broken ankle (too early yet for a final diagnosis), and his understudy has to substitute at short notice. Of course he rises to the occasion, and in the cheers of a handful of onlookers, the rehearsal is acclaimed a success.

The Ideal Way to Appreciate Banff is to Spend a Big Chunk of a Summer Here Taking in the Festival of the Arts

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modest and unlikely beginnings. In 1932, Ned Corbett, head of the University of Alberta's extension department, secured a $30,000 Carnegie Foundation grant to establish a travelling arts development programme for the province and hired Elizabeth Haynes to head the drama component. The following year, with the support of the local school board, they opened a theatre summer school in Banff in what Corbett described as "a rather shabby old theatre." But it would seem that Corbett promptly advertised his first course: "School of the Drama, Banff, August 7 to 25. Registration Fee $1.00, no tuition fees." They expected maybe 45 people to register, nearly 190 turned up. The centre never looked back. Its current site was acquired on a perpetual lease from National Parks of Canada in 1945, and the first building on the new site was constructed soon after. Since then the centre has gone from strength to strength, steadily expanding its areas of artistic expertise and its international reputation. Today it constitutes a monument not only to the faith and vision of its founders but to the dedication of countless benefactors, artists, faculty and administrators.

The centre receives half its funding from the Province of Alberta, with the remainder coming from a variety of federal and other grants, private sector and individual donations. The centre has devised some ingenious ways of supplementing its income to offset decreased funding. Recently it began renting its sets and costumes to opera and theatre companies across North America – in 1991 its sets and costumes for The Marriage of Figaro were rented to no less than five companies in Canada. Funding remains a problem, however, and the future could see the curtailment or elimination of some"core" programmes.

Given its ambitious objectives, it would be a miracle if the centre were perfect, and in truth it is not. To the visitor, the organization tends to creak in places, and there are occasions when understandable professional pride on the part of faculty and artists may cloud judgement.

Then again, there is a price to be paid as well as many advantages to be gained from the centre's relative physical isolation from the daily congress of a more mainstream environment. Its achievements tend to get overlooked, and it backs to some degree the strong community identity and support it would undoubtedly enjoy in a large urban setting.

But, says Carol Phillips, the recently appointed vice president and director of the centre for the arts, "Banff is not simply an isolated paradise in the mountains but an integral part of the ongoing life of the arts in this country. While we remain dedicated to the development of individual artists, we are also concerned with the role the arts play in society as a whole. We are interested in bringing educators and artists of a larger scale to stress the part that the arts can play in our daily lives. Indeed, the arts as a whole have not done enough to remind us how important art is to all of us."

Minor cavils apart, there is little disagreement that in its primary task of development of the individual artist, the centre for the arts continues to do a first-class job. Artists as a breed tend to be iconoclastic, but it's hard to find an alumnus who is anything but enthusiastic.

Morris Wolfe, a Toronto writer and columnist who participated in last year's arts journalism course to complete a book he was at work on, recalls his experiences.

"Given my particular project, I could not have done it anywhere else, and there was no other way I could have bought the time. I needed total isolation from everyday concerns, and Banff provided the perfect environment. I found the opportunity to discuss my work with my peers to be enormously useful. I had a wonderful studio and a wonderful support system. For me, there is a continuing afterglow from the Banff experience."

Perhaps no one has put Banff in better perspective than David Leighton, who became director of the centre in 1970, guiding its development for the next 13 years. In his Book, Artists, Builders and Dreamers, written to mark the Banff School's 50th year, he wrote:

"The story of Banff is the story of individuals, men and women with a common purpose: to create on a mountainside overlooking the Bow Valley in the Rocky Mountains, a place for the growing and nurturing of the arts and management in Canada and around the world. These individuals comprise a brilliant parade of artists, builders, and dreamers who shared a vision and made it come true."

Leighton wrote: "The history of it, especially the story of the individual artists; the value of Banff for their lives, for the Canadian arts, for the arts of the world is something we have to celebrate, to claim and appropriate and continue."

Over the past year or so, Canadians have become more accustomed to switching their television sets or open their daily newspaper without finding some discussion of Canada's peacekeeping efforts. One reason for the attention is the extent of Canada's recent involvement: in 1992 it was involved in 15 missions, more than in any other one-year period during the 45-year history of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions.

Tragically, another reason for the attention has to do with recent charges that Canadian peacekeepers were involved in the torture and murder of a Somali man in their custody and with rumours linking some members of a particular Canadian unit to the cause of white supremacists. If these allegations prove true, the entire nation will feel the shame. Whatever the outcome, however, these matters cannot obliterate Canada's long and honourable record of peacekeeping, and it is important to remember that the vast majority of Canadian peacekeepers continue to be highly respected around the world.

Not only does peacekeeping continue to make front page news in Canada but since the end of the Cold War has been in the global spotlight. The world order is changing. Up until the late 1980s the policy makers and peacekeepers of the UN faced every international incident burdened with the weight of either Soviet or American interest or both. Sir Brian Urquhart, a Briton whose 41-year career at the UN included 14 years as undersecretary-general for special political affairs, remarks: "We had to tip toe around the Cold War to get anything done – it took us 60 percent of our time." No longer. The end of the Cold War, however, has brought its own problems. Nationalism is no longer checked by the superpowers, so some countries have hastened to redefine their borders, creating what General Lewis MacKenzie calls "a new world disorder." Other countries have contended with regurgitations of racism or ethnic strife. The UN, while coping with these changes, is seeing the moment to advocate a more muscular kind of peacekeeping, one that places humanitarian concerns over sovereignty.

The Cold War was at its peak in 1956. When a belligerently charming Canadian named Lester Pearson first proposed an idea to a skeptical Dag Hammarskjold, secretary-general of the UN. In July of that year, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which was owned by Britain and France. That fall, angered by the move, the two European nations along with Britain invaded Egypt, much to the horror of other western nations. "Then a new menace appeared in this most appalling week in postwar history," wrote Canadian historian Jack Granatstein. "The Soviet Union...threatened the attackers with nuclear weapons."

As the crisis deepened, Pearson, at the time Canada's minister for External Affairs, made his now historic suggestion: perhaps UN soldiers, called from its member countries, could step in and offer all nations a chance to save face while diplomats negotiated an agreement. Hammarskjold, Pearson decided, was "quite cool" to the idea, discussing only its obstacles. He took his suggestion to an evening meeting of the General Assembly on November 2. The diplomats argued its merits well into the early hours of November 3. What would peacekeeping be? How could peace be enforced? Another observer corps, Pearson argued, would not do any force designed to prevent fighting but be as strong as the combatants. A resolution...
officer to do."

That is because Canada's armed forces are extremely well trained (and it is members of the armed forces who do almost all of Canada's peacekeeping work; the RCMHP have been involved to a small degree since 1989). "The Canadian Forces are," says Colonel Michael Houghton, director of peacekeeping operations, "a volunteer professional force." That means all members have chosen to serve, unlike members of the conscripted forces in some nations. Of the nearly 4,500 Canadian Forces personnel who are currently involved in UN peacekeeping missions, 90 percent are full-time members of the military.

The remaining 10 percent are highly trained reservists, who serve in lower risk areas. However, the arts of war may not always serve the cause of peace. While many military skills can be readily adapted to peacekeeping purposes, other attributes of the professional warrior may be less compatible to the peace tasks that an increasing number of Canadian Forces personnel are finding themselves called on to undertake. Belligerence, for example, is a desirable trait in a front-line soldier but can be a disadvantage in the peacekeeping role, which demands firmness, tact and understanding. A good portion of Canadian military training is already devoted to peacekeeping techniques and practices, but as the demand for using the armed services to support humanitarian causes increases it may be desirable to introduce more specific instruction in both the philosophy and techniques of peacekeeping.

Still, I think it is timely to suggest, however, that these attributes have been missing in Canada's peacekeepers.

Indeed, our peacekeepers have long been known for going to great lengths to avoid conflict. In Cyprus in 1974 (where Canadian troops are part of a contingent trying to maintain an uneasy peace between Greek and Turkish Cypriots), an unused Canadian observation post was seized by Greek Cypriot militia. The Canadians tried to talk them into leaving. They refused. Instead of returning to the bridge, a Canadian commander had a ceasefire quietly emptied its contents around the observation post— and got it back in short order.

