

## **First Comes Primary School, Then Comes...MUN**

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It all began in grade three when we were asked to dress up as “what you want to be when you grow up”. That morning I had a fight with my mother. This led to neglecting my outfit, which led to me going to school dressed in my everyday clothes. When my friends, who were dressed as astronauts, doctors, nurses and so on began to ask me what I was, I quickly picked up an exercise book and pencil and replied, “I am a teacher.” Good cover up?

Fast forward 13 years. I walk across the stage for the first time in 2007 to accept my Bachelor of Education. (Side note: I never once envisioned myself as a teacher during my schooling.) I enrolled in Memorial in 2001, to be on the MUN Sea-Hawks cheerleading team. Yes, you read that right – a cheerleader. When I did not make the team in 2001 I decided to take a year off post-secondary education to work full time and decide what I actually wanted to be when I grew up. After a year had passed, I returned to MUN to pursue my dream to wear red and white. Luckily, I made the cut this time, I was ecstatic. But...what should I study? General studies sounded like the best and easiest option.

Regardless of what I was doing in University, my parents were tickled pink that I was going. I had been encouraged since my early school years to attend university, as not one Larkin had ever been able to apply, let alone be accepted. There was a big deal made when I was accepted, but even a bigger deal made when I decided to take a year off. I found this interesting, as I was paying for my tuition. Why did my parents feel they were entitled to such an opinion? Regardless, I did return after one short year of working hard for my money.

After a year of general studies, cheerleading and working full time, I decided to attempt to focus my studies and stop wasting my money. I was very interested in geography and travel, so I decided I would research career possibilities related to either field. One day while having a conversation with a travel agent, I expressed an interest in her chosen field. She quickly stomped on my dreams, advising me that it would be a mistake and waste of time. I was a little shocked as this was her career. She then asked me about myself: what I liked, was involved with and my favorite subjects. I told her I was a CLB leader, cheerleading coach, cheerleader and had always been involved in school council. I liked Math and English, but had a strong distaste for Biology. When I was done telling her about myself she said, “Well, sounds like you are a teacher.” I asked her what she meant, and she replied, “You teach small children in CLB and teenagers in cheerleading. You are already a teacher, just not getting paid.” With a confused look, I thanked her and left.

From that conversation I decided to dedicate two more years to complete the courses necessary for admission into the Faculty of Education. In January 2006 I applied to both the regular three year program and fast-track program for Primary/Elementary Education. That April I received a letter notifying me that I was not accepted into the regular education program. I was devastated. Other than not making the cheerleading team five years prior, I had never applied for something and not been accepted, especially in regards to education. Two days later, I received another letter in the mail from Memorial, which I opened hesitantly. I literally jumped for joy when I discovered I was accepted into the fast track program. I would be beginning the journey to the rest of my life that May, in one short month.

Luckily, I was able to continue cheering all through my first degree. Although I found the workload during the Fast Track program challenging at times, I could always escape to my favourite outlet, cheerleading. However, over the course of four short semesters I found a new passion and outlet, education. This program has to be one of the most rewarding ones that MUN offers. The courses were interesting and engaging, and the professors highly knowledgeable. In addition, the internship during the third semester made the last one worth the work.

Memorial paired me with a school, cooperating teacher and class that I could swear was made for me and me alone. I am not sure how the process works, but I could not have asked for a better match. It was during the course of my internship, off campus, that I feel I learned the most valuable lessons – things that might be impossible to learn and experience sitting in lecture halls. This was the real deal. I had the opportunity to conduct lessons, assess my students, write reports, administer interviews with parents and learn all the ins and outs of being a classroom teacher. It was unforgettable.

I enjoyed my first undergraduate degree so much, that I went on to complete a degree in Special Education and another in the Arts. Learning at Memorial did not stop there; as I went on to apply for the graduate program in Leadership Studies. A Master's program – I am completing my Masters. Can you imagine how happy my parents are now? To tell the truth, I am not sure my time at Memorial will end there as the letters P, H and D keep running through my mind. Who knows? Maybe one day I will have the honour to be one of the memorable professors who work in the Faculty of Education? A girl can dream.