



**Laura Hernandez**

### **What is your current position?**

I have been working as a research analyst and team leader with Public History, Inc., since graduation. The company is a private research firm that conducts historical research for government and private clients. A large majority of my work is for aboriginal litigation. During my M.A. program we had a session in which we met different historians working in various fields, including a representative from my current company. I hadn't thought of research consultant work as an option until that day. After graduation, I applied to the company right away and the rest is history!

### **What History program did you take at Western? What year did you graduate?**

I completed a Honours Bachelor of Arts (combined History and Anthropology) degree in 2005, followed by an M.A. in Public History in 2006 at Western.

### **How have you been engaged since you graduated?**

My field has had its ups and downs in the past few years due to the economy and government cuts. It is also competitive in terms of employment opportunities. However, I have been working at the same place for over eight years and have loved it. The research is always changing and I am constantly broadening my knowledge base and encountering new challenges. My typical day can consist of tracking aboriginal families in Hudson's Bay Company documents, analyzing Champlain's maps, reading archaeological reports or sorting through RCMP patrols reports on the arctic. That is exactly what I wanted to do with my degree after graduation!

### **How did your History degree prepare you for your current position?**

My history degrees have been invaluable for the work that I do. My course selection was so varied in both my undergraduate and graduate programs that I have a very solid history base.

My professional work requires a broad education, since my projects can range from transportation, natural resources, inter-provincial or federal-provincial affairs, and health to aboriginal policy/history. I am very comfortable switching from one subject to another, handling multiple research projects at once, and understanding how government policies throughout our country's history fit the general or big picture. Also some of the projects that I am assigned are based on specific courses that I took, papers that I wrote, etc. The M.A. Program in particular prepared me for archival research, which is a large part of the work that I do.

### **What would you tell an incoming History student?**

My advice to future history graduates would be to make sure your marks are strong. Often I have had to submit my transcripts for job applications or contract bids. I would also suggest being involved in academic associations to network and learn as much as you can from other professionals in the field. Getting something published in anything, whether an undergraduate journal or an academic one, always looks good in your curriculum vita. Get to know your professors, they will give you wonderful references and guidance later in life. Finally, if you are looking into government as a career option, history will give you the analytical, writing, and research skills to excel in the professional world. I would suggest including an economics or statistics course to assist you in other areas.