Colonel John Gardam, formerly with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and chief of the Canadian Peacekeeper, served as battle captain at Rafah in the Gaza Strip as part of the first UN peacekeeping mission. Gardam told how some UN staff made sure the camp ran efficiently. He recalls a small but telling incident that highlights an attitude of concern. He was once hailed by the radio with a distress signal that had been broadcast by a woman who had seen her child on a team had run over a little Bedouin girl's goat. "Is the goat dead?" asked Gardam. No, said the soldier, but explained that it was dying. Gardam told the soldier to shoot the goat. There was a moment's silence. Then the soldier said, "I haven't got my weapon with me." Gardam told him to return with the goat over the Gulf to put it out of its pain. The five-year-old girl watched the Canadian who had hit the goat get back into his jeep and drive away. But in a Canadian gesture of courtesy Gardam arranged to pay the Bedouin family handsomely for its loss, not realizing that for a while UN drivers on the road would have to dodge goats hurled at their jeeps by ambitious Bedouins. Many were common since, as Gardam notes, "we had to write the rules as we went along—no one in our squadron had done peacekeeping before." Tragedy was occasional, but very real. More than 85 Canadian's have died as peacekeepers, singly or in their country but of the world. Canadians, it seems, have rarely hesitated to show courage where it was needed. During the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, artillery officer Major W. R. MacNeill and a colleague informed Egyptians and Israelis on either side of a bridge in the northern Sinai Desert of the ceasefire. The Israelis told the Canadians to clear the bridge: an attack would begin in

Since 1956, Canadian peacekeepers have stood guard in many troubled countries around the world, including the former Yugoslavia (middle) and Cyprus (top and bottom).
more diverse. Many were simple mis-
sions to oversee cease-fires, such as that in the Dominican Re-
public in 1965-66. If everything went
well, the missions were carried out by a few officers equipped with a jeep and a
pair of binoculars. Canadians have also
walked the border between India and Pak-
istan to supervise a cease-fire during
1965 and 1966, looked at the El Cigala Camp at Ismailia in 1975 (where Canadian
women first served in a peacekeeping operation) and monitored the withdrawal of
Soviet soldiers from Afghanistan in 1988. As
well, they have helped a country achieve its independence, as occurred in
Namibia, and confirmed the withdrawal of an occupying
force, as happened in southern Lebanon.

As Canadian governments have increased their under-
standing of what our participa-
tion in peacekeeping around the world could do for the
country's stature, commitment to
a Canadian presence in UN peacekeeping missions has also
grown. "There has been a deci-
sion by both Liberal and Conservative
governments to maintain the maxi-
um presence we could," says
Michael Pearson, a defence policy
adviser to the federal Liberal party and, incidentally, Lester Pearson's
grandson. Canadians have been a part of
every peacekeeping operation the
UN has had over the years, some two
dozens of them.

One peacekeeping operation that will, for Canada, end this year has dem-
onstrated the difficulty for Can-
dians and peacekeepers generally in
doing a job too well. In 1964 Cyprus's
preparation for independence was
giving its Turkish and Greek communities,
which for centuries had lived togeth-
er in mutual loathing, enough cause to
fight. Turkey announced it might join
the fray. With direction from Paul
Martin, then Canada's secretary of
state for External Affairs, a Canadian
group of UN soldiers flew to the island
within three days and was instrumen-
tal in establishing the Green Line, a

buffer zone in the island's capital, Nicosia, that separates Greek and
Turkish Cypriots. That would all seem like ancient history except that Can-
dian peacekeepers were so effective they were there for so long in Cyprus.

They have been there ever since. Their period of greatest danger was
during the Turkish invasion in 1974. Despite the hatred between Greek and
Turkish Cypriots continues, Canada will be withdraw-
ing its troops in the fall. Originally the mission was expected to last only a
few months, but Canadian troops have been there nearly 30 years.
There is little more they feel they
can do to end the animosity on the island, and there are so many other areas of the
world where their services are needed.

The deployment of peace-
keeping forces to the former
Yugoslavia has raised ques-
tions about what the role of
such forces should be. Last
summer, Canada's now retired
Maj.-Gen. Lewis MacKenzie led the UN peacekeeping
force (850 of its 1,100 members were
Canadian) to the troubled region.
The force's mission was to keep the
airport at Sarajevo open so the city's
besieged residents could receive food
and medical relief. The troops were
successful in securing the airport but faced
criticism from many for not
doing more to bring about peace. The
problem MacKenzie and his force faced, of course, was that there was no
peace to keep. "What can I respond
with?" MacKenzie asked a reporter
last summer. "This is a peacekeeping
force... Do you want me to go out and
job them with my elbow point?"

While MacKenzie was ducking shots
in Sarajevo the current secretary-
general of the United Nations, an
Englishman named Boutros-Ghali,
withdrew his administration's vision of what peace-
keeping should be in the wake of the
Cold War. He has advocated "pre-
ventive deployment" by peacekeepers in
countries whose borders are threat-
ened, as well as specially trained, more
heavily armed "peace enforcers" ac-
ceded from the militaries of various
nations -- the kind of peacekeepers Canada, in sending members of its
armed forces to the area, would supply.
The preventive deployment Boutros-Ghali calls for was, in fact, presaged three
months before in Canada by a policy circular from the government, which
predicted that future peacekeeping operations could include the running of elections,
tax collection or internal armed
actions to restore a legitimate govern-
ment subverted by criminal elements
or a neighbour. "We need," notes
Sir Brian, "a government that's
prepared to take the lead."

Michael Pearson believes, like Sir Brian, that a unique opportunity exists for Canada
to help write the rules of the new
game of peacekeeping. He notes that
Canadian experts now travel to many
developing countries as well as to
Russia and Ukraine to train and
train their governments on
deployment. He advoca-
cates answering Boutros-Ghali's call
for more assertive peace enforcement
with the creation of an international
peacekeeping training centre at
Lahr, Germany (where the Canadian Forces
centre will be closing at the end of
August 1994). Lahr would be a place
for countries to hone their skills at
peacekeeping and a transfer point for
troops entering or leaving any country
in strife. Peacekeeping, Pearson notes,
"has evolved far beyond what my
grandfather envisioned."

Sir Brian thinks that all the current
debate about peacekeeping makes it
seem that more change has taken
place than is really the case. "Thirty
years ago in the Congo we did practi-
cally everything that everyone now
says is completely new," he remarks.
"Including running the country at
one point. I think we've laid a damn
good foundation for peacekeeping."

In Canada, the credit for our reputa-
tion as peacekeepers belongs to the
men and women of our armed forces
who built that reputation through more than four decades of daily effort in sometimes appalling conditions.
They have returned home with a
greater appreciation of Canada's comfort. "We [in Canada] tend to talk
each other to death," said
MacKenzie when he was in Sarajevo,
"and out here they tend to argue with
AX [Anatol Karpus]. When he returns from staff
visits to the various peacekeeping oper-
apions, says Houghton, he wants to
"kiss the ground, this is such a fabu-
los place."

International acclaim for Canada's
peacekeeping efforts has come so far in the
form of one, and to a degree two, Nobel Peace Prizes. One
was awarded to Lester Pearson in 1957 in recognition of his
work in peacekeeping; the other was awarded in 1988 in recognition of all UN troops
around the globe.

At home, the recognition for our troops finally came last fall in the form of a
monument. You can find Recom-
memoration behind the Parlia-
ment Buildings in Ottawa.
Flanked by Moshe Safdie's National
Art Gallery on one side and the shops
of Bytown on the other, British
Columbia sculptor Jack Harman's
design is an island of calm surrounded
by a traffic island, in fact. Three
larger-than-life bronze figures in
various forms of UN garb watch over passers-by: an armed sentry, a
communicator with her portable radio
and a military observer with binocu-
lars who keeps an eye on the Hill.

If you visit the monument, you will
find a particularly ingenious marriage of
art and function. The wheelchair
access ramp allows the average
Canadian to feel what it's like to walk the
Green Line in Nicosia just as the
peacekeepers do. On either side of the
ramp, concrete slabs are disfig-
ured and strewn, just like the ruins of
bomb-destroyed buildings. Among
these lonely ruins, flowers and herbs have
sprung up just as they would anywhere
where there is a life. Harman has
recreated the no-man's-land where the
peacekeeper patrols.
Lending Nature a Helping Hand

An Alberta reservoir, once used by Imperial to provide water for oil production, is transformed into a summer home for thousands of migrating birds

By PLUS ROLHEISER

CALL IT A TINY, TRULY ASTOUNDING MIRACLE OF NATURE. A flock of blue-winged teals—smallish mollusc-eating grey ducks—takes wing from a wooded marsh in the coastal mountains of Colombia and turns northward. Before the day is through, it has crossed the mountain range that holds the headwaters of the Amazon River. As the days become weeks, guided perhaps by a combination of primal instinct and visual cues—we cannot be sure—the flock makes its way over Panama, Lake Nicaragua and the Sierra Madre. It passes over the Grand Canyon, Utah’s Great Salt Lake and a Montana town called Anaconda.

