

## Internship in JD Irving Woodlands in St. Léonard, New Brunswick, Canada

I applied for an internship through EU-Canada Transfor-programme and was accepted to do one in New Brunswick, Canada. Dr. Dirk Jäger from University of New Brunswick (UNB) organized a place for me at JD Irving Woodlands. I contacted the company in the beginning of July and it took two weeks to arrange the work permit and flights. So on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 I headed to Fredericton, New Brunswick via Frankfurt, Germany and Montréal, Québec. My supervisor from JDI Woodlands, Pamela Poitras, had come to pick me up from the airport and took me to St. Léonard.

My internship was situated in the Black Brook District in North-West New Brunswick. The district is approximately 188 000 hectares and has two saw mills (St. Léonard and Veneer). I stayed until mid-October and I would say the time of the year was the best time to stay there. I got to experience the heat of the summer, the beautiful autumn colours as well as the frosty mornings.



My task was to participate in the field work of Productivity Delineation Project. Black and white spruce (*Picea mariana* and *Picea glauca*) are the most planted tree species in the Black Brook District (approximately 33 million seedlings per year). The aim of the project was to determine how the combination of different factors (e.g. soil type, depth to water table, position on slope etc.) impact on tree growth. I did the field work with three Canadian



summer students. Beside the project I helped out my supervisor with her different tasks as well as other workers in case they needed a helping hand. I got an opportunity to follow different workers of the office with their daily tasks. This was really good because it helped me to get to know the co-workers as well as gave me an overall picture of the

woodlands. Too bad this was scheduled in the end of my stay due to the tight schedule of the project. It would have been better to have this right in the beginning of my internship.



St. Léonard is quite small place about 20 Km north-west of Grand Falls and 40 Km south-east of Edmundston. The state of Maine in USA is right across the river. I was accommodated in a boarding house about 5 Km from St. Léonard. The company didn't pay me a salary but the accommodation and food was provided. The boarding house was a good place to

stay in and the woman who owned it, Mrs. Thériault, was extremely friendly and nice. The only disadvantage of the house was its location. It was already a bit far away from the town and quite isolated. I had the company car which I was able to use when agreed and it helped a lot. St. Léonard has a public library where I was able to access the Internet once a week for an hour.

Another disadvantage about staying in St. Léonard and working there was the language. The area is already French speaking although everyone can speak English. At the office everyone spoke French to each other so I felt a bit outside in the beginning. After the first shock I just tried to speak English to everyone and tell everyone that I couldn't understand French so things went smoothly. The language is something that everyone who considers working as an intern in the Black Brook District should bear in mind. You can survive there with English but it can be frustrating when instructions are given only in French.



The Canadian culture is quite different from Finnish. The people are more open and talkative. The genuine interest in where I come from and what Finland is like was flattering and sometimes I had to answer really strange questions. But it was understandable

because no one really knew anything about Finland. So if you come from a small country I would advise to bring some reading or something from your home country. Being only Finn there really improved my English because I had to deal everything in English from daily routines to work and even to a hospital visit. The accent of the English speaking Canadians was a bit tricky sometimes as they spoke so fast.

Sometimes I felt that the working environment was stricter than in Finland. Although you had finished all your work for the day, there was no way that you could leave earlier. The working hours were from 7 am to 17 pm which felt long in the beginning. Often you were so tired after the long day that you couldn't really do anything else but to sleep in the evening. I



found the safety policy stricter than in Finland. Everyone is required to wear safety boots, hard hat, safety glasses and vest whenever they are in the forest regardless of what they do there. It felt ridiculous in the beginning but the hard hat is not that bad after all. It really helps with the thick branches! Sometimes the preparing and organizing weren't so effective like I was used at home. If you asked for some information you might have to ask several times until you eventually got it.



The distances are long in Canada and the public transport is not even close to what it's like in Europe. So travelling around requires renting a car. Luckily I managed to do a little bit travelling with the help of Mrs. Thériault and people from the office. I visited Québec City in Québec which was absolutely worth visiting. I also crossed the border to visit the USA and had no problems with it. I only had to

buy a visa (app. 7 CAD) which was valid for 90 days and I was able to come and go as I wanted. When the participants of the Transfor field course came to visit Black Brook District, I joined them to canoe in Riley Brook and climb up to the highest mountain of NB,

Mt. Carleton (800 metres high). The last days of my stay I stayed in Fredericton and visited UNB. I was able to see the city and visited the Irving Nature Park in St. John.



The overall picture of my internship is good. Everything didn't go as well as I hoped all the time but that's just part of the life. The cultural shock in the beginning of my stay was so enormous that I nearly packed my things and flew back home. I'm lucky I didn't do that because when I got used to the people and the culture, things started running way better. Now that I have

been back home for a couple of weeks, I see my stay as a magnificent experience.

Everything I learned there about forestry, working and the life itself will definitely benefit me in the future. Being there was not easy all the time but it was worth every second. I'm more than happy to recommend the place for everyone interested in Canadian forestry.

Lastly, I would like to thank the people who made my stay such a great experience.

Thanks to

- my supervisor Pamela Poitras, Management Forester Gaétan Pelletier and everyone else at JDI Woodlands in Black Brook District for all the help and strength to explain me everything.
- Mrs. Thériault and her family for making my stay such a great experience.
- the fellow students Jessica Knox, Marie-Josés Castonguay and Karl Roussel for the nice moments while doing the field work.
- Dr. Dirk Jäger for organizing the whole internship and my stay in Fredericton.

I'm more than happy to answer questions about the internship in JDI Black Brook District so don't be shy to contact me in any case.

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