

# Where in the world do YOU want to go?



**LETTER FROM AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURER:  
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ALGONQUIN COLLEGE IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY**

April 2006 - Before I head down to Nicaragua, I wanted to send a few words about what I have been up to since graduating from the Outdoor Adventure program at Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley. I am just going to freestyle some of my experiences....

When I graduated, I started working for Nahanni River Adventures, based in Whitehorse, Yukon. It was like a dream come true when I got this job. Before the college program, I had worked as a river guide in **Algonquin Park** for five summers, so I already had an appreciation for the outdoors and a desire to see more rivers. It was an honour to see the Nahanni for the first time, and working for Nahanni River Adventures for four years gave me an opportunity to see some amazing rivers.

The Nahanni River is in **Nahanni National Park** in Canada's Northwest Territories. Our trip lengths varied from 8 to 21 days, but my first was a 12-day trip where we were completely self-sufficient with a couple of rafts and canoes. Although the Nahanni was one of the main rivers we paddled, we also guided trips all over the north, from Alaska to Nunavut. I also had a chance to guide some two-week trips on the Snake, Mountain, and Yukon Rivers.

Having made wonderful connections working up north in the summers, I had the opportunity to travel the north in the winter too. Over two winters, I spent a great deal of time dog sledding in the **Yukon and Alaska** with 8 to 10 dog teams. My longest self-sufficient trip was two weeks, where we had all our dog supplies, food, and camping gear in our sleds but also had snowmobile support that packed our trail ahead of us and carried our Arctic Oven tent. This tent was a luxury in the dead of winter because it came with a wood stove that we fired up each night to dry our damp gear and, of course, to sleep in some relative warmth. Ahhhh...how lovely it was.  
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The Outdoor Adventure Program helped me develop some great skills. Having studied in this program has allowed me to keep the adventure going. With skills previously developed in the paddling industry, the program enabled me to become certified in these areas which helped me tremendously. In addition, taking courses within the tourism industry helped me become more knowledgeable and well-rounded to work in the field and to become a great outdoor leader. As well, if I ever want to open my own business, I have the skills to do so. Being in the Outdoor Adventure Program was like taking an entrepreneurial course, and I would not be where I am today without the help and knowledge gained in this program.



Since graduating, I have lived, travelled, and worked across the country. I was with an ecotourism-based company located in **Whistler, B.C.** which provided tours on zip lines in the canopy of the forest and canopy walks on bridges. The rock climbing and ropes courses I took in my college program helped me adapt to this new job very easily. Over the last few winters, I worked as a snowboard instructor at several different hills and mountains.



My adventure side then sent me on some extensive travels throughout **Central America**. After my summer guiding up north, I decided to travel throughout Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and Costa Rica. Although I was there strictly to travel and see a different culture, I also did a little volunteer work in Guatemala for one week, mainly planting trees with an organization that works on forest restoration.

When I first arrived in Central America, I studied Spanish for three weeks to ease my travels and to minimize the language barrier. What a great way to learn a language, to be fully immersed in it. I lived with a local family while studying and before I knew it, I was even dreaming in Spanish!

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Page 3 - I did a lot of hiking and paddling, mostly in Guatemala and Costa Rica, not to mention surfing, something I had wanted to do for a long time. I also did some diving in Belize and Honduras where the scuba diving certificate I earned through my program really came in handy. While I was at Algonquin College, I had always heard about how rich the tourism and adventure industry was in Costa Rica, so I decided I needed to see it firsthand.



As for my new job coming up in Nicaragua, I will be working on a five-month contract with Volunteer Abroad which is set up all over Latin America and Asia. This is a non-profit organization with a mission statement to make the world a better place through volunteer efforts.



My position as "Business Development Manager" gives me the responsibility for the volunteers coming into the country and making sure they are placed in their area of interest. We have projects in all sorts of different fields including Health and Medical, Conservation, Building, Education and Social. This position has a strong entrepreneurial focus and the Outdoor Adventure Program will help me tremendously in many aspects of the job. I will be able to directly apply the skills and knowledge I learned in my program such as business development, finance, trip planning, accounting, and the tourism industry, to name a few.

I have kept in touch with most of my classmates to keep the networking going, and everyone always has an adventure to share. Over the past few years, I have experienced and learned so much from the people I've met and from the travel I've done. Some of the people I met on my northern trips inspired me tremendously, whether to get more involved in conservation or environmentalism, or to seek more adventure. I know all these experiences and opportunities will leave an impression on me for the rest of my life.



In a nutshell, I have been seeking adventure while living the dream--the adventure will always live on.

Marissa Kyte