

## Trent Magazine interviews Cody Meyers, the “Antarctic Cowboy”

### **On his decision to attend Trent:**

In 2004, I graduated from Moeller High School, located near Cincinnati, Ohio. Then the Iraq war was raging on and many of my high school friends were going to the Middle East to fight. I disagreed with American politics and instead wanted to step beyond the U.S. borders to get a different perspective on life, so I toured several universities in Canada and fell in love with the remoteness, tranquility and beauty of Trent’s campus.

### **On the Trent Experience:**

Trent is made up of a diverse body of students, coming from all parts of Canada and the world. Nonetheless it has a great foreign exchange program, which I took part in in 2005 while abroad in Thailand. The international networking at Trent is huge and the repercussion for me was that I dove into Geographic Information Systems as part of the Geography Program, just so I could map out the future of our world. For instance, where will the U.S. get its water in a decade when it runs low?

### **On how he ended up in Antarctica:**

Believe it or not, [www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com) has some great opportunities. One day, I randomly stumbled across an ad to work on the ice in Antarctica while looking for a fishing lodge job in Alaska. I thought it was a hoax, but far from it. Once you get on the ice you get addicted and the connections to other research stations at the Poles become endless. Connections, connections, connections. ❖



# Planting Seeds

DONALD FRASER '91

When **Cathy Dueck '83** attended Trent as a mature student in the 1980s, she had no way of knowing that her research would help lead to the creation of Ecology Park, a beloved Peterborough institution and local landmark. She couldn't have known that it would offer a rewarding career, filled with learning, personal growth, and community empowerment. And yet, looking back on 20 years of education and gardening, she recognizes the importance of this Trent experience.

“Trent offered me a sense of confidence,” she recalls. “Confidence, and a sense of validation for the ideas that were being generated.”

With a strong personal belief in the importance of community, it is hardly surprising that Dueck also recognized an atmosphere of support and nurturing as one of the keystones of her education. “I have lifelong friends at Trent,” she says. “I still have a valuable support network there.”

It takes a combination of bravery, perseverance, and dedication to attend university as a 36-year old mother of two. It then takes a good deal of effort to transform this experience into a meaningful award-winning career. It is these traits, however that have shaped much of the work that Dueck has put her mind – and her back – to.

As a student, she was a pioneer of inter-disciplinary research, attempting to tackle a complex combination of sociological, psychological, and ecological issues through a single thesis. It was an approach that was, at the time,

not at all common – or advised. And while it took some persuasiveness on her part, faculty at Trent came to see this approach as integral to the creation of educational community gardens.

As the Manager of Ecology Park (and the Rogers Street Ecology Garden before that), Dueck has invented and introduced a host of programs that marry community engagement with public education and ecosystem preservation. In short, she has gotten her hands very dirty doing a tough task: getting the general public to embrace the importance of their natural world.

By all accounts, she has done her job well.

*“Cathy’s commitment and dedication to preserving our native biodiversity is contagious.” – Johanna Hart '00*

Dueck has been named an Honorary Master Gardener by the Master Gardeners of Ontario. Among her numerous personal achievements: a 2007 Canadian Network for Environmental Education National Award for Excellence in Environmental Education, as well as two 2009 awards from the Ontario Horticultural Association recognizing Community Improvement and Education. Ecology Park has received numerous awards as well, including the Evergreen Hands for Nature Award in 2005, and a Trillium Foundation Favourite Environmental Project in 2003.

Ecology Park was named Crown Jewel of Peterborough by the 2005

# for Community Engagement:

## Cathy Dueck Helps Peterborough Grow

Provincial Communities in Bloom judges and is recognized in *The Good Garden Guide: A Guide to Outstanding Gardens of Ontario* and *Restoring Nature's Place* by the Ontario Parks Association.

Of course hands get even dirtier when up to the elbow in soil. Despite her role as Manager of Ecology Park – or perhaps because of it – Cathy can be found shoveling compost or transplanting native trees as often as she is planning the next great park program. She leads by example, setting an often daunting pace – one that staff and volunteers are eager to try and match. Her energy, her experience, her commitment to her work and to the park have earned her that kind of respect.

“Cathy’s commitment and dedication to preserving our native biodiversity is exceptional, as well as contagious,” explains Ecology Park Educator, **Johanna Hart ’00**. “She inspires staff and volunteers around her to pour as much energy into their work at the Ecology Park as she does – whether it is in the plant nursery, with visiting school groups, or with the public.”

Cathy is quick to point out that the park is a community project – one that takes many hands to run. And while Ecology Park recruits staff and volunteers from across Peterborough, there is always strong Trent representation.

This is due, in a large part, to the reputation that Ecology Park holds with Trent faculty. The park has become a regular destination for Teacher Education classes, placements, and practicums.

It is also introduced to many classes in the Environmental and Resource Studies/Science Department.

If that weren’t enough, Cathy has recently started instructing in Environmental Studies courses related to food and community development.

Oftentimes, the lessons learned at Ecology Park are just as valuable – or even more so – that the ones gained at Trent. The park has a rich tradition of being a stepping stone for impressive careers in the environmental sector: **Peter André ’89**, a Professor of Environmental Policy at Carleton University (and formerly at Trent) was one of the original youth employees at the park, while Keith Stewart (PhD, York) another early student connection, spent 11 years with the Toronto Environmental Alliance before becoming the Director of Climate Change Programs with WWF Canada.

Then there are the countless staff and volunteers who have gone on to become teachers, environmental educators, and passionate environmentalists.

It’s a wonderful legacy. One that both Peterborough and Trent should be proud of.

Ecology Park will be celebrating its 20th growing season this year. It is a lasting testament to the willingness of a community to embrace meaningful ecological change. It is also testament to the dedication of a Trent student who had a passion for community betterment.

Celebrations are in order. ❖

