

Assuming Our Place Among the Forest

Starting my university career felt daunting — it was like I was wandering into an unknown forest without knowing where I would end up, or how I might change by the time I emerged on the other side. I eventually found out that such a feeling is a vital part of every new beginning. It's the importance of what you're about to take on that fills you with doubt and hesitation. My ambition to grow as a student, as a citizen, and as a person continues to push me through my post-secondary education at Kwantlen.

This ambition is something I wanted to capture in an art creation. I connect on a deeply personal level to the subject in my photograph, especially when I think back to my first year at KPU, which started the autumn immediately after high school. That was me — still is me — walking up to the foot of the woods, yearning to one day stand tall amongst the fully educated and the wise. Though I am further along in my transition, I still feel eager to assume my place in the world and exist there with the purpose and dignity of an evergreen. I am certain that without my post-secondary education that I would be nowhere near as far along the path to where I want to be.

The lessons that I learn transcend the assignments and examinations. What has been most essential in my transformation into a driven, compassionate, critical thinker, is the people I've been surrounded with since my first day in the classroom. It did not take me long to realize how fortunate I was to attend a university where I can interact with instructors as closely as I do at this institution. Friends of mine that attend other universities are often among hundreds. Personally, I've never had a class with more than thirty students in total, which makes it easy to engage with and come to know my instructors over the semesters. They are instrumental to my growth as a student and a person.

As I continue to transform through the rest of my post secondary education, ambition is the one characteristic that will push me to continue my growth even after my days at Kwantlen end. This ambition has been fostered throughout the creative writing program. After every class, I leave less anxious about finding my place among the world. This is due to how post secondary schooling has changed my outlook on the world. When I began, I looked out into the world as a complex forest I'd never successfully navigate. My time at Kwantlen has shown me that I am not only capable of navigating the forest, but that the forest *needs* us as students to assume our place among it, and grow into the tallest, wisest, most optimistic trees that we can in order to keep the forest alive at all.

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