

## Marcela Garcia's story

**M**arcela Garcia, an Alberta student spent her placement in Montreal promoting a play produced by the Chateau Ramzey Museum in Montreal, under the Ministère de la Culture de Communications et de Condition féminine. A self-described "super shy person," she says working in the area of marketing was a challenge.

"The thing I learned while working at the museum is that you cannot be shy when you're dealing with the media...I was intimidated at first...but I knew that if I didn't contact them (media) then the play I was promoting would suffer, said the 22 year old who is in Grant MacEwan's Bachelor of Applied Communications in Professional Writing.

As well as building confidence, Garcia says the program gave her the opportunity to expand her knowledge about another part of Canada.

"Working at the museum, I learned about Quebec's history. I saw how their culture was formed. It gave me a better understanding of the difference between Quebecois culture and Alberta culture. It isn't just that they speak a different language, they see the world differently. One of the girls I worked with at the museum said it best - in Alberta we live to work and in Montreal you work to live," she said adding, "the province is beautiful, it's definitely worth seeing close-up."

Garcia "fell in love" with the city, the music and the people and decided to remain in Montreal following her placement.

She found a job with Lobster Press, a publisher of children's books. She continues to work in marketing and is also trying her hand at writing a children's book. The job is also helping her to fulfill her practicum requirement for her studies with Grant MacEwan College.

Garcia says she wouldn't hesitate to recommend the Alberta/Quebec Student Employment Exchange program to other students.

"They will meet other students from across the country, they can share their passion for the French language and culture, and they can get a crash course in their field's terminology (in French)."

## Judith Handfield's story

**I**n the western part of the country Quebec student Judith Handfield, 27 spent her summer working for the Alberta Liberal caucus in Edmonton.

"It was very busy and I learned about everyday life at the (Alberta) legislature and how the legislative assembly works, said Handfield.

"It was one of the best summers of my life," said Handfield, one of 22 students from Quebec who participated in the exchange employment program.

She intended to return home to Contrecoeur, near Montreal at the end of the exchange program, but began looking at Alberta with a more long-term view. Handfield says Albertans were welcoming and she could see that this was a province with good career opportunities.

She gave herself until the end of October to find a job and she was hired by Alberta Advanced Education and Technology as a full-time researcher at the end of September. The student from Quebec says she plans to remain in Edmonton and build a career in the Alberta Public Service.



*Judith Handfield explores Alberta's Rocky Mountains*

"I think it's the kind of employer that gives you good opportunities to build your skills and to learn," she said, adding that the job also helps her improve her English speaking and writing skills.

While she misses her family she is grateful for the student exchange program that introduced her to Alberta.

"It's good to discover a new province and city...I would not hesitate to recommend this program to anyone...it is excellent," she said.

## Bocar Diallo's story

**M**aking fish leap out of the water and tying GPS monitors around the necks of elk are just some of the job adventures that Bocar Diallo is tackling as a participant in the Quebec/Alberta Student Employment Exchange Program.

He is one of 22 exchange students from Quebec who are working in various provincial government departments, as well as with the Liberal and New Democrat caucus. The 13 week program provides exchange students with the opportunity to gain work experience in their field of study, practice their English language skills and expand their knowledge of life in Alberta.

“Previous to this job I did not have very pertinent work experience” says Diallo, PhD student at Laval University. He is applying his education in geometrics to his job with Sustainable Resource Development in Canmore.

Diallo spends half of his time in the office working with graphic information system operations (GIS), mapping and image geoprocessing. The other half of the time he is in the field collecting GPS points to mark trails, telemetry which allows the remote measurement and reporting of information to the operator, visiting parks and electro fishing, some of which are new experiences for him.

“It was my first time electro fishing” says Diallo. “I dressed in big rubber boots and entered the river. One of my work colleagues sent a small shock into the water that made the fish jump out. With my net, I caught the fish and then weighed it and measured it before throwing it back in. I had to be vigilant to respect the security of the environment.”



*Bocar Diallo (middle) electro fishing in Alberta with Scott Jevons (left) and Pierre Sabourin (right).*

Some of the other projects he will do before the end of the summer include counting sheep, and tying a GPS monitory around the neck of elk to study their movements and habits.

In addition to applying his education to a work environment, Diallo is also improving his English. He says that learning English is fundamental in order to get a good job in Canada.

“Originally I wanted to go to Ontario” says Diallo about choosing an exchange province. “I actually chose it as my first and second choice”. One of the priorities of the program is to provide relevant work in his field of study which brought him west.

“Now that I’m in Alberta I’d like to stay. The atmosphere is good, people are kind and each one has the opportunity to have a great job.”

### Get involved!

**O**vercoming shyness, discovering more about their country and finding new career opportunities were just some of the rewards experienced by post-secondary students who participated in the Quebec/Alberta Student Employment Exchange program.

The 13 week program provides exchange students from Alberta and Quebec with the opportunity to gain work experience in their field of study, practice their French and English language skills and expand their knowledge of life in each others provinces. Each participant spends from May to August working in a provincial government department or with an opposition party.

“Most interns comment on the beautiful landscapes and the friendly people in Alberta” says Rosalind Irvine, Program Coordinator. “They go home with a love for the west, improved English and relevant work experience that will give them the edge in getting a good job in the future”.

There are 80 university students participating in the Quebec-Alberta 13 week exchange.

*If you are interested in participating in the Quebec/Alberta Student Employment Exchange Program for 2010 please visit [www.employment.alberta.ca/step-qa](http://www.employment.alberta.ca/step-qa) or call 780-422-5082.*