

# Taking your career “out there”

By Christina Mavinic,  
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Now is falling lightly and the sun is low on the horizon. My dog and ever travelling companion Lola is asleep on the carpet. It's 4 p.m. and I sit here staring out the window, watching the Arctic tundra freeze up and fall prey to the start of another long winter. I find myself wondering... “How did I get here?” One of two RNs servicing the tiny remote outpost of Old Crow, Yukon. There are 250 amazing people living off the land to a large extent, and warmly opening their hearts and lives to me... a relative stranger, who has been given the opportunity to spend a period of time amongst their community learning their practices and enjoying their lands.

I'm into travel nursing, something I knew I wanted to do from the very first term I spent in the BCIT nursing program. When I was a little girl, about 11 years old, I went on my first backcountry hiking trip with Girl Guides of Canada and some VERY adventurous leaders. I read a quote shortly before I left from a now famous person named J.R.R. Tolkien. “*Not all those who wander, are lost.*” I thought to myself, I like that. I like it a lot. This saying has become a motto for my life.

Over the past seven years I have done multiple work contracts with various government and private agencies all over B.C.'s remote northern and coastal areas,

as well as the entire Yukon Territory. I have started to venture into Nunavut and other areas of the Arctic this past year. Along with these remote nursing experiences, I have taken my skills with me on various high-altitude mountain trips, looking after teams of climbers in the remote corners of our planet. I've also been fortunate enough to provide volunteer and disaster response nursing services in Africa and Haiti.

My “real” job is as an emergency department nurse at Lions Gate Hospital in North Vancouver. I love the combination of a fast-paced urban trauma centre, with all the services and supplies I could dream of and remote outpost clinics that test my skills and resourcefulness. People often ask how I got into the lifestyle of nursing that I have chosen. The answer to that question is definitely a combination of things. The presence of extremely supportive, as well as motivational people along the way, play a huge role in my choices.

After finishing my BSN, I quickly began pursuing my emergency nursing specialty and my remote nursing certification. After a few years of dedicated study and a steep learning curve, I began to feel more confident and comfortable working in remote and isolated areas.

Why the nomadic and wandering lifestyle? People have asked me what I'm running from... to which I often answer, I'm not running from anything. In fact, I'm

running to something; the amazing experiences and people that have enriched my life beyond my wildest dreams. Looking after tragically sick children in Haiti, and wondering if they will survive after I leave them with the Haitian health care system, knowing I've done everything in my limited power to help them. Trying to help my friends breathe, rehydrate and remain calm in the mountains when they are suffering the ravaging effects of altitude on their physiology. Using a translator to understand the symptoms a First Nations elder in the northern Yukon is experiencing and trying to treat her while incorporating her traditional beliefs and medicinal practices. Learning to enjoy various preparations of fish, berries, meat and other local fare as thank yous and offerings at community feasts, while taking in the gorgeous raw landscape on which these peoples are surviving. With every contract, volunteer aid trip and adventure comes a new desire to see what's around the next corner. As I bridge my passions for the extraordinary with my desire to settle and have a family, I find that the path is a little less clear. Nevertheless, where there's a will there's a way! (My mother always said). So, now I look forward to many more years of nursing, travelling, exploring and growing with a family that is as eager to see what's next as I am!

Dwell in possibility! 

## NENA AT WORK

### Letter to the President


Good evening Sharron,

Please accept my sincere appreciation for the wonderful surprise of the NENA Honorary Lifetime Member and your letter. It was extremely touching to receive such recognition. I always felt that it is the members we honour as they continue to belong to our organization and who have the courage to represent our specialty on the world stage.

Yes, a lot of great moments were achieved over the years, but nothing could have happened without the hard work of the board and NENA's members. I was extremely fortunate to be a part of the board with many great leaders. To see the growth over the years is a pure joy. To see the collaboration with other professionals, how can we not succeed to expand our specialty? To be seen and looked to for our skills, knowledge and most of all our spirit,

passion, and love of emergency nursing is AWESOME!

I greatly miss my role in emergency nursing, but will forever stay involved in any way I can. Great NENA leaders have come before me and after me, and I am forever grateful to have been part of such incredible leadership.

Once again thank you, Sharron. Take care and bonne chance. 

Love, Louise Leblanc