

# RESIDENTS' PAGE

## PAGE DES RÉSIDENTS



### Setting up your ideal rural elective

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**A**ivuk!" The sled dogs lunged forward in fan formation. My *gamutiik* (sled) floated gracefully over the hard Arctic snow. The Inuit sped beside me on snowmobiles, buried in their sealskin suits. The temperature was  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

"Auk!" I shouted. The dogs wheeled to the right.

Dog sledding was exhilarating, as was most of my elective in Rankin Inlet (pop. 2300), Nunavut. Interesting cases included reactivation tuberculosis and

severe postpartum hemorrhage from retained placenta. Combined with a preceptor who hunted musk oxen, this definitely made for a memorable and exciting experience. Which brings up the topic of this article — how to go about setting up the ideal rural elective.

Positive factors that are attributed to rural electives include exposure to breadth of practice, quality of life in a rural setting, and good mentor experiences.<sup>1</sup> And there's another positive factor I'll add: the opportunity to explore the pristine beauty of remote Canada.

The number of rural physicians has been steadily declining in Canada. In 1996, 9.8% of physicians practised in rural areas, compared with 14.9% in 1991. The ratio of rural physicians per 1000 population is projected to decrease from 0.79 (1999) to 0.53 (2021).<sup>2</sup>

A recent study showed that factors predictive of a physician's choice of rural practice included rural clinical training during medical school (55.4% rural physicians v. 35.2% urban physicians) and postgraduate rural training of more than 8 weeks duration (38.8% v. 20.2%).<sup>3</sup>

Countrywide programs have been developed to assist in setting up rural electives. Most provide free transportation and accommodation. Return to service agreements and bursaries are available.

Here's a listing of several of these programs. Good luck with setting up your ideal rural elective. You'll never regret it.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA, YUKON & NWT**  
Rural Experiences Access Program (REAP) North/West  
[www.srpc.ca/reapnort.htm](http://www.srpc.ca/reapnort.htm)  
Experience remote Canada. Limited funding.

**University of British Columbia**  
[www.med.ubc.ca/education/md\\_ugrad/clerkship\\_electives.htm](http://www.med.ubc.ca/education/md_ugrad/clerkship_electives.htm)  
[www.med.ubc.ca/education/md\\_postgrad/Electives.htm](http://www.med.ubc.ca/education/md_postgrad/Electives.htm)  
Visit Queen Charlotte Islands or the Okanagan Valley

**ALBERTA, SASKATCHEWAN & MANITOBA**  
REAP Central  
[www.srpc.ca/reapcent.htm](http://www.srpc.ca/reapcent.htm)  
Large \$ bonuses for those planning to practise here

**MANITOBA & NUNAVUT**  
University of Manitoba J.A. Hildes Northern Medical Unit  
[www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/units/northern\\_medical\\_unit/](http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/units/northern_medical_unit/)  
Experience First Nations or Inuit communities. Good funding.

**ONTARIO**  
Northwestern Ontario Medical Programme (NOMP)  
[www.nomp.on.ca](http://www.nomp.on.ca)  
Sioux Lookout to Thunder Bay. Experience First Nations culture.

Northeastern Ontario Medical Education Corporation (NOMECE)  
[www.nomec.on.ca](http://www.nomec.on.ca)  
For those wanting to visit Timmins or Little Current

Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP)  
[www.romponline.com](http://www.romponline.com)  
Excellent summer program for medical students

Southwestern Ontario Medical Education Network (SWOMEN)  
[www.swomen.ca](http://www.swomen.ca)

**QUEBEC**  
REAP Quebec  
[www.srpc.ca/reapqueb.htm](http://www.srpc.ca/reapqueb.htm)  
Good funding

**MARITIMES**  
REAP Atlantic  
[www.srpc.ca/reapatla.htm](http://www.srpc.ca/reapatla.htm)  
Varied funding

**NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR**  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
[www.med.mun.ca/MED/medEducation2/medElectives.htm](http://www.med.mun.ca/MED/medEducation2/medElectives.htm)  
Visit Goose Bay. Popular elective

#### REFERENCES

1. Jensen CC, DeWitt DE. The reported value of rural internal medicine residency electives and factors that influence career choice. *J Rural Health* 2002;18:25-30.
2. Laurent S. *Rural Canada: access to health care*. Depository Services Program. Ottawa: Govt of Canada. 2002 Dec 1. Available: <http://dsp-psd.communica-tion.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/prb0245-e.htm> (accessed 2007 Jan 2).
3. Rourke JT, Incitti F, Rourke LL, et al. Relationship between practice location of Ontario family physicians and their rural background or amount of rural medical education experience. *Can J Rural Med* 2005;10:231-40.