



DAVE WARD

What is your current position?

I am General Manager for Youth Engagement and Outdoor Education at the YMCA of Western Ontario, which is based in London. I have several key responsibilities. Versatility is crucial to my work - I rarely focus on the same task two days in a row. As part of my role I hire, train and manage a staff team that provides direct delivery of youth and outdoor education programs. I am also responsible for the research that informs these programs, to help set goals and outcomes. My responsibilities also include establishing programs and logistics such as location, program supplies and curriculum. I also fulfill a training role within our organization. I help improve recruitment processes and facilitate sessions on Healthy Adolescent Development and many other topics. I am also responsible for our international projects - organizing exchange programs and connecting with our Global YMCA.

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

The Honours Specialization. I earned a B.A. in 2009.

How have you been engaged since you graduated?

I earned a B.Ed. from Nipissing University and an M.Ed. from Western. I then worked in Outdoor Education in France and managed a pool with 2300 swimming lessons a week for the YMCA in London. I have managed staff teams with responsibility for between 10 and 85 staff members.

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

My position was brand new when I took it on.

The primary focus was first on research, in order to understand what academic work had been done on youth programming, as well as what was happening in our community and around the country with youth outreach. My history degree obviously gave me direct access to research skills needed for this process. In addition my role demands a lot of relationship building within the community and within our large YMCA. The communication skills I developed as a history major have been invaluable for this.

What would you tell an incoming History student?

To explore broadly anything that interests you and not worry about where it leads. The 'softer' skills of communication and analysis you will pick up in any pursuit within the History department are far more valuable in the current workplace environment than what most people consider to be more 'practical' skills.

Any other thoughts or comments?

I would consider pursuing extra-curricular activities that complement the skills you are developing in your history courses. I worked for the Gazette as a writer and editor, which greatly enhanced my written and verbal communication skills, as well as my research and analysis skills. There are limitless opportunities on campus to extend your skills beyond the classroom. I recommend that you take advantage of them in order to start applying the skills you are learning in history to real world applications. They are highly transferable skills but practice is invaluable.