

**TREKKING THROUGH NEPAL****A distant campus for Cap College**

By **KARIN LIND and PAUL TAYLOR**

Capilano College has had campuses operating as far away as Squamish before, but never so far away as Nepal. But now, three instructors and 30 students flew to this ancient kingdom Jan. 18 for three months of study. The college students are not on a holiday or tourist program, but will be studying anthropology, biology and geography literally in the field.

Terry Brown, a geographer, and Karin Lind, anthropologist, began preparations for this complex program two years ago and have since been joined by biologist Carole Stanley. The students began their final orientations four months ago with research projects and intensive lectures and seminars. They are a diverse group with backgrounds in childhood education, law, first aid, and even some who are "just interested in everything." But they will become a close-knit community, sharing what promises to be some difficult times, particularly the 30-day trek around the Annapurna Massif, which will take them to elevations of 18,000 feet.

The various topics of study are equally diverse. Research proposals cover herbal medicine, water and sewer lines, deforestation, village and national law, and more. One student will be studying the social behaviour of the monkeys that scramble around the

gilded temples, uninterrupted by passers-by or pilgrims. Another, with a background of Pacific Northwest Coast Indians, will explore story-telling and the elders of Nepalese ethnic groups.

Many Westerners have pre-conceived notions of the Nepalese people, fed by the images of Shangri-La in *Lost Horizon* or the bar room brawl in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. This remote Himalayan land, home of Mount Everest, Mount Chomolungma, or "Mother of the Earth" to the people of the country, was closed to the outside world until 1951. It had, therefore, retained its unique cultural identity, and has much to fascinate and instruct the open-minded student. The deep, ever-present religious influences

of Hinduism and Buddhism, and the old traditions of shamanism are felt intimately in everyday life. The "sacred cow" which wanders the streets of Kathmandu is greeted as a deity and loved as a religious presence. The ancient layout of valley cities follows the measured, sacred discipline of age-old practices. Students will find themselves in Kag Beni, an ancient medieval fortress town, and at Muktinath, the sacred high mountain site where flames spring from water and all the elements, according to the Nepalese, are combined as one.

There is much to be learned in Nepal, so far away. The instructors will be stretching the edges of their disciplines to study not only monkeys and yaks, but markets, farming and even diseases. Stephen Bezručka sums it best:

"Nepal is there to change you, not for you to change it. Make your foot prints with care and awareness of the precarious balance around you."

THROUGH THE MAGICAL AND MYSTERIOUS land of Nepal, Cap College will be making their mark over the next three months. (Karin Lind photo)