Several weeks and more than 6,000 kilometres after its journey began, the flock alights quietly on Lysseng Reservoir, a small body of water in the aspen parkland of east-central Alberta, an hour’s drive south of Edmonton, near the city of Camrose. Set in the heart of some of Alberta’s best grain-growing country, Lysseng Reservoir is less than a kilometre across and not much to look at. Several small islands dot the amoeba-shaped surface; bulrushes border its irregular shoreline. It seems not much different from the hundreds of sloughs that appear in Alberta when the snow melts each spring.

But there’s a reason the blue-winged teals choose to make their quiet landing on Lysseng Reservoir. That landing completes a genuine miracle of nature after traversing nearly a third of the globe, the flock has come home. Many of the birds were hatched at the reservoir. They grew up and learned to swim here. Now they’ve returned to build nests, breed and raise broods of blue-winged teal ducklings, as likely as not, will winter in South America and return 6,000 kilometres each spring, choosing this small body of water over the rest.

The view from the shoreline suggests the blue-winged teals aren’t alone in their choice. The reservoir is home to a dazzling variety of ducks, geese, swans, loons, pelicans, eiders and herons. It also serves as a stopover for Barrow’s goldeneye, Canada geese and a couple of other species that summer in Canada’s Arctic and winter in the United States and Central and South America. Beavers and muskrats live here, too, building their homes in the shallow channels.

The many species of birds ply the waters of Lysseng Reservoir for good reason. Food of the type the birds prefer—insects, invertebrates and aquatic vegetation—is plentiful here. So, too, are the shore grasses that provide essential nesting cover for waterfowl and shore dwellers. The dense bulrushes and the water beyond provide protection from predators—foxes, skunks and coyotes—that are here for good reasons, too.

Part of the reason they’re all here is that unlike most of the thousand other sloughs, which dry up in the summer, Lysseng Reservoir is permanent. It is a small but critical element in a continent-wide plan to promote the recovery of waterfowl and other migratory bird populations jeopardized by human encroachment. Human intervention, responsible for reducing wildlife habitats across North America to a critical point, has helped Lysseng Reservoir achieve the permanence its residents so desperately need.

Human hands figure prominently in the 40-year history of Lysseng Reservoir. In the early 1950s, the town of Camrose—its name was at the time—created the reservoir by building a mechanical weir and a series of dykes on one of the dozens of natural sloughs in the area. The move was intended to establish a secure water source for the town, but it turned out to be a source Camrose never had to tap—a larger one nearby met all its needs, so the town sold the reservoir to Imperial Oil in the early 1960s.

Imperial’s interest in Lysseng Reservoir had little to do with the growing numbers of ducks, geese and other waterfowl nesting on its shores. The reservoir was an ideal source of water for the underground water-flood programme that was helping the company boost production from its nearby Joucan oilfield. Hundreds of metres below the reservoir’s tranquil surface, high-pressure streams of water flushed crude oil from pores in sandstone rock and swept it towards wells for recovery.

For the next two decades, Lysseng Reservoir continued to lead a double life. And a remarkable thing happened. As oil production from the Joucan field dwindled and the
reservoir became less vital to the oil industry, its impor-
tance to agriculture increased. Each year, more of the area's land was cleared for farming. Many small bodies of water dried up or were lost to drainage. Consequently, Lyseng Reservoir found itself supporting an ever-increasing waterfowl population. By the time declining oil production convinced Imperial to discontinue its waterfall project at the Joacram oilfield in 1983, the reservoir had become an extremely important breeding and migra-
tion habitat for both waterfowl and shore birds.

But this fact wasn't lost on the local chapter of Ducks Un-
limited Canada, a conserva-
tion organization committed to restoring, enhancing and
preserving waterfowl habitats in Canada. The organization was born in 1937, the brain-
child of a group of conserva-
tionists who witnessed the ravaging of Canadian wet-
lands by the drought of the
Dusty Thirties. It has a partic-
ular interest in Alberta wet-
lands, which lie at the heart of the Central and Pacific waterfowl flyways and are home to one in five North American ducks. To Ducks Unlimited, Imperial's Lyseng Reservoir was anything but the unremarkable slough it looked. "I've been interested in that particular wetland ever since I moved here," says John Martin, the district biolo-
ist who joined Ducks Unlimited's Camrose office
nearly 10 years ago. "There aren't very many permanent bodies of water of its size and character in this area, which makes Lyseng an exceedingly important wetland." Martin, who studied wildlife biology at the University of Guelph, believes the reservoir's importance cannot be overstated. Numerous species—including gadwalls, wigeons, lesser scops, northern pintails, mallard and golden ducks and Canada geese—use it as a breeding and feeding ground. The birds breed here in the summer months, building up layers of fat and thickening their feather cover in preparation for their fall migration. By the time the pintails, usually the earliest to leave in

fall, take wing southward, Lyseng Reservoir has become an
avian Grand Central Station. Martini estimates Albertans are a staggering 89 percent below the long-term average. American wigeon
51 percent. Since the turn of the century, more than half of
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Martin isn't just being dramatic, either. Pintail popula-
tions in central Alberta are a staggering 89 percent below the long-term average. American wigeon 51 percent. Since the turn of the century, more than half of Alberta's wetlands in settled areas have disappeared, and thousands more are lost each year to drainage, cultivation and drought. You can believe Martin when he suggests that Alberta's ars parklands play a pivotal role in maintaining waterfowl populations in North America and that Lyseng Reservoir is a key factor in that equation.

Ducks Unlimited isn't alone in its concern over North American waterfowl. The Nature Conservancy of Canada, with more than 15,000 Canadian members, calls the preservation of wetlands a matter of genuine concern. "Wetlands are one of Canada's most threatened and important natural resources," says the conservancy's national projects director Amanda Jones. "The conservancy is working very closely with private interests, other nature conservation groups and governments across the country to try and secure these ecologically sensitive and economically important systems.

Recognizing the importance of Lyseng Reservoir, Ducks Unlimited began working with Imperial more than 10 years ago. It found a willing partner. While Imperial continued to draw on the reservoir for its water-flood operation, Ducks Unlimited set in motion a series of operations of its own. The water level in the reservoir was lowered to expose more of the marshy shoreline. Ducks Unlimited worked with Alberta envir-

mental groups to introduce a number of artificial floating nesting structures, consisting of straw-covered wooden rafts on Styro-
foam floats, were added to entice Canada geese and mallard ducks to build nests.

And an unprecedented and understandable partnership with Imperial, Ducks Unlimited turned to adjacent landowners, leasing parcels of land on the reservoir's shores and converting them from crop land back to grass cover to encourage nesting. The restoration of nesting areas is a pivotal part of the Alberta Prairie Care programme. "Waterfowl need more than water to survive and thrive," Martini comments. "In many areas the loss of nesting habitat also poses a serious threat to the waterfowl population. Species need both to survive."

On the southern edge of Lyseng Reservoir, just about the place where the puhkles give way to hummocks of shore grass that provide critical nesting cover, the latest chapter in the partnership between Ducks Unlimited and Imperial was written in a windy day last October. A brief ceremony preceded the unveiling of a concrete cairn erected here to commemorate Imperial's donation of the reservoir, valued at just under half a million dol-

ars. The cairn is all that remains to remind one of Imperial's former ownership of the reservoir.

Ron Bremner, Imperial's president, rather likes it that way. "We're pleased to be able to turn over an asset like this for the benefit of the community at large," he says. "Lyseng Reservoir represents one of those rare situations in which a human involvement has resulted in a lasting improvement to the ecosystem."

