

ACE Advice



Practical Experience | Expert Insight

A Virtual Chat with Yvonne Kjorlien



BSc Anthropology
BSc Archaeology
MA Anthropology



University of Calgary
University of Alberta



Specialty/Research Focus:
Taphonomy and Human
Evolution

Yvonne Kjorlien, MA, PMP, is an anthropologist with a foundation in biological anthropology, primatology, and archaeology.

From age 15, Yvonne had her life figured out: she was going to have her university education in mechanical engineering paid for by the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), become a fighter pilot, retire by age 45, then fly commercial aircraft and retire with two pensions at age 55. This changed, however, when she discovered that fighter pilots needed 20/20 uncorrected vision, and that engineering was too confining for her inquisitive mind.

After coping with culture shock from moving from a small town to the big city, clinical depression, and an ill fit with engineering, Yvonne then embarked on a meandering path through undergrad: from Psychology to pre-Med to Anthropology. This diverse background is reflective of her curiosity, her ability to see connections between unlikely things, and her need to balance logic and abstract in her life. Academic tenure seemed to be a logical path for Yvonne.

She turned her passion for taphonomy and human evolution into an MA project on possible patterns in the way remains were scattered due to scavenger activity. During her graduate work, she began to work with law enforcement agents on investigations, and training civilian searchers on how to search for skeletal remains. During her graduate work, however, Yvonne also discovered that achieving tenure-track would require more financial debt.

She decided to 'quit while in debt' and enter the workforce. Finding work that compensated according to Yvonne's skillset and education was difficult. After many administrative/clerical jobs, Yvonne entered consulting archaeology in 2005. While the work was diverse, it was also physically demanding, time-intensive, and mentally and emotionally draining. Yvonne decided to find another career in 2009 and it took two years to successfully translate her resume to find a job.

Escaping from consulting archaeology allowed Yvonne the luxury of 20/20 hindsight. She had acquired project management and business skills, a network of clients and colleagues, and a desire to find her own path. Since 2011, Yvonne has worked full-time in research administration, while pursuing a path of personal and professional development that allows her to explore the breadth of her diverse interests.

These interests have led Yvonne to become an independent fiction and non-fiction author, obtain her Project Management Professional (PMP) designation, obtain training in conflict mitigation and coaching, and perform freelance work in archaeology, editing, and transcription. Recently, she started throwing pottery, painting, publishing a podcast, and working with a collaborator on a scavenged remains research project.

Yvonne is committed to showing through example that fulfillment can be obtained outside of academia, and that academic knowledge and skills can be successfully translated and applied to non-academic contexts. It is possible to have it all; you just need to be open to the possibility that it may not show up as you expected.

Website: www.yvonnekjorlien.com

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