

Jobs Opportunities for 2018 Season, Scooter's Camp

Information Updated: April 15th, 2018

I'm currently in the process of interviewing additional tree planters for my own camp's upcoming 2018 spring and summer season at Folklore Contracting, for work in British Columbia and Alberta.

At the moment, I have a fully hired camp, which consists of 46 vets and 8 first-year planters. However, it is common to have half a dozen people drop out before the season starts (including in early April), so I want to be prepared to find some replacements. In addition, some of our other camps at Folklore are in the same situation, therefore, I will still be reviewing applications until mid April. It will still be worth your time to submit an application.

Do not apply if you're not a Canadian and if you do not have a valid Canadian social insurance number. Non-Canadians should read this: <http://www.replant.ca/foreignworkers.pdf>

Cooks & Camps:

My head cook, Stephane Levesque, has cooked for me since the late 1990's. He's an excellent cook and an excellent personality in camp. Camp costs are \$25 when we're in BC and \$27 in Alberta. You'll be very well fed. As far as the camps go, Folklore tries to excel at putting up functional mobile camps, and invests a lot of money into mess tents, generators, pumps and water systems, shower and kitchen trailers, dry tents, and basic remote satellite internet capabilities. We also use trucked-in potable water for everything but the showers, to avoid the risk of water-borne pathogens which could cause a sickness in camp.

Foremen:

I have six foremen in camp this year. Crew sizes are either five or nine or eleven planters per crew. Four of my foremen worked as foremen in my camp in previous years, and two new foremen are running small crews (five planters apiece). As a whole, my foremen have a combined average of over six years in the industry. Each of them has worked at other companies besides Folklore, including a variety of companies from Ontario to coastal BC, and also planting outside of Canada. They bring a significant amount of knowledge, experience, and diversity to the camp. Also, the two larger crews each have an assistant foreman who is permanently assigned to the crew, to help make sure things run smoothly when logistical challenges arise. These assistants each have a minimum of six years of planting experience, and both have past experience as either assistant foremen or regular foremen.

Three of the crews have five planters apiece plus a foreman. One crew has nine planters. The two large crews have eleven planters apiece plus the foreman and the assistant foreman. The planter-to-foreman ratio is only 7.7 planters per foreman. If you count the two assistant foreman plus our two checkers, we have a planter-to-management ratio of only 4.6 planters per field staff employee. Logistical challenges in Alberta (mostly due to challenging access) require a management-intensive approach. We are moving away from the use of super-crews to only use mid-sized and small crews. This approach ensures that the planters will be well taken care of, even if we're on a more challenging contract. Every crew has its own assigned vehicle(s) and every crew has its own Honda 500 ATV for the foreman to use for tree delivery. All vehicles in camp are 4x4's with truck-mounted VHF radio communication. We have a permanent spare F550 Crew Cab in camp this year as a contingency in case another vehicle has mechanical problems, in addition to the carrying capacity of the checker's truck and the supervisor's truck.

Our six regular crews have a total of 46 seats for planters this year (plus the two assistant foremen). In addition (as of February 12th) we have decided to hire six extra planters who will be assigned to our crews on a rotating basis.

Length of Season:

My camp planted about 6.03 million trees last year. This year, we have a current estimate of 5.92 million trees, and the number is still growing. As the season approaches, this number is much more likely to continue to grow than to be reduced. We also have the option of picking up additional trees from other Folklore contracts if we get ahead of schedule. I have also communicated to all of our foresters that I will accept all nursery overruns, which happens quite frequently. I expect that we'll be working for approximately 66 planting days. Shifts are usually 3&1's until approximately May 20th, while people are getting back into shape, and then 4&1's in late May and throughout June. In July, we often move back to 3&1's if we're comfortable with meeting project deadlines. Our last day of planting this year will probably be July 31st.

Based on experience from the past couple of seasons, I expect that our best veteran planters will probably gross approximately \$23k to 25k for the summer (although a few have earned significantly higher). I expect that most first year-planters will probably gross between \$12k and \$15k, before items such as equipment, camp costs, etc. I've hired several motivated rookies over the past few years who have grossed over \$16k in their first season, but be aware that this is the exception rather than the norm.

Safety:

- All of our drivers have submitted driver's abstracts, and go through annual driver certification or refresher training.
- All drivers and occupants must wear seatbelts, 100% of the time, period.
- All of our trucks have GPS fleet devices to help prevent speeding via remote monitoring.
- We have approximately twenty individuals in camp with the basic WorkSafe BC certified two-day "Level 1" occupational first aid training.
- We typically have five to seven individuals in camp with the advanced WorkSafe BC certified multi-week "Level 3" occupational first aid training.
- All planters will be provided WHMIS training and other basic industry-related training.
- A significant number of additional employees, both in-camp management and regular planters, have elected to take a large number of additional training courses, including but not limited to: Transportation of Dangerous Goods, ATV training, Chainsaw training, Safe Food Handling, Danger Tree Assessor, PAL certification, H2S and Poisonous Gas training, Supervisory Safety Management training, EMS courses, etc.
- If we schedule you into any training courses (which depends on your role in the camp), all training course costs are covered by Folklore Contracting.

