



LRIGS Master's student Kate Melnik.

Kate Melnik has been an MSc student with the LRIGS program since the beginning of 2015. Her interest in land reclamation began with her experience in Botany 205, a course taught by Professor Emeritus Dr Randolph Currah from the University of Alberta's Department of Biological Sciences. Dr Currah's passion for botany influenced Kate, and her interest in the topic formed fully when she understood that a good foundation in plant sciences was a perfect starting point to a number of promising careers. The following summer Kate worked as a summer research assistant for Dr Simon Landhäusser and his team, which gave her the opportunity to experience graduate work and further develop her interests in the field. She saw how her background in botany could be linked to land reclamation and from that moment she became very passionate about the idea of working as a land reclamation professional.

Kate sees land reclamation as an incredibly important field of study and practice; human disturbances to landscapes will likely only increase in the future and will need to be handled appropriately. As the land reclamation profession is relatively young, there is ample room for development and improvement at both an individual and industry level. Kate recognizes that the research and work she does in the field could potentially have a large impact on the profession's body of knowledge and trajectory.

Kate's current MSc research involves enhancing topography on reclaimed oil sands sites to assist in establishment of plant species to maximize plant abundance and species diversity. Her current research sites are located in the Shell Albian Sands north of Fort McMurray, Alberta. The research interests her because the examined soil placement techniques have potential to greatly enhance site recovery while being more cost effective than conventional soil placement strate-





gies used in reclamation.

Kate looks back at her experiences in land reclamation thus far and is very grateful to have had the opportunity to meet and work with a large number of professionals in academia, government, industry and consulting. Two individuals had a large positive influence on her. Eckehart Marenholtz, a former lab technician on her team, was a kind and ingenious co-worker who impressed Kate with his strong work ethic and an amazing ability to creatively build items needed for work in the lab, greenhouse and field. Dr Simon Landhäusser

has been Kate's research mentor and has inspired her to work hard on her project and to strive to become an excellent scientist.

Outside of research, Kate enjoys a wide variety of hobbies and interests. She enjoys running, rock climbing and leather working. In the past she has participated in flare bartending and fire prop performances.

Kate plans on completing her MSc sometime this fall. After earning her degree, she would like to work in consulting or industry for at least 2 to 5 years, preferably in Alberta or British Columbia. She recognizes the importance and benefits of practical experience and wants such an experience before possibly pursuing a PhD degree.