

Letter from the Okanagan



Derek, Amanda and Leevi – The Kontkanens

Dear CCOVI friends,

I'm writing to you with Derek, my husband and fellow CCOVI grad, from our home in Penticton in BC's magnificent Okanagan Valley. Since we moved out here in 2004, a lot has transpired. Here are some of the details.

Derek works as a winemaker at Jackson-Triggs Okanagan Estate in Oliver. And I love my full-time role as mom, taking care of our son, Leevi, who is vintage August, 2006. I also squeeze in part-time contract work as a consultant for a software company, which conveniently allows me to work from home.

At Jackson-Triggs, Derek is in charge of making premium, VQA white wine, rosé and Icewine. He also has a hand in winemaking at Vincor's (Jackson-Triggs' parent company) commercial facility. His favourite part of winemaking is that it lets him combine science with creativity. He values the critical thinking skills he developed while at CCOVI which help him face the day to day challenges of being a winemaker (and a dad).

As a mom, I do everything from being a playmate to a nose-wiper to a teacher. I really enjoy watching our son change, learn and grow; it's fascinating to see his personality develop – much like a good wine. As a consultant, I have the best of both worlds since I'm able to embrace motherhood while maintaining an interesting career in a field I enjoy.

We truly love living in the Okanagan. With breathtaking views, skiing, beaches and wine country, we have nothing to complain about. My family is close by, which is fantastic. Derek's family lives in Ontario and, fortunately, they're always keen to visit us and we gladly head to Ontario whenever we have a chance.

We really miss CCOVI, especially the camaraderie we shared with our classmates and professors. In the small classes we had, we became a closely-knit group. We have fond memories of tasting events and touring the world of wine with friends. And we met at CCOVI so, of course, it will always hold a special place in our lives.

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If there's any advice we can offer to current CCOVI students it is: make good use of your co-op placements both in Canada and abroad. The practical experiences reinforce the skills and knowledge that you learn at CCOVI so that you can hit the ground running in your career. Also, don't hesitate to contact CCOVI grads when searching for a job or co-op placement. I know Derek always looks to CCOVI when hiring.

To other CCOVI grads: send in your stories so that we can all learn about the exiting things that are happening in your lives.

We wish everyone a happy holiday season and all the best in the New Year.

Cheers!

The Kontkanens (Derek, Amanda and Leevi)