



Who is Doing What

VWS Alumni Corner

Sasha Cooke

Class of 2008

VWS: Tell me about your work and education after graduating from the VWS.

SC: When I graduated in 2008, I was committed to full-time intensive dance training with the goal of becoming a professional dancer. I never even considered the option of pursuing a university education – dancing was my dream. Following graduation, I spent a year working semi-professionally with local Vancouver companies; then unexpectedly, things started to change. Around this time I also suffered an injury, which gave me the excuse and opportunity to explore new possibilities for my future. Hungry to see the world and explore other cultures, I moved to Mexico in 2010 and spent a year studying and teaching yoga, immersing myself in Spanish and Latin culture. During this time I co-founded a yoga agency which brings certified yoga teachers to hotel-resorts in the Riviera Maya, which still runs today. Little did I know, this experience would set the direction for my post-secondary studies (never say never). My time in Mexico inspired me to return up north and pursue an undergraduate degree in liberal arts, which, in a tic-tac-toe of transfer credits and major-switching, led me to study at 4 different universities, live in 3 different countries, and finally graduate with a degree in Latin American Studies from the University of British Columbia in 2015. During this haywire of post-secondary study, I was determined to continue my travels. In 2013, did an exchange in Granada, Spain, for seven months. This opportunity allowed me to fine-tune my Spanish while simultaneously ‘olé-ing’ my way through Spanish culture, in a mix of flamenco, wine and tapas, and spontaneous European travel. The resulting connections I made from this time abroad led to my current work as a project consultant and translator for a Foundation in Argentina. In my last year of study, I also spent a summer living with a host family in Brazil, with the intention of extending my knowledge of Spanish to include Portuguese.

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

SC: Parallel to my work as a translator and project consultant, I am currently co-founding a non-profit organization called the Conscious Society Foundation, which is dedicated to funding innovative social and educative projects based on new and alternative perspectives. My long-term goal is to create an endowment fund that will provide grants to social entrepreneurs and inspired change-makers to support projects in different social areas – from agriculture, to education, urban planning, and community living, with the goal of financing innovation and sparking social transformation. My dream is to continue travelling, networking, collaborating, and learning from the people and places that ignite my passion to create a more beautiful and harmonious world.

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

SC: Ask yourself what you would be inspired to do right now – is it travel? Is it studying? Is it working? Or is it simply taking a year off to rest and reflect on what you want? Even if it isn’t what you want to do for the rest of your life, there’s incredible value in following your interests and allowing them to lead the way, step by step. Have faith, be open, and see where they take you. One door will lead to another. Often we cannot foresee the incredible opportunities and experiences that lie ahead of us, but we can set ourselves in motion toward the things we love or find interesting. Even if it doesn’t seem like it, these experiences often lead to post-secondary study, jobs, or professional paths that we never knew we wanted! So no pressure if you don’t know what you want; you’d be surprised by how many professionals found their niches by tic-tac-toeing their way through seemingly unrelated jobs and experiences. Just ask yourself what would ignite your passion, and go for it!

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

SC: It’s tough to narrow down, but my fondest memories at the VWS were definitely high school hiking trips. There is nothing like getting to know new students and faculty by spending a week together climbing up mountains and learning how to survive as a team in the wilderness. No make-up, no showers, no premises, no masks. It led to the best kinds of connection. Some of my most enriching conversations with peers and teachers in high school were had huffing and puffing up beautiful forest trails carrying 50 lbs. on my back. And of course, those moments spent basking in exhausted achievement while looking out across a panoramic view of turquoise lakes and white glacial peaks. I always returned home after these trips feeling a great sense of connection, health, and inspiration to start the year. These trips cultivated an unparalleled respect and connection with my teachers in a way I have never again experienced in other educational institutions.

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

SC: Waldorf education cultivated a natural capacity to see possibility instead of limitation in my life choices. I was taught to think freely and independently, which has provided me with a sense of freedom and confidence in following my interests and passions. Even if I don’t know exactly what I wanted or where I am going, I trust in my capacity to create new pathways and opportunities that cause me to grow and mature through different experiences, especially the difficult ones. But in a single sentence, I think the greatest gift Waldorf education gave me was giving me the permission to create a life that is uniquely and expressively my own.

Interview by Ronaye Ireland, on April 29, 2016