Human intervention at the reservoir, from its creation 40 years ago to provide a secure water supply for Camrose and its recent, and permanent, indus-

trial retirement by Imperial, has already wrought some last-
ing good to improves waterfowl and other migratory bird popula-

tions in North America. The fact that the title deed to Lyseng Reservoir now rests in the hands of Ducks Unlimited gives biologist John Martin cause to smile. "It secures that body of water as a waterfowl habitat in perpetuity," he says, and gives us the opportunity to manage that habitat to the lasting benefit of wildlife."
Prairie Summer

One of Canada’s best loved novelists casts a nostalgic glance at the summer of his childhood

By W.O. Mitchell

The first 12 years of my life were spent on the Saskatchewan billiard table south of Regina, and this childhood autobiography has had a great deal to do with the rest of my life. The late novelist and historian Wallace Stegner, who was a prairie boy from East End, Sask., said in Wolf Willow that the prairie should create poets. I agree with him, all that land and all that sky has done to, whether the prairie of mid-America, the moors of England, the steppes of Russia, teaching early in life that to be human meant to be conscious of self, separate from all the rest of the living whole. Human.

The cost of being aware of an inner self that can mirror the outer remainder of the whole has an outrageously high price in loneliness. It is impossible to retain the living whole to ease the pain of human loneliness except by dying. That works in the end.

I wonder whether being a prairie human we do not have to pay a higher loneliness price because we have such a shallow and recent past, whether we realize it or not—that our part of the earth’s skin is really still both wild and name. We have no medieval cathedrals with soaring Gothic arches to soar and to comfort us with an ancestor echo; we do not unearth Roman baths and walk old roads. Here in Canada, really, we are the newest of the New World. My own generation was newest of all. We were the first whites to be born and trained in childhood by the prairie way. It is difficult to be much newer than that and, therefore, historically less loneliness.

As a child, I wondered over the prairie a great deal, with the prairie wind driving me on the great prairie harp of telephone wires; they hummed and they twanged and seemed to adjust themselves endlessly against the prairie
tiness. I can remember boxed-winged fences, hung with butterflies, gashoppers, perhaps field mice, trapped there, the skirker’s supermarket. In winter, bird prices in the snow, the alternating tracks of a coulee, the distant catch of jack rabbits, all squashed inland life to sun, nor human. Very young I felt the total thrust of the prairie sun upon my vulnerable and naked head. I looked down to the sky banks of dead gophers, crawling with ants and flies and undertaker beetles, worked over in black oil-white spilled magpies. Again and again the skipping lift of a prairie meadowlark was a surprise.

In my new world, as a very young one, I learned I was mortal. I could die—the end of Billy Mitchell. The hardening, living prairie of old did not give one good goddamn about that. My mother, brothers and friends died, and my grandmother and Auntie Jane perhaps. When you learn you are going to die you truly understand this you are human. You have been then given a perspective that is very helpful in deciding what is important and what is unimportant, valuable and not valuable.

For all of us, summer was our favourite season. Our always began, logically, on May 24, when we would walk our way, the Sundays and Miss Hart’s three little cottages on the eastern edge of town. Miss Hart seemed to have an awful lot of nices living out there with her. She pulled out of Westburn in 1945 and moved to Calgary. I’m almost certain that she changed her name to Pearl White and opened a famous Mount Royal bordello.

But enough of hoarse of ill repair, let’s get back to prairie summer. We were still headed for the Little Soo for our first swim of the year. Naked, of course, and watched by several exponents from the provincial mental hospital just upstream from our swimming hole. Several are vivid in my memory: Buffalo Billy in 10-gallon hat and hairy chaps, with his two toy six-shooters in hip holsters and Blind Jesus, not in the usual green hospital-gown uniform but in pure white, his man outstretched in the crucified position as he stared upwards, always directly into the sun. That was how he had blinded himself.

For me, the best part of summer was July and August, when in the McLauchlan touring car we drove the 60 miles east to our cottage at Carlyle Lake on an Asparagus and Sauerkraut Indian reserve. Here, the Black Hills of the Dakota riddled out. We welcomed the sight of cottonwood and birch trees we hadn’t seen since the summer before, the smell of leaf mould and the perfume of wolf willow. The vivid orange of black bear legs with their fleshy thumbs and all those horses grunting with a new crop of sulking colts.

Every year old Sherupkin would be across the road in front of our cottage, seated in the Lotus position like a Buddha under the cottonwood and sandstone, smoking his clay pipe. My brother Bobbie and I and Sherupkin bonded to one another. Very early we managed to establish communication even though Sherupkin spoke virtually no English and we couldn’t handle Sauteaux.

Sherupkin did know a few monosyllabic words in English. Words like you, him and me. He communicated with us in other ways too: a back tan of his hotel and a curved thumb thrown back over a shoulder followed by patina, down and flattened out, spreading wide, meant "all them others." A sharp chop at the elbow certainly meant "Shut up!"

There was another signal the old man used often. It was a long drawn-out, "Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh..." which ended with a short, sharp and piercing "Tah!"

The old man broke wind. The wind smelled lingered long, overpowering the campfire and backwoods smell that always breathed up from him. It was just a natural event, like the
squeak of a gopher, the quick skipping notes of a meadowlark, the cawing of a crow.

I guessed the old man to be in his very late seventies or perhaps only eighties. So he would have hunted hundreds of buffalos as an adolescent, most likely far to the west in the Cypress Hills, where the dwindling herds sought refuge from "civilized" hunters. He had missed smallpox and tuberculosis and venereal disease to survive most of his life on wild game. Sheepskin would show up daily in his democrat with a young woman and her baby. His granddaughter and his great-granddaughter, we guessed. The woman was unlacing the baby and prop her up against a birch tree trunk, unbib and hobble the team to graze in a new spot, spread out a blanket, load it with beaded jackets and moccasins for sale. She would rim the blanket with Maple Leaf lead pads filled with saskatoon berries, pin or chokecherries or wild raspberries. This location in front of our cottage was a good business spot for them, for our road was the main access route to the beach and the hotel, and sooner or later cottagers and weekenders would pass and stop and buy.

I did business with Sheepskin. Each year I would gather a supply of discarded boots from McCormick’s Harness and Shoe Repair in Weyburn. Bobbie and I and Sheepskin traded: one pair of boots for a bow and arrow fletched with wild goose feathers; three pairs of boots for one boy’s-size fringed and beaded buckskin jacket. Most important of all: four pairs of boots for one shagapappy pony to ride for one week bareback with Bobbie, taking turns at who would have the lines and who would sit with his arms around his brother’s middle. We were the only mounted whites at Carlyle Lake all those summers.

Actually, in retrospect, I think the young woman with the baby might have been Sheepskin’s wife. Bobbie and I were the only people at Carlyle Lake who prayed for wind. Without rain, we asked for whitespups, listened for the tapping of leaves and sighs through the birches. I may even have considered asking Sheepskin if there was a wind dance as well as a rain dance he could do for us.

We had a 16-foot Peterborough canoe and, given wind, would step a short mast in the bow and hang it with a lateen sail, lower the leeboards and take off over the lake. I was always the skipper in the stern with a paddle for a rudder and the sheet line in my teeth. Bobbie crouched middleship, gripping the gunwales with both hands, ready to lift his butt up and out on the canoe rim so when the sail bellied he could hang out to contradict the wind. Again and again there would be a fear thrill as we tried to marry the wind gusts in our thirsty shell, tipping and gulping water over the sides.

Our mother had an understanding with Mr. Diamond, the hotel owner, that if we capitated, the hotel launch would come to our rescue. It did so a couple of times each summer. I was 10 and Bobbie was eight the first summer we sailed the length and breadth of Carlyle Lake, our broad Atlantic.

When we would beach on the far side we were the only humans over there. We would strip and play Tamar of the Apes, climb a giant cottonwood to swing from branch to branch, then drop from the big boogh that hung out over the water. This was truly dangerous, for in the tree’s main crotch was a grey paper wasp’s nest. One Sunday afternoon when my foot slipped, the wasps got to my crotch. They stung my genitals, both cheeks, chest and arms before I could drop into the water. There was no way I could skip the canoe back over the lake, so I had to turn the sheet and the paddle rudder over to Bobbie. A hundred yards offshore we intertwined. We managed to unstap the mast and lateen and get the leeboards off, but the canoe resisted all our efforts to right it. We decided to rest awhile, and as we did I realized that the cool lake water had softened my wasp stings some.

We decided we’d better dive and come up under the canoe and check out if the clothes we should have put on before disembarking were still there. They were. We stayed under. Very early in our canoe life, Bobbie and I had discovered the green luminous bubble under a capizone canoe with the water’s lap, tag and gagle amplified. It was a magic place of wundering shadow and the glimmer of reflected light on the shelf above our heads. Our voices became resonant and importantly hollow sounding, solemn and grown-up.