Contracts:

- We hope to start planting on approximately May 4th. Our first contract will be working in central BC near Vanderhoof.
- After mid-May, we'll move to northern Alberta for a couple weeks of planting near Whitecourt.
- In June, we'll be doing three to four weeks of work for a mill west of Calgary.
- In July, we'll start with a week of work near Edson, Alberta, and round out the month with a large contract around Whitecourt.

As far as prices go, Folklore generally tries to focus upon finding work on lower-priced, easy ground, which offers an easy

learning curve for inexperienced planters and for planters migrating from Ontario. If you look through lots of the photo galleries on the Replant website, you'll see the types of ground that is typical for our camp. Our prices for prepped ground, if we have any, generally range from 10-13 cents. Non site-prepped raw ground, which is the majority of our work, ranges from 11.5 to 16 cents. Fill plants range from 16-25 cents. I expect that our average tree price for the season will be approximately 13.5 cents. However, if you do much research, you'll soon realize that prices are completely irrelevant unless taken in context with the difficulty of the land, and you can never understand how difficult the land is from a job advertisement. You should focus on expected daily earnings rather than tree prices.

Gross daily earnings for the average first-year planter at Folklore, company-wide, were approximately \$189/day in 2017 (based on planters who worked for a full season, not including anyone who quit early). Company-wide earnings for the average full-season experienced planter were approximately \$307/day in 2017. These numbers are gross earnings, before daily camp costs are deducted, and were based on full days of work. The company-wide daily averages have been trending upward in all of the past seven seasons, and I expect this year's averages to meet or exceed 2017's averages.

Note that when I suggested that you check out the photos on the main Replant website, do not look at the coastal photos as examples of the ground that our camp plants! Folklore doesn't do coastal planting. The coastal galleries are when I work separately for other companies on the coast each spring and fall. The contracts that my camp plants are much, much easier.

Payroll:

- Folklore pays earnings bi-weekly, with direct deposit into your bank accounts. In the decade that we've been using this system, the payroll has never been even one day late. Ever.
- We pay 100% of the tree price. You will not receive deductions for quality fines.
- We follow the BC provincial regulations for minimum wage, which mostly affects first-year planters, although this sometimes comes into play for imported vets on their first paycheque. We schedule our workday to reflect 11 hours of work, including the portal-to-portal drive time. Unless we work a part day during the ramp-up at the start of the season or on the last day of a contract, you should expect to receive 11 hours on your payroll and 11 hours for your ROE (for EI). Minimum wage equivalents (which we pay to planters who do not earn the equivalent of minimum wage in their piece-rate earnings) are approximately \$153 per 11 hour day in BC, and approximately \$183 per 11 hour day in Alberta. These numbers go slightly higher after 40 or 44 hours in a work week. If you're a first year planter, and you're applying at ANY planting company in BC or Alberta, ask them for clarification in writing about whether they pay minimum wage top-up for portal-to-portal work, if applicable, and how many hours they plan for in a standard work day for payroll and ROE's. The minimum wage has risen significantly in Alberta this year, and that \$183 is not a typo for a standard 11 hour day (minimum wage of \$13.60, eight hours of straight time, plus three hours of time-and-a-half, plus vacation and statutory holiday pay on top). Every company working in Alberta this year should be paying these minimums.
- Our planters do not have to buy their own flagging tape.
- Our planters do not have to buy their own tarps for tree caches.
- We pay planters if they are involved in camp setup or breakdown.
- You will know your tree prices before planting each block. This is required as per BC's Employment Standards, and I will make sure that all block prices are listed in writing before you start planting. Everyone in camp will have access to an online summary spreadsheet, at all times, which details prices on all prior and current blocks. In fact, I'll often do that for the entire contract in advance, when I'm able to figure out that information.
- If reefers have to be unloaded into summer shade tents by planters, we pay for that. I don't believe that ANY of the other major northern Interior planting companies do this.

Miscellaneous:

- No pets permitted. I love dogs, but we've inadvertently killed too many in our camps.
- Musical instruments (especially guitars, etc.) are highly encouraged.
- If anyone wants to and has the capability to bring a mountain bike to camp, I think you should consider it. We've often talked in the past about how it would be nice to have a few bikes in camp for days off.
- If you have a specific food allergy or specialized diet, please let us know that when applying, so we can let you know what can be and what can't be provided. Our cooks have quite a challenge in cooking for almost sixty people, so it can be difficult for them to provide specialized meals for individuals. We want to be able to plan in advance and make sure that we can accommodate everyone's needs satisfactorily.
- We have a handful of gay people in camp, and welcome gender diversity. We have no tolerance for homophobia, racism, or other forms of bullying or harassment.
- We have a predominantly English-speaking camp, although we have about a dozen people who also speak French, half a dozen who speak Spanish, and a few who speak other languages.
- We already have people in our camp from eight of the ten Canadian provinces.
- The gender breakdown of the camp in 2017 was 51% female, 49% male. Although tree planting camps have traditionally hired male-dominated workforces, Folklore encourages gender equality, and we strongly encourage women to apply. We aim for an approximate 50/50 mix, although of course we select individual applicants based upon their qualifications.
- We have satellite internet in camp. However, it's not the fastest internet you'll ever use. Email and simple web pages are fine. Videos and torrents, not so much. Most people prefer to browse with their phones whenever we have cell coverage in camp.

