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September 2011

Faces of the oilsands: The student

Sadeed Hassan, geology co-op student, Osum Oil Sands

By **Melanie Collison**

The oilpatch may not ultimately benefit directly by employing geology co-op student Sadeed Hassan when he graduates with an honours Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Waterloo. But it will certainly benefit indirectly as he sets the record straight whenever people trash talk the oilsands industry.

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Sadeed Hassan, geology co-op student, Osum Oil Sands. Photo by: Charles Hope.

Being on an eight-month internship with Osum Oil Sands Corp. "Has definitely improved my knowledge of where the oil and gas business stands," Hassan told *Oilsands Review* near the end of his internship this summer. "It has cleared up a lot of my own personal misconceptions. [The oilsands] definitely gets misrepresented in eastern Canada. I know for sure I'll clear up misconceptions."

On two of Hassan's three previous work placements, each four months long, he mined diamonds. On this one, he's been mining data using his hydrogeology training, a specialty of Waterloo. The team he's attached to is looking for water in the Grosmont carbonates to be used for steam on Osum's Saleski steam assisted gravity drainage properties.

The team comprises a "geophysicist, carbonate geologist and two senior geologists. It's a good mix of people and great resources," Hassan says. "I'm very fortunate to be among such a great team with PhDs and master's who have so much information and experience to offer."

For their part, his colleagues say Hassan is super smart and a crackerjack geologist who's full of good ideas.

Says Hassan, "Whether it's hard rock or oil and gas or hydrogeology, it's all very interesting to me at this point."

He anticipates using his Osum experience for his honours BSc thesis and looks to graduate school to help set his career direction.

"Eventually you have to settle down to a specific field you're passionate about," Hassan, 22, says. "Co-op gives you a taste of everything within your field of study, but eventually you're going to have to choose."

So far, he has been drawn to fieldwork—except maybe in winter.

A big surprise came to Hassan while he was working at Rio Tinto's Diavik Diamond Mines last term. "Just for a small object like diamonds, we clear up the tundra, and drain a lake. It's mind-boggling when you fly over two pits and see a lake being drained and a dike holding back the water....It stirs a passion in me to minimize the damage, especially coming from Waterloo. The passion is there to make a difference, to be sustainable and do everything within limits."

Hassan appreciates the co-op program for teaching him that there's much more to being a scientist than simply knowing the science.

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He cites the emphasis on communication and writing skills, the mentoring, professional development courses, work-term report feedback and revisiting goals set each term with his co-op coordinator. Plus the co-op experience feeds into his membership qualifications for the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta, or its counterpart, the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario.

Propelled by a parent with a master's degree in mathematics, Hassan knew early on he wanted to go into science. Initially, a high school teacher who was passionate about the environment sparked his interest with a single physical geology course, then his first-year university professors nurtured that spark.

He feels lucky to have found his way so soon, "especially when you can make a career out of something you're passionate about."

His placement with a junior consulting company in Kitchener-Waterloo exposed him to a wealth of experiences, but the real turning point for him was a two-week Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists (CSPG) field trip last year.

The CSPG annually selects a top student from each of the Canadian universities offering an earth sciences program, and brings them to Calgary for talks from all kinds of industry experts, guides them on a four-day field trip in the Rocky Mountains, and coaches them in an interactive exploration game to develop skills to find oil and gas plays.

"It's a great way to start on a positive note with the industry, to get to know the geology as well as the social side of the business," Hassan says, adding that this was the springboard to landing his internship at Osum. "This co-op experience has just been amazing. I would never recommend to anyone to do a degree without co-op jobs."

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Deborah Jaremko

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