Bobbie was the first to dunk his face below the water surface, to suck and gargle, then spurt me. Our usual water fight followed. I heard a tickling sound fright and far off. I wasn’t sure I was hearing it, but the tightening of Bobbie’s face told me I was. We both came out under, and there it was a hundred yards away: the hotel launch with a dozen passengers under the fringed canoes taking their Sunday afternoon sightseeing cruise. And we knuckled naked! We dived back under the canoe.

Hanging on to our throats, our worst fears were realized as the launch stopped, then circled our canoe for almost half an hour. Thank God neither the pilot nor the passengers knew about our magic air bubble. They gave up and took off to tell our mother about another Mitchell boys’ rip-over and that, alas, there had been no sign of either of them or their drowned bodies.

When they’d left, Bobbie and I swam to shore, showing the canoe aboard of us. We righted her and bailed her out. This time, we put on our clothes, wet as they were, but we didn’t step the mast or lower the leeboards; we peddled all the way back to the opposite side. Often in recall dreams I have been under that magic bubble, and I’ve apologized for what we put our mother through. She stripped us both, grounded us for a week and made us haul the canoe out for the rest of the summer.

Here was the least common denominator of nature, the skeleton requirements simply of land and sky — Saskatchewans prairie. It lay wide around the town, stretching as the line of the sky, flushed with low brush, wild rose bushes shimmering under the late June sun and waiting for the unflagging irritation of wind, gentle at first, barely storking the long grasses and giving them life; later, a long, hot gusting that would lift the black topsoil and pile it in barren pits along the roads or in deep banks against the fences.

That’s the opening of a book I once wrote — my first novel, Who Has Seen the Wind. I was born in 1914, too soon for universal pastureization of milk, so that I picked up bovine tuberculosis and for a whole year I was taken out of High School. I was the only kid alive in Weyburn or Saskatchewan, or Canada for that matter, between the hours of nine and four. I used to wander up Sixth Street to the prairie beyond, and because of all those hours alone out there — talking to myself, smelling, seeing, hearing — I ended up a writer.

Prairie distance between neighbours probably makes us try harder than others to bridge that distance. It explains why, perhaps, I became a writer, seeking creative partners in print.

I agree with Wallace Stegner. The prairie, with all that sky and all that horizon, does produce creative people. Look at Dostoevsky, Pushkin, Tolstoy — not much difference, I suppose, between the steppes of Russia and the steppes of Saskatchewan.
Balancing Act

At Imperial, employment equity not only benefits women and minorities. It's also good business

BY JANE FINLAYSON

"Shouting from the top isn't what will change things—learning and awareness will"

beyond the millennium are learning the jargon.

In Canada, the purpose of employment equity is to ensure equity in the workplace so that no one is denied employment opportunities for reasons unrelated to ability. This requires that employers identify and dismantle barriers inherent in their employment practices that have historically put specific groups—women, visible minorities, aboriginal people and people with disabilities—at a disadvantage. This concept—originally a concept of human rights legislation throughout the country—was enshrined in federal law seven years ago as the Employment Equity Act.

The act applies to all federal government departments and federally regulated companies and, under the federal contractors programme, to companies that have more than 100 employees and do business with the federal government. Each company is required to draw up a plan to help it meet employment equity goals. Imperial's plan received approval under the federal contractors programme in 1992 and includes measures to ensure Imperial's work practices are fair as well as a forecast of the demographic make-up of its future workforce.

Prompts champion employment equity legislation as good economic policy and good social policy, maintaining that a representative workforce that makes full use of available skills, talents and abilities not only benefits the designated groups but contributes to the effective functioning of the economy. Its detractors see it as focusing on numbers and as a preferential hiring device that enables women and minorities to jump the job queue.

Although the legislation continues to be a source of controversy, people who work in the area of employment equity agree that the real story is not in the numbers (the specified groups are making demonstrable headway in the Canadian workforce, albeit at a glacial pace). Rather, it resides in the legislation's power to challenge the status quo—the old boys' networks from Parliament Hill to union hiring halls that have perpetuated employment of white, able-bodied males to fill the higher paying jobs—and encourage diversity in the workplace.

It's a daunting challenge made all the more difficult by the lingering effects of the recent recession and economic restructuring that have cut a wide swath through the Canadian workforce. At Imperial, for example, there are currently a third fewer employees than there were three years ago.

Meeting employment equity objectives to increase representation of designated groups has been tough to do while having to reduce the number of employees so significantly.

Nevertheless, the company is committed to this course of action. For the company's president, Ron Benneman, the reason is straightforward: employment equity goals are compatible with Imperial's own desire to attract excellent people. "A key to our business success has been our ability to attract the very best people. These days, as we see the composition of Canadian society changing dramatically, we absolutely must find ways to persuade women and minorities, who are increasingly represented at the top of the class, to come and work for us."

As Benneman has learned, however, hiring the best people and keeping them can be two different things. "There have been so many barriers—some systemic, some attitudinal, some cultural, some physical—that have prevented people from the designated groups from feeling comfortable and motivated at Imperial. We must learn what those barriers are. We must deepen our understanding of our own biases. Too often we look for a mirror image of ourselves, and we don't even realize we do it. Shouting from the top isn't what will change things—learning and awareness will."

Jennifer MacLachlan, Imperial's employment equity manager, agrees. "Employment equity is not about treating everyone in the same way—it is about responding to individuals and understanding that people do things differently. When you include those aspects in your approach and perspective, you can better utilize their knowledge and experience."

One way the company tries to help managers understand the changing world around them is through education. In recent years, several dozen senior managers have attended workshops on the importance of valuing diversity. The sessions began in response to concerns raised by a group of Asian employees who believed they were being negatively stereotyped and missing out on promotions.

One member of the group, Al Chan, is a chemical engineer who was raised in Hong Kong and has been with the company since 1974. In the late 1980s he moved into the information technology area and was involved in recruiting new employees. "I saw an imbalance in the number of people from the minority groups hired compared with the number interviewed. When I mentioned this to management, I was asked to see if I could find out why this was so."

"I think one of the reasons is a significant cultural difference in the way Westerners and Asians view authority. Westerners are assertive and will challenge the leader. Generally, Asians do not—they perceive that it is their role to listen to the experienced, more senior person. In the workplace this can be misinterpreted as passiveness."

Meetings between Chan and his managers were enlightening and prompted the company to implement diversity awareness workshops more widely.

"Encouraging greater awareness," says Chan, "is vital because the essential issue is how to get people to be more tolerant of differences. I say, 'Don't judge me on who I am, please look at the results of my work.'"

The workshop leader was a Calgary human resources consultant, Rebecca Chan Allen, who has spent the better part of 20 years researching human and organizational development. In her workshops, she initially talks with participants about why and how the workplace is changing to illustrate why it is harmful to organizations and individuals to stereotype people and make judgments about them based on such views.

"I paint the big picture first and point out that for business, globalization demands innovation and flexibility. We can no longer afford to let traditional barriers such as race and gender get in the way. The postindustrial economy is a knowledge-based economy that requires free thinkers, not clones who value conformity."

The essential first step is to recognize differences between people and talk about them, which is an exercise Chan Allen steers, having participants talk about their cultural backgrounds, abilities and life experiences.

"Traditionally, cultures discouraged looking at differences, so why would we have learned any skills to deal with differences? What do we learn from a very young age is that some differences are better than others. In this country, we learn that being male is better than being female, that being white is better than being another colour. We can choose to deny this, but in the working world the hierarchy indisputably affirms which characteristics are better than others."

RON BRENNEMAN

"We can no longer afford to let traditional barriers such as race and gender get in the way"

AL CHAN

"I say, 'Don't judge me on who I am, please look at the results of my work'"
Neil Purslow and Carol Elliott

"Carol has concerns that are different from mine—I'm forced to look at things from a different point of view"

space, a ball in the conversation, during a meeting. In fact, many of us don't give a second thought to jumping in or actively interrupting the speaker, just to make sure there's no awkward pause. I learned that the comfortable protocol for many Asian people is to wait for the speaker to finish and then allow a bit of dead time before responding. This may seem like a small thing, but the point is the different style was sometimes misinterpreted. When senior managers were around the table talking about an individual, we'd hear that he had excellent ideas one-on-one, was always rock-solid analytically, handled people exceptionally well, but in larger groups never got his ideas out. As I thought about this, I realized the result was we'd never give him a chance. Our belief was the individual barrier to getting the most out of this particular employee.

