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MEET WINONA KENT

Job Title:

Graduate Programs
Assistant

Department:

School of Population
and Public Health

How long have you worked at UBC?



I came to UBC in 2004 as a temp for Hiring Solutions and I worked with them for a year and a half before landing permanently in my current position.

Take me back to your first day at UBC. What do you remember?

I remember thinking that a lot had changed since I was a student here in 1982! The campus was so much bigger and there were more buildings and a lot more students! I also remember thinking that it felt like I was coming “home” – I’d been working in the private sector for 18 years and had taken a year off to go to film school, and now I had to earn a living again. UBC had such beautiful surroundings and wonderful people. I loved it from the moment I set foot on campus again.

Take us through your career journey – what

was your first job at the university?

My very FIRST job at UBC was when I was an MFA student in Creative Writing in 1982-85. I was the Managing Editor of Prism International – the literary journal published by the Creative Writing grad students. It was my idea to institute the magazine's first annual fiction contest. The editors only had a one-year assignment, so I put everything in place for my successor— they followed through with it and the contest is still running, all these years later!

My next job was when I came back in 2004 to work with Hiring Solutions. My first assignment was in Brock Hall in the Undergraduate Admissions office. I remember sitting at an ancient computer using very temperamental software, processing admission requests while a very loud party was going on outside. It was the last day of classes and all the students were celebrating.

After that I worked in a variety of temporary postings, including one where all I did all day was enter data from hand-written timecards that janitors and gardeners submitted at Building Operations. I actually enjoyed that job a lot—I got one half of my brain trained to enter numbers into the computer while the other half of my brain plotted out my next novel.

I eventually ended up at the Department of Health Care and Epidemiology (now called the School of Population and Public Health) as a receptionist who also did program assistant tasks. I liked it there – and they liked me! I stayed with the School when they expanded and relocated from the James Mather Building to their current location. I was moved off the reception desk and into the program assistant position full-time roundabout 2012, and that's where I've been until now!

One thing we might be surprised to learn about you?

As well as having an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC, in my other life I'm a novelist. I've had seven books published – two tongue-in-cheek spy stories (Skywatcher and The Cilla Rose Affair), an adventure set on a cruise ship in Alaska (Cold Play), three accidental time-travel romances (Persistence of Memory, In

Loving Memory and Marianne's Memory), and my latest, Notes on a Missing G-String, a mystery featuring professional jazz musician and amateur sleuth Jason Davey. I've also published a novella, also featuring Jason, called Disturbing the Peace.

What will you miss most about working at UBC?

I won't miss the long commute to and from New Westminster! But I know I will miss the intelligent conversations with my colleagues, the lovely surroundings and my almost-daily walks up Main Mall to the Rose Garden.

Looking back, what has been the biggest highlight of your career at UBC?

I think it was probably receiving the Applegarth Staff Service Award from the Faculty of Medicine in 2016. It was a lovely recognition of a lot of work that I'd undertaken that year when we'd been suddenly short-staffed and I'd had to step in to take on extra responsibilities and duties.

How do you plan to spend your retirement?

I'm going to be a full-time writer at last! I've been writing novels in my spare time, and it's going to be wonderful to have the luxury of being able to do it without worrying about getting an outline or a chapter finished before I have to go back to work. In the immediate future, I'm going to take part in a panel comprised of members of the Crime Writers of Canada at Word Vancouver 2019. I'm also taking over as one of two Crime Writers of Canada directors for B.C./Yukon/NWT. I'm working on a short story for inclusion in an anthology by the Canadian west coast branch of the Sisters in Crime. I'm going to do a little PR for Notes on a Missing G-String. And I'm going to make a start on the next novel in the Jason Davey mystery series! (I plan on writing at least five more—hopefully ten more if my brain holds out!)

If anyone wants to read more about me and my writing visit my website (<http://www.winonakent.com/>).