

Elizabeth Boyle



Q: When did you receive your graduate degree at the University of Guelph, what was your thesis research, and who was your advisor?

MSc 2012, supervised by Dr. Sarah (Sally) Adamowicz

Q: What is your current job description/location?

I've been working for ERM Rescan for over three years now as an aquatic biologist. I principally conduct baseline and environmental monitoring programs on water quality, sediment quality, primary producers (periphyton and phytoplankton) and aquatic invertebrates (zooplankton and benthic invertebrates). My job spans study design, management, field work, analysis and writing. My focus has been on northern British Columbia freshwater ecosystems, but I have been involved with arctic and marine projects as well. I conduct field work mostly in northern BC, but I have also worked Nunavut, Saskatchewan and right here at home in Burrard Inlet/Howe Sound.

**Department of Integrative Biology
Graduate Success Stories**

Q: How did your graduate experience at the University of Guelph prepare you for this position?

My graduate program at Guelph helped prepare me for my current job in several ways. Having conducted a large field program in Churchill and studied arctic ecosystems was very important experience as I now work in very remote locations (which pose lots of logistical challenges) and I work on arctic projects quite a bit. Designing and executing a research program all the way through to analysis and writing is something I do all the time, so my experience doing this with my masters has been essential. Also, my statistical background and R coding that I learned while at Guelph are necessary skills for my job. My knowledge of benthic invertebrate ecology that I picked up during my masters is something I use all the time. Finally, one of the most important skills I learned at Guelph was independent learning. Going into my job there were lots of new concepts I had to learn on my own, but the critical thinking skills and ability to teach myself that I learned at Guelph meant that I was able to quickly meet these challenges. This is not to say that teachers were not supportive while I was at Guelph (quite the opposite), but for me taking my education (and later my job) into my own hands were essential for my success.

Q: What are some of the important skills that you learned outside of your graduate experience?

Specifically, I have learned a lot about water and sediment chemistry since leaving graduate school as it is a very important part of my current job. More broadly, I would say scientific writing for a more general audience, as opposed to writing for a scientific journal or grant which was a common focus in graduate school. Also, managing large projects and budgets are skills that I learned on the job.

Department of Integrative Biology Graduate Success Stories

Q: How would you complete the following sentence when thinking back to your graduate education: "If I had known then what I know now, I would..."

Have taken better advantage of the resources available to me while in graduate school. While my research area has been very useful in my current job, I have also had to broaden my knowledge in many other areas. While in graduate school, I found it very easy to become focused on my thesis and the very specific area of science it involved. I regret not talking to professors or going to more presentations outside of my discipline to provide myself with a broader background. While you can learn these things when you leave school, your access to them is not as easy.