Who are you?

Chris Hunter

What do you do?

I am an exploration geologist currently living and working for First Quantum Minerals in Lapland, Finland.

What does your job involve?

I am responsible for the technical and logistical planning of FQM's exploration programs in Lapland for base metals. This involves generating and testing targets by designing, undertaking and interpreting geochemical and geophysical surveys as well as a variety of drilling programs. All these methods are used to help understand the local geology and find ore (a concentration of economically extractable metal bearing minerals).

I use an assortment of software packages, including 3D visualisation tools, and GIS, database, logging and geochemical platforms. I also manage technicians and contractors. I spend a lot of time in the field supervising drill rigs, creating geological maps and collecting samples for analysis. I travel extensively with work and operate on a FIFO ("fly in, fly out") basis. I have spent the majority of my 4 years with FQM in Europe and Africa.

How did you get there?

Since I was a child I always wanted to be a volcanologist, but a chance lecture course in 2nd year about mining changed that! I then took several more economic geology focussed modules; got side-tracked by two internships with BP before choosing to do my masters project with the LODE research group at the NHM.

After graduating from Imperial in 2012, I joined First Quantum Minerals as an exploration geologist. The recruitment process was thorough and involved several interviews; but my practical field work experience, industrial placements and ore geology focus I had gained at Imperial College helped set me apart from other applicants.

Since then, I have been on a constant revolution around the globe, working in 10 countries chasing a variety of base metals. From starting off as a roaming graduate, I now operate at a Project Geologist level: running nickel exploration programs exclusively in the Lapland district.

How do you use your skills in geology and geophysics?

Every day I use the geological and geophysical concepts taught at Imperial to try and find economic concentrations of nickel and copper. Practical, logistical and teamwork experience from university field trips have helped to set me up for a diverse role which often involves working in difficult and remote locations. Research projects undertaken at university taught me how to critically evaluate and present data collected on the job to my colleagues and supervisors.

What do you love about geology/geophysics?

Geology and in particular mineral exploration, is an interactive, iterative, logic-based puzzle which has the added thrill of finding "the next big discovery". You are forced to think outside the box and draw on many

different skill sets. This career pathway also takes you to some incredible locations and enables you to meet some amazing people.

Your best and worst moments?

Best moments: Being dropped off by helicopter on the tops of the Mackenzie Mountains in Canada; riding snowmobiles across frozen swamps and lakes in Finland; pizza nights at the Trident exploration camp in Zambia using a termite mound as the oven.

Worst moments: Running into a brown bear and its cub in Finland; experiencing my first coup d'état in Burkina Faso and flying in a tiny, rickety prop plane during the thunderous rainy season in Zambia!