



# 2012 Chris Wilke Scholarship Winner

## Respect, Responsibility and Pride

Growing up in a trapping family in Northern Alberta has certainly given me a different perspective on the environment than is commonly held by 17 year old girls. Many of my earliest memories center around my Grandpa and Great Uncle telling stories at our Trapline cabin about their earliest adventures on the line. As I grew up with a father and two older brothers who were active trappers, the lifestyle was engrained in my development. Weekends were when the children were allowed to participate, and we loved our time checking traps and sitting around in the evening discussing the weekend's catch (or lack of it!)

An integral part of growing up is the broadening of one's horizons. As I began to attend summer camps, sporting and other school events, I became exposed to many other children who were literally appalled at my family's beloved Trapline. They were horrified that I was involved with what they considered cruel and barbaric treatment of animals.

This overwhelming negative response led me to question my family's, and consequently, my own values and attitudes towards trapping. The result of this new found doubt was several heated discussions as I began to learn about the importance of the stewardship service the trappers offer to Alberta's wildlife.

My Grandpa focused his arguments on the value of the his-

torical tradition, and explained how Alberta's very identity is a direct result of the trappers and fur traders, as well as the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. He claimed that it was these people who broke trails and created the first maps of the then uncharted Northern Wilderness. His pride in being a part of this continued tradition could not be ignored!

My Great Uncle Sylvia expanded this conversation by discussing the importance of the trappers' role as conservationists. From his perspective, the history of trapping in Alberta is almost a mirror of the history of the development of the Humane Society. He remembers the earliest styles of traps, and the days when limits and quotas were seen as almost 'optional' by many trappers. Those archaic conditions were cruel and barbaric, and also potentially very dangerous to specie Continuity. He is proud to be a member of an Association which is aware of the need to manage and control populations to ensure conditions which will promote the healthiest wildlife possible.

Back at home, my dad shared with me his opinions as a father, and my mother could not resist adding her voice. To my dad, hunting and trapping with his children have been his opportunity to teach them skills, values and attitudes that he hopes will



Jasmine with 3 Lynx in one day January 2012

help them in whatever adult path they choose. Respect for the animal and the environment were utmost in our Trapline ventures. No animal was ever killed without the full intent to harvest every available portion. Hides are sold, hunted animals are eaten {Much to the dismay of my brother's city-born fiancé, we eat heart, tongue, liver and kidneys of deer, elk and moose!!} Trapped animals are of course processed for shipping, their carcasses then become bait.

My father sees our time with him, in the bush, as a time to learn responsibility including insisting on checking the lines no matter how cold it is or how late we were out the night before!

My mother married into this trapping family and it took her a long time to understand these arguments. For her, it was the horrible year of the tick infested moose that solidified her understanding of the significance of human intervention in wildlife management. She has always appreciated the men's respect for the animals they hunt and trap but until that year she was not fully convinced that this is, in fact, a necessary and humane service to the wildlife communities.

Luckily for me, my dad has no



gender hang ups. I have been an active assistant trapper since I was old enough to want to help. With my brothers now moved out I have enjoyed trapping with dad for the last two seasons. Thanks to the knowledge of my family, I believe I am able to deal with the questions from those who don't understand the importance of managing our wildlife resources. I am proud to have been raised in a trapping family, and intend to be actively involved with this whenever I can in the future. Perhaps while I am away at college my most important role as a Trapper's daughter will be educating those who don't see the importance of continued wise Furbearer Management practices.

### Plans for Future

I have initially been accepted to Canadian University College in Lacombe, Alberta in their Bachelor of Education program. I am hoping to be able to do some

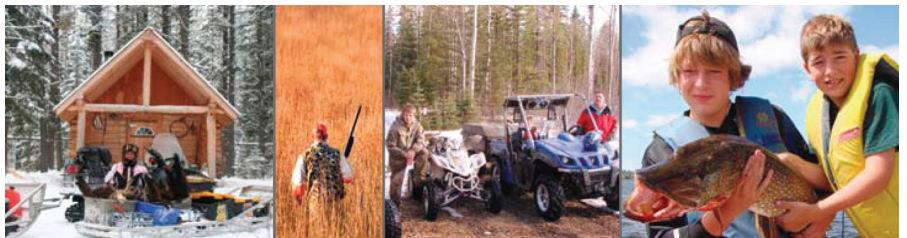
Mission work during my summer vacations. After I complete my four years there I plan on finding a teaching job in a small community where I will have the opportunity to help it grow. This may mean I travel north to the Northwest Territories, or even to a small town in Alberta. Perhaps I may end up south in Haiti teaching the children there and helping rebuild the community after the disaster.

Eventually I plan on coming home to Northern Alberta, this is where I want to raise my family.

For the last three years my dad has been teaching me how to set snares, to check traps, and to clean lines. My father and I have been working, and playing together on our trapline so that when I come home, I can take over the family trapline, and keep the tradition going.



Jasmine with the first beaver she caught by herself 2010





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Jasmine Fontaine