The realization prompted Brennan to change his own style. "Now I invite people who have been quiet for a while to express their views, and I show them one way to often thinking about their style of communicating, too." He knows that effective significant change by changing attitudes will be slow. "But it's going to be helped by time and people now. I am happy to be here to help the other people who have had a difficult time in securing the position. I know that some people hold the view that employment equity ought to be forced in some way, but I don't agree. It's essential to change people's attitudes, not simply statistics, and I think our approach is sound.

Imperial has not set hiring quotas or enacted special measures to speed employment equity. Rather, it's working to remove barriers from its hiring practices to ensure that there are no biases against the top candidates and that they will be selected regardless of sex or ethnic background. The expectation is that this will result in those hired being representative of the population from which they are selected. Employment equity legislation itself requires hiring to be based strictly on the ability of someone to perform a job, and job requirements must be bona fide. In the petroleum industry, for example, an employer may list as a requirement the ability to climb a three-metre ladder to test whether males are male; the employer cannot make it a requirement that employees be a certain age.

Getting people is relatively simple: retrieving them is quite another story. Over the past decade, in an effort to reduce the number of employees, Imperial has offered incentive packages to induce employees to resign voluntarily. While the programme provided a gentler means to reduce the workforce than straight job cutting, they were not without a negative aspect: too many employees from the designated groups left the company.

These days, the company is making a considerable effort to retain employees from the groups. One method that has attracted enthusiastic participation and the eye of senior management is a mentoring programme for junior-level professional women that began in the natural resources division in Calgary.

A year later a larger project was begun. Twenty pairs of mentors and proteges were matched up after exchanging résumés and getting acquainted in seminar sessions. The mentors were 16 men and four women in managerial positions, while the proteges were all women at various professional levels. The partners wrote their own contracts to set down what the individuals expected of the partnership and the logistics of where and how they would meet. Most chose to meet for an hour or so every couple of weeks.

The programme's objective is to provide learning experiences that will be of mutual benefit: the proteges learn about the implicit cultural mores—the unspoken rules—that influence advancement in the company; the mentors learn about the perspective and working styles of women at Imperial.

Carol Elliott, a certified management accountant and a protege in the programme who joined Imperial in 1989, says the programme has been new generation of people to define career goals and interpret the working of suitable job postings.

She says she also encouraged her to take more risks in the way she did business.

"Sometimes Neil and I are at the same business meetings, so we get to see him in action, and he gets to see me. I've admired his direct approach and management style—he always says what's on his mind and challenges other people—and the feedback and coaching he gives me are invaluable." In fact, Elliott applied for a new job—one with greater responsibility—during the initial months of their mentoring programme. The relationship is helpful in securing the position. She credits Purslow with giving her a needed extra nudge to pursue the opportunity in the first place.

For his part, Purslow—a 16-year employee veteran currently working in the area of computer applications with a computer's group—considers mentoring to be too-way learning.

"Carol has concerns that are different from mine—I'm forced to look at things from a different point of view. It's a good way for me to learn, and I hope I take away something that helps me relate better to people in my own area of work."

Maureen Bradbury, who led the mentoring project when she was Imperial's public affairs manager in the West and is now involved in an employee development task force in Toronto, believes mentoring is an invaluable learning tool.

"At the very least it helps people understand how the company works, which enables them to make informed choices about their own future in it. More importantly, people are willing to share what they've learned, and this is what makes mentoring meaningful.

The project has sparked interest in establishing other types of mentoring programmes—a cross-cultural group, for example. It has also inspired the company to take a fresh look at workplace arrangements that could help meet diverse needs. One arrangement known as telecommuting—which means having an office at another location electronically linked with the workplace—has already been tried with positive results.

Jane Mitchinson, a computer systems analyst in Toronto, was one of Imperial's first telecommuters. She had been with the company for six years when she decided to start a family in 1989.

"My husband and I had moved to a smaller community about an hour's drive northwest of Toronto, and I wanted to have a job that would allow us to stay and keep my job, so I started looking at my work options.

"In the systems area, we had talked a lot about how an office didn't have to exist physically at a central location for many types of systems work to be done or, equally important, for that work to be measured."

Mitchinson put this theory into practice and set up an office at home. To enable her to work part-time she temporarilv switched jobs—she moved from a position as a project leader in the area of computer systems to one in which she provided computer support to those working in the credit card field. She did this for three years and then returned to full-time work as a computer-training coordinator.

"When you work at home, you realize that there is so much else going on in the workplace in terms of professional and social life. I missed my network of colleagues, so I tried to have lunch once a month to keep up with people.

But there was the advantage of being able to work more efficiently during off-peak hours when access to the company's main computer was quicker because fewer people were using it.

Mitchinson had a second child during her telecommut- ing arrangement, and jokingly refers to him as one of the occupational hazards of working at home.

Telecommuting, says Mitchinson, was the ideal solution for her while her children were infants, allowing her to balance more easily the offers conflicting demands of career and family. For the company it provided a means to retain a valuable employee. "I believe I have a special bond with this company now, because it was so supportive when I needed job flexibility. I've learned that commitment is a two-way street."

Meeting diverse needs is, of course, what employment equity is all about.

At Imperial, diversity workshops, mentoring programmes and nontraditional work arrangements will be, Ron Brennan hopes, the small waves that initiate sea change. Brennan, for one, looks ahead to a day when managing diversity becomes a natural practice in business life and employment equity offices are relegated to a footnote in Canadian labour history.
Lure of the Wild

For 100 years, Ontario's provincial parks have offered a haven for people and a home for wildlife

BY ALEC ROSS

WHEN JEFF MILLER WAS A TEENAGER IN SUBURBAN NEW YORK City, his main thrill in life came in August, when he travelled north to Ontario to a summer canoeing camp in Algonquin Provincial Park. The wilderness enthralled the range Miller. On his paddling trips he marvelled at Algonquin's towering brooding pines, angled for most in tiny streams and caught tantalizing glimpses of rabbits, bears and moose. He carried 40-kilogram packs over portages and learned how to survive in the bush in all kinds of weather and with a minimum of equipment. This, he thought, was real adventure. When he got home Miller couldn't stop thinking about his experiences in the Canadian outdoors.

He was 13 when he first visited the park in 1944. Years later the adult Miller, then living and working in Toronto, took summers off to guide canoe trips in Algonquin. But occasional forays into the park weren't enough for Miller, so in 1973 he became a full-time canoeing guide and outfitter, a job that lasted six years. Today he's a painter, based in a rustic cottage-studio on the edge of Algonquin Park. Not surprisingly, scenes from the park appear frequently on his canvases.

"After the first summer, that was it," recalls Miller. "The park had set the course of my life. I mean, just look at the record: I moved from my home, changed my citizenship, made some pretty major decisions all to be near the park. And I ended up living beyond my dreams."

Not everyone responds to Algonquin as passionately as Millier. Nevertheless, the park has a definite magnetic pull. Last year, 250,000 people blocked there to run rapids in a canoe, watch moose browsing in beaver ponds and hear the lonely cries of loons and wolves. The sugar maple forests on the park's hilly west side, the red and white pines in the lower elevations of the east and the multitude of large and small lakes, spruce bogs, streams and rivers provide solitude and creative inspiration for artists like Miller and for other urban dwellers seeking respite from the city's frenetic rush.

This year happens to be Algonquin's 100th birthday. The occasion is being marked by a variety of events including the opening of both the Centennial Ridge Trail, featuring outstanding clifftop views, and a new $8-million visitor centre overlooking a panorama of bogs, lakes and forest; sporting activities; and the publication of at least six books commemorating the park. And last year, in anticipation of the centennial, a museum dedicated to the long and sometimes controversial history of logging in the park was opened.

But 1993 is also the centennial of Ontario's entire provincial park system. With its distinction of being the first and best-known park, the venerable Algonquin will probably garner most of the media attention, but Ontarians have reason to celebrate all of their provincial parks—all 260 of them. Found in every region of the province, they are as diverse as the people who frequent them to hike, canoe, swim, watch birds and animals, study rocks and trees, suntan, picnic, hunt, fish, cycle, cross-country ski, gaze at fabulous scenery, snowshoe and camp in tents, trailers or under the stars. The size of the parks varies dramatically. The largest is Polar Bear, a 2,452,000-hectare behemoth on the tundra shores of Hudson's Bay; the smallest is Devil's Glen, a compact six-hectare park situated just south of Collingwood.