Ontario Planters:

We had a lot of success in the past several years with bringing more than a dozen planters into camp each year who had experience in Ontario. If you have prior experience in Ontario and would like to move out west, this is a great opportunity. I can introduce you to other planters who made the same transition. Folklore doesn't have the highest prices in the industry, but it certainly doesn't have the worst either. What we do have is some of the easiest ground in Western Canada, and a company that strives to follow all employment laws. Alberta is shitty when it rains, and full of mud, but if you can live with that, you can make quite a bit of money in a summer (as mentioned already, we work in both BC and then Alberta, as the season progresses). If I had to try to give an unbiased assessment, which of course is hard to do when you're talking about yourself, I'd say that my camp has, "Decent earnings, excellent equipment, excellent organization, a tight-knit community, a big emphasis on safety, and a fairly long season."

If you've planted in Ontario, you're going to be in for a culture shock for the first shift or two as you adapt to higher quality standards, but you'll catch on pretty quickly. If you're seriously considering a switch from central Canada to the west coast, I'm also willing to introduce you to several people in my camp who recently made the move from Ontario to BC. That way, you can talk to them directly to get a better idea of what to expect when you make the transition, and to answer more questions about my camp in general. You'll get a better idea of the true conditions in the camp from them than you would from anything that I can write, since I've never planted in Ontario myself. I know it's a big step moving away from a company that you know to work with, to join a bunch of strangers on the other side of the country, but if you meet some of the people in my camp beforehand, that should help you make the decision. Also, four of my foremen started their planting careers in Ontario, so there are lots of people who can fill you in on how the move worked out for them. In fact, we have multiple people in my camp who, between them, have worked for every significant company in Ontario. If you've planted in Ontario for more than a year, you probably know some of them.

Probably at least twenty of the returning members of my camp started their careers in Ontario.

Common Questions from First-Year Applicants:

“Am I responsible for travel costs getting from contract to contract?”

No. You are responsible for getting to Prince George in late April, and after the season is over, you are responsible for your own travel costs (from either Whitecourt or Prince George) to wherever your destination is. During the season, on all camp moves, you will be able to travel with our convoy of trucks and it will not cost you anything.

“Do I have to pay for camp costs up front?”

No. The camp costs are deducted from your paycheques as the season progresses.

Final Notes:

If you have previous experience and you're interested in moving from Ontario or Quebec out to the west coast, send me an email. I need to know where you've worked, company names and planting locations (and who your contracts were for, if possible). I need to be able to check references. We have no tolerance for stashing. We work pretty hard - there's no partying during the work week, but on the night before the day off, many members of the camp will bring out the musical instruments and have refreshing adult beverages around the campfire. And as mentioned, we have a fairly long season compared to many other western Canadian planting contractors.

Please don't apply if you've had a season that was cut short by a planting injury. If that happened to you, and you think it could happen again, you should look for a different career. The job is challenging enough as it is without having to worry about past injuries that may come back to haunt you.

Our expected start date is going to be camp setup on April 30th and planting starting on May 1st (depending on snow melt in Vanderhoof in March and April; snow levels are currently above average). This means that you'll need to be in Prince George for our start-up meeting a couple days before this. We realize, however, that some planters have college or university exam periods to worry about, and would have to miss the start of the season. For now, I would say that if you want to work in our camp, you should be prepared to be able to start work within the first few days of May at the latest (for planters with previous experience). All inexperienced planters that we hire will need to commit to being in Prince George by a certain start date approximately 48 hours before the rest of the planters (on the night of April 27th). This is because we do two days of a Rookie Training School at the beginning of the season, which is too complex to offer a second time for latecomers.

If you currently have a British Columbia OFA3 first aid ticket, which will remain valid until at least August 1st of this year, then you should mention this in your application. Any planter (including applicants without previous planting experience) who has this certification will have a significant advantage during the interview process.

To apply, please email me at jonathan.scooter.clark@gmail.com

Do not contact through Facebook or Instagram messaging. I will acknowledge receipt of all applications. However, not all applicants will be interviewed. As noted, I will continue to accept applications throughout the middle of April, and even if I'm not able to interview you when I receive your application, I will forward it to one of our other camp supervisors at Folklore.

If you've looked at this advertisement multiple times, hit the "Refresh" button on your browser, in case I've made updates. If you don't know how to do this, it's Ctrl-F5 with Windows, Apple-R or Command-R with Mac, F5 with Linux, and pull-refresh on Mobile devices. I generally update this document about once every two weeks, until I've filled all the spots in my camp.

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Also, for those of you who end up securing employment as first-year planters at other companies in Canada, the following book may be VERY helpful to making sure that you're well prepared for the job. For those of you who are still trying to find work, it also has a comprehensive list of almost every Canadian tree planting company, along with a full chapter of suggestions on the best way to apply for a job: www.replant.ca/stepbystep.html