

Who is Doing What

VWS Alumni Corner

Interview with Michelle Nagle (nee Alexandre)

Class of 1998



VWS: Tell me about your work and education after graduating from the VWS. (post-secondary schooling, travel, work experience, family, etc.)

MN: After spending nine years at VWS and graduating in 1998, I spent a year working and traveling. I then attended UVic where I completed an Arts degree in Anthropology with a focus in Environmental Studies and Languages. Soon thereafter, I met my husband and started a family and we now have three daughters, aged 8, 11 and 13. During early motherhood, I continued my education with a two-year certification as a Community Herbalist and trained with, and continue to train with, a spiritual community in Vancouver called Spiritual Essentials. After spending a few years of family life in North Vancouver, we moved to the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island where we have been for the past ten years. Upon our arrival, we wanted to find educational opportunities for our children that fit with our ideals and lifestyle. We mixed together a combination of experiences and then along with some other families, decided to open a Waldorf school in the Comox Valley. This began as three programs, which were hosted in our homes. Over the past eight years these programs have grown to the Saltwater Waldorf School, which encompasses Parent and Child programs to Grade Seven.

VWS: What kind of work/study are you involved in now?

MN: In the last seven years I've become involved with Spacial Dynamics and am a Level One practitioner. I am also trained in Bothmer Gymnastics. From this training, and subsequent movement trainings, I have built up a Movement Education program at the Saltwater Waldorf School in the Comox Valley. I have the opportunity of working with all grades of children, sharing games, sport, gymnastics, circus activities and more. It has been quite a creative experience on many levels, from curriculum development to the use of space (various fields and play spaces, a dance studio and this year a classroom dedicated to movement as well). Over the past six years I've attended, coordinated and witnessed events at the Greek Olympiad for BC and Alberta Waldorf schools. This has been a grand opportunity to meet teachers, students and parents from schools in our region. Several years ago, along with a few local schools, I coordinated Medieval Games for Grade Six students as well.

Since my oldest child was little, (she is soon to be 14), I have carried Parent and Child groups. Currently, I work weekly with two lovely groups of families which include activities such as baking, crafting, playing, singing and storytelling with parents and their little ones. Being out of this stage of development as a parent, I am relishing the pace and experiences we are having together.

VWS: What advice would you give to this year's graduates?

MN: As someone who is motivated, entrepreneurial and appreciates challenges, I suggest listening to and following the passions you have and bringing them into reality. One of the biggest lessons I've learned along the way is balancing this drive with enjoying the journey. You will get to the end and if you didn't notice the flowers along the way then you've missed a great part of the ride.

VWS: What are your fondest memories of your time at the VWS?

MN: Working with and learning from various teachers who shared their love for the subjects they shared - Music, Art, Handwork, Sewing, Projective Geometry, Projects, Physical Education, School Plays, Woodwork, Clay and Metalwork and so forth.

VWS: How did Waldorf education affect your life, and your choice of career?

MN: Needless to say, it has affected my life greatly, seeing as I now work and help run a Waldorf school! I have and use many of the items that I made during my time at VWS - flute and flute bag, carved box and spoon, batik skirt. In Grade Nine, in a Probability and Statistics Main Lesson, we were to make a board game and I made one called Ski Mania with the tag line 'ski without hittin' the slopes'. I kept this game over the years and when my children were old enough they pulled it out and began playing it. Much to my surprise it turned in to one of their favourite games and also some of their friends' favourite game. When I was 14, I certainly didn't imagine it getting the use that it has!

Interview by Ronaye Ireland for Development, January 2018

Interviewer's Note: Michelle made a wooden kayak for her Grade Twelve Project. It was a work of art!