

## Mining rocks for Anne Belanger

By Marlene Eisner



Not many people get to handle a gun or be up close to fiery fresh lava, but at 21, this year's winner of the \$2,000 Scotiabank and Scotia Capital Markets Scholarship has done all that and more.

Anne Belanger, who is in her fourth year studying earth sciences at Dalhousie University in Halifax, recently had a unique experience. "In Hawaii, one of the highlights was we got to see and poke flowing lava. I think

it's a geologist's dream to do that; our group got lucky," says Belanger about a 12-day field school trip she attended in early September. "You have to hold the hammer in one hand and guard your face with the other. You could only stay there for 15 seconds at the most due to the radiating heat."

In September 2008, after completing a Dalhousie Earth Sciences Field School, Belanger realized she wanted geology to be a part of her life. It was there that she came to appreciate rocks and rock formations. In the summer of 2009, while working in Iqaluit, Nunavut, with the Canada-Nunavut Geoscience Office, she became enraptured with the beauty and adventure of the North.

"It was my first time on Baffin Island and just the scenery and the topography of the area, as well as being transported by helicopter, was unreal to me at the time," Belanger says. "There were a lot of fjords and amazing scenery that most people don't get to see; it was an exhilarating experience for me."

It was then she discovered the line of work that she wished to pursue. "The field work I did exposed me to exploration and economic geology in general," explains Belanger. "The basis of mining is that you're doing geology to gain money for the economy. I find a genuine interest in it, in all the environmental processes and metamorphic reactions involved in creating the rocks that we see every day. There's a lot that goes into it and it's interesting to find out how it all works together."

During her field study this past summer with the Geological Survey of Canada on the Melville Peninsula in Nunavut, Belanger was a junior geologist. She lived in tents at the Barrow River camp with about 20 other geologists and students. Each day, she and a partner would be picked up by helicopter and dropped off at a designated spot. Armed with an air photo, a GPS, a hand-held computer and a shotgun, they walked the path, recording the rocks, the minerals in the rocks and interesting structures.

"It's mandatory to work up North and have a gun license," she explains. "There were polar bears at the end of the summer, and they go on land, so you take a shotgun."

Belanger says she would like to take a year off to gain experience working in the mining industry and to travel after she finishes school, but then plans to go back for her master's in 2012. In the long term, her goal is to work in exploration geology and academia.

"Ideally, I'll probably get a PhD and have it tie in with industry, so I can do research about economic geology," she adds. "It's a lot about finding out how deposits are formed, so if there is a gold deposit, I would be responsible for finding out how it was formed and then a company can look for similarities and find different deposits." **CIM**