The park network has grown and matured with the province over the past century, and today Ontario's park system ranks among the best in North America.

The concept of what a park should be has evolved over the last 100 years. The act that created Algonquin described it as a "public park and forest reservation, fish and game preserve, health resort and pleasure ground."

But in an age of growing awareness of humanity's adverse impact on the environment, many people believe that the primary purpose of parks should be to serve as places of refuge for non-human life, places where human activities should be kept to a minimum, if not eliminated entirely. "Parks are places where you can recognize that you don't have dominion over nature," says John Lounds, the executive director of the Toronto-based Federation of Ontario Naturalists, a group that has long championed a hands-off or preservationist approach to wild spaces. "In parks you can recognize yourself as part of nature and understand better what your
relationship is to the natural world.")

Today, these words still ring true, but in the 19th century such thinking was rare. The greatest advocate of the preservationist view in the last century was John Muir, the Scottish-born naturalist-philosopher whose tireless efforts on behalf of the American wilderness led to the establishment in 1890 of Yosemite National Park in California and two years later the Sierra Club, which today is one of North America's most influential conservation groups. However, Muir's spiritual approach to wilderness was a far cry from the utilitarian mind-set that led to the genesis of Algonquin Park in 1893 and seven other Ontario parks over the following 50 years.

The Act to Create the Algonquin National Park of Ontario passed in the Ontario legislature in May 1893. The statute set aside 375,500 hectares of richly forested land covering 18 townships, an area less than half the park's present size. But Algonquin was not conceived to protect its plentiful stands of white pine from the ravages of men wielding crosscut saws but to safeguard the area's rivers (Algonquin contains the headwaters of half a dozen major river systems) from settlers who, in the act of clearing forests for fields, might damage and foul the rivers that drained the area, thus spoiling the waterways for lumbering, hydroelectric development, and other commercial enterprises downstream in the Ottawa Valley.

"If you kept settlers out, you kept the land covered in forest, saved the flow on the headwaters of the rivers that started here and reduced the risk of forest fires," says Don Stirratt, who has worked as a naturalist at Algonquin for more than 25 years and has written prolifically on its natural and human history.

From the outset, logging in Algonquin was permitted. In fact, between 1894 and 1896 a timber baron named J.R. Booth built the Ottawa, Arnprior and Perry Sound Railway through the park to facilitate the removal of wood. His was not the only railway to run through Algonquin. In 1913, the Canadian Northern Railway laid steel across a northeast section of the park. The line, which provided a link to the West, was used to transport not only lumber but people, which to a growing number of leaseholders, youth camps and lodges in the park.

The lodges-Hotel Algonquin on Joe Lake and Mowat Lodge on Canoe Lake among others-were tourist Meccas complete with indoor washrooms and hot and cold running water. The luxurious Highland Inn on Cache Lake even boasted a billiard room, tennis courts and a bowling green. Guests were expected to dress formally for dinner. Most lodges offered anyone interested in canoe trips the services of experienced guides and outfitters. One guide employed by Mowat Lodge was the Group of Seven artist Tom Thomson, whose many sketches and paintings of the Algonquin landscape later became symbols of the Canadian wilderness.

While recreation and tourism were allowed to flourish in Algonquin, other potential moneymaking activities such as hunting and trapping were banned in order to provide a place for overhunted game animals to repopulate. If moose, deer and fish didn't reproduce, the logic went, hunters outside the park would have nothing to shoot, trappers wouldn't be able to trap and anglers might cast their lines for nothing. In turn, the outdoor recreation industry-outfitters and their associated suppliers-would lose business.

In subsequent years, practical reasoning and public desire gave rise to other parks. Rondelou, which protected a natural harbour on the shores of Lake Erie and became a much praised destination for summertime tourists, was established in 1894. The government set aside the land for Quetico in 1913 to protect game animals and forests, while the growing popularity of auto touring and outdoor recreation prompted the creation of Presqu'Ile in 1922, Ipperwash in 1938 and both Lake Superior and Sibley provincial parks in 1944.

To offset the provincial government's limited coffers, early park managers sometimes devised creative schemes to boost revenue. Park rangers in Algonquin, for example, trapped beavers and sold the pelts—much to the chagrin of trappers outside the park who regarded the rangers as unfair competitors. Another Algonquin experiment involved the marketing of maple syrup. Rondelou's first superintendent, Isaac Gardiner, raised game birds, sold and bartered the eggs and invited hunters to eradicate game-bird predators.

Meanwhile, the parks were developing their recreational facilities. At Rondelou, picnic areas, concessions, cottage subdivisions and a scenic driving route were established. Lodges and youth camps, similar in concept to those that were already flourishing in Algonquin, sprang up. Through the 1920s and 1930s, dozens of privately owned cottages whose development was overseen by commissions often composed largely of leaseholders-sprouted like spring mushrooms at Long Point and Presqu'Ile. They were so numerous at Long Point that in 1949 the park had to be relocated on adjacent property.

In the 1930s, exploitation of Ontario's parks by private interests—from cottagers to mining and logging companies—a rise in opposition from those who believed a gentler approach should be taken to wilderness development. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists, formed in 1931, held that parks shouldn't be used for reaping revenues but for scientific, aesthetic and educational purposes. Above all, said the federation, parks should protect nature. The organization focused its efforts on lobbying for a ban on logging in Algonquin—a fight its members continue today.

After the Second World War and throughout the 1950s, Ontario's population exploded, and public use of outdoor recreation space increased at a dizzying rate. "Over the five-year period 1957 to 1961, overall visitation to Ontario's provincial park increased 302 percent to 6.2 million users, while the number of campers alone skyrocketed to over 862,500, a staggering 995 percent increase," notes Gerald Killam, a professor of history at the University of Western
Ontario who has written extensively on Ontario's provincial parks.

New parks were created to help cope with the demand. By 1960, Ontario had 72 provincial parks. A decade later, the parks numbered 158 and entertained 12 million visitors. Creating more parks helped ease the situation, but the nagging problem of legislatively protected areas was that the province moved through the process of legislating protection, and it was often too late to save a site.

To help solve the problem, the Ontario government introduced a classification system in 1967, which currently involves six categories of parks (historical, natural environment, nature reserve, wilderness, recreation and waterway), each designation assigned with a view to the goals and objectives the park is meant to fulfill.

Sky-piercing hemlocks and sugar maples; cliff views of rolling hills interspersed with alpine lakes and forests upon dark, rolling clouds. A moose call by the roadside. A visitor centre. Walking knee-deep through tepid testing a fathomless canyon. These might be anyone's favorite stories. In some parts of Ontario, memories of a distinctly Canadian nature, and although the parks may vary widely, each imprint on a visitor's mind is its own vivid image.

Take Frontenac Provincial Park, located about 32 kilometres northwest of Kingston. A recent addition to the Ontario park network (it was created in 1974), Frontenac is a sanctuary for paddlers, backcountry skiers, cross-country skiers and hikers. It is situated on the Frontenac Axis, a finger of the Canadian Shield that links the Shield with its geological core, the Adirondack Mountains in upper New York State. Frontenac Park borders rugged and rolling pine and hardwood forests in the north, flat glaciers-scoured terrain in the south and wooded lakes, marshes and streams everywhere. At 5,196 hectares, Frontenac is tiny compared with giants like Polar Bear, Woodland Caribou, Ojibway and Quebec, but for regular visitors such as Ernest Hemingway, it's plenty enough.

"I can change my batteries there after working all day," says Fredal, a Kingston car mechanic who spends most weekends quietly exploring the park, watching for signs of deer, bear, deer and wolverine. "When I'm out there, I like to slow down and watch what goes on." He adds, "After a time, you seem to melt into your surroundings. You're not a disturbance anymore."

Although it's within an hour's driving distance of Kingston, Presque'le Provincial Park, from a physical point of view, might as well be half a continent away. Situated on a narrow 10-kilometre-long peninsula jutting into Lake Superior just south of Brighton, Presque'le, Ontario's fifth oldest provincial park and one of its most popular, holds considerable charm for visitors. In summer, the main attraction is its two kilometres-long sandy beach and shallow bay, which hosts hordes of sun worshippers, swimmers and windsurfers. A couple of kilometres away, private cottages and residences, some dating from the original cottage hoons of 1920s, line the north shore of the peninsula. Although they line outside park boundaries, these inhabitants must drive through the park to reach them.

