

District Life in the Warden Service

Life in the districts was totally unique not only for the wardens but for their families as well. Prince Albert National Park (PANP) was divided into districts. Each district had a cabin that shared the same name as the district. Wardens were assigned to a district. They didn't follow a regular workweek or work a shift. They and their family were the sole residents of their district and they were responsible for it at all times.

There is something uniquely beautiful about living in wilderness surroundings. A quiet absence of all humanly generated noise and light is something few of us get to experience today. To step outdoors on a cold evening to a choir of bugling elk, yowling coyotes, and howling wolves makes the hair on the back of your neck tingle. Bright starry skies and intense northern light displays whose whisper you can hear are unforgettable.

Access to schooling was the biggest hardship. My older brother Dick rode about five miles on horseback to school at Rapid Bend, Lake Four, and Park Valley - an arduous trip at minus 40°F. I started boarding away from home at age six. I'm sure my mother shed more than a few tears of concern.

We lived without electricity, refrigeration, running water, or indoor bathrooms. At the time, we didn't see those things as hardship. We just lived in ways that made those facilities unnecessary.

We had a battery powered Stromberg Carlson Console radio and a long wire antenna. With no electrical interference, you could truly tune in the world: radio plays from the BBC in London and fights from Madison Square Garden in New York.

The isolation and social distancing experienced by people during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown were once our normal and it didn't bother us at all.

The Warden Service was a quasi-military institution. Wardens wore a uniform, followed a chain of command, and were subject to inspections for the results of their responsibilities.

Wardens were law enforcement officers. Their primary role was to enforce the National Parks Act of Canada which required them to protect the Park, its wildlife, and its property. However, the job often involved much more.