Presque'le is also a nature lover's paradise. For all its 553 hectares, the park includes a remarkable array of ecological habitats. In addition to the beach there are manor woods, savannas, two nearby islands covering Pigeon, Bay, pastures and a small glacial forest. Among all this are 700 species of wildflowers and dozens of species of reptiles, amphibians, mammals and insects. The beach is an important resting ground for shore birds, while Presque'le Marsh and High Bluffs and Oll Wedge are important stopovers for many thousands of migrating and breeding waterfowl.

To a visitor the marsh is also a destination for autumn duck hunters whose limited, but sanctioned, presence in the park has not fuddled more than a few feathers over the years. Nature lovers and bird-watchers maintain that Presque'le, widely reputed as one of North America's prime birding spots, is no place for people with gone.

While Ontario's parks are unspoiled places to observe and appreciate the province's natural heritage, they also highlight its cultural history. For instance, there are homestead buildings and a turn-of-the-century mine in Murphy's Point Provincial Park near Perth. Standing in the open-pit Silver Queen Mine, with sunlight slanting through the hanging slope above and swallows soaring in and out of the dark core, you can almost hear long-gone miners with ice-cold chopping labours at the rock wall. One day, there the miners are the photographers in Lake Superior, Bell Echo and Quinico provincial parks. The figures, shown in reddish ochre pigments by aboriginal peoples, are usually found at the bottom of lakes, cliffs. The photographs at Agawa Rock to Lake Superior park include carvings, a man on a horse, a mud-stone camera and Abahegakadda, the great bear of Ojibwa legend. Observing the figures can be a thrilling experience, especially when a morning fog hangs low over Lake Superior and shrouds the rock in a ghostly mist.

In coming decades, Ontario's growing population will insist on more space for outdoor recreation. Whether it's unmitigated, hiking or studying flowers. At the same time, the public and private sectors will continue to demand more land for business, factories, urban expansion and agriculture. Each will inevitably put pressure on natural habitats and wildlife, some of which are already in jeopardy.

While hearing the inevitable calls for recreation and development, some observers feel that the public must become more cautious in the need for conservation. For example, Lousch of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists says that in the next century large parks like Algonguin will become even more creative as refuges for wildlife and as places where humans can come to understand their role as members of an interlocked, global community of species.
Waterway parks—which surround sections of major rivers like the Winisk, Albany and Missinabi—may also play a significant role in furthering Ontario’s conservation goals in coming years. Such parks could, in theory, help protect water systems and provide a secure corridor for birds and other wildlife travelling from one place to another, an important function in areas of ever shrinking natural habitat. In order to fulfill such a purpose, however, some waterway parks will have to undergo significant change. “Look at the Missinabi,” says Londis. “Right behind the trees on shore there’s clear-cut logging. In looking at conserving biodiversity, we should consider the protection of the natural habitat and its associated water system as well as the recreational values of such areas.”

The future of Ontario’s provincial park system also depends upon the resolution of some long-standing issues by the Ministry of Natural Resources. looming on the immediate horizon is the continuing acrimonious debate over the presence of logging in Algonquin Park, where—unseen by most park users—there are still many kilometers of logging roads (some groups say more than 1,500 kilometers). Organizations such as the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Toronto-based Wildlands League say parks are no place for logging, while the Ministry of Natural Resources contends that the practice is part of Algonquin’s past and an economic mainstay in the present. Another controversial issue has to do with the land claims of aboriginal peoples and the related issues of their rights to hunt and fish in the parks.

Resolving all the controversies won’t be easy, but there are reasons to hope that Ontario’s provincial parks will help provide more much-needed protection for plant and animal species in coming years. One sign of this is that the Ministry of Natural Resources has embraced the World Wildlife Fund’s endangered spaces campaign, which urges governments to establish, by the year 2000, a comprehensive network of protected areas representing their country’s most important natural features.

The World Wildlife Fund recommends that 12 percent of all Canada’s lands and waters be protected, and Ontario is about halfway there. Its provincial parks now cover about 6.3 million hectares, about six percent of the province’s total area. More than a third of this impressive figure consists of Polar Bear Provincial Park in the remote, rarely visited north. The biggest challenges to expanding the park system lie in southern Ontario, where the appetite for recreation is greatest and the amount of Crown land available for more parks is minimal at best.

While a balance between recreation and conservation in Ontario’s parks can and must be found, says Londis, emphasis must be placed on preserving natural places that are in danger of disappearing, perhaps for ever. This, he adds, is the only way to ensure that future generations will have a chance to be touched by the magnificence of the natural world, to marvel at it and to learn to respect it. Lessons of childhood

Nearly a year has gone by since I first asked W.O. Mitchell to write an article for the Review on some recollections of his Saskatchewan boyhood. He promised to think about it, but I wasn’t very optimistic; not only is Bill Mitchell one of Canada’s busiest and most famous writers but he is a man much in demand in the North America as a teacher and storyteller. But a few days before last Christmas I cornered him in a weak moment at a splendid 50th wedding anniversary party that his family and friends threw for him and his wife, Merna, and extracted a promise that he would, indeed, write a piece for the Review. “Prairie Summer,” which appears elsewhere in this issue, will have a special appeal for those readers who grew up on the Prairies. They will identify with Mitchell’s childhood experiences with similar ones of their own and will readily recognize the landscapes and skyscapes that he portrays so vividly, providing a kind of written counterpart to the haunting Prairie paintings of William Kurelek.

For others it will recall summers spent growing up in other provinces and other places by the sea, perhaps, or in some urban landscape. Regardless of location, the summers of childhood share the same general pattern: a whirl of pleasurable activity, played out under an unending, impenetrable sky and expeditions long awaited and meticulously prepared, all conducted in an atmosphere of relaxed parental control.

Even time takes on a different dimension. At the beginning, the long school holiday stretches into seeming infinity; the day that summer camp sign gets handed back to school will never come. But as the end approaches, the days compress themselves into a high-speed blur, leaving many pupils unrealized. How will I fill my time? I used to wonder on the first day of my holiday. “Where did all that time go?” I used to ask myself on the last day.

But, as all literature should, Mitchell’s evocation of summers past also strikes a deeper chord. For there is a universality to the fleeting but important memories of childhood that transcend geographic boundaries. Anybody who grew up on the Prairies, in the Maritimes, in the city, in the country, in the Arctic or in the north woods—or, as I and many other Canadians did, in another country on another continent—one shares a collective childhood experience. And it is this collective experience of growing up that I think Mitchell describes so well.

At the same time, as the writer suggests, childhood geography has a great deal to do with the rest of one’s life. And this fact poses a particular problem for Canadians as a whole. For we are increasingly a people who grew up in many different places and within many different cultures. And one of the important challenges we face as a nation is how best we can meld these individual experiences to the betterment of our collective future.

We cannot, even if we wanted to, forget or expunge our individual pasts. Nor, indeed, should we. Much of Canada’s strength stems from the diversity of its peoples, and we are all the beneficiaries of that. But we also share a common future, and how well we succeed in reconciling our ethnic diversity with the shared imperative of a collective future will ultimately decide our national fate.

1. I, for one, see little cause for alarm and many reasons for hope. As a nation, we have many strengths on which to call and much to celebrate, not least the fact that Canada has more than its share of author and storyteller W.O. Mitchell who can inspire us with their vivid portrayal of the Canadian experience.

This is the last issue of the Review that will appear under my editorship. The new editor will be Sarah Lowey, whose name will be familiar to most readers. She is no newcomer to the publication, having served for the past 10 years as associate editor and managing editor, and also with an editorial background in consumer magazines. She can, I know, be relied on to bring to her task what every new Review editor has brought to the job in the past: a fresh viewpoint and fresh ideas without losing sight of those ingredients of the magazine that have made it successful—its balance of quality of content, a well-earned respect for our readers and an abiding interest in all things Canadian.

During the course of a long career I have occupied a number of editorial chairs, but none has given me more pleasure or satisfaction than the four years I have served as editor of the Review. There are many reasons for this, but beyond question, the main one is the support that the publication and I have received from you, the reader. It has been constant and more than heartening.

I hope that you would want me to wish Sarah Lowey well in her new task. For my part, I expect to continue my association with the Review in other editorial capacities—Wayne Thomas