in any way, or just stay out of the way but just kind of modeling that, you know, women could do anything like they lived it. And it wasn't like we're doing anything. No, it was just, it was just normal. And I think they had a real impact on what I even considered as an option for myself. Event wise, this is again, like, yeah, life is so strange sometimes how different events lead you in different twists and turns and journeys you never considered. The military actually, I'm very fortunate, they sponsored me to do a full time Master's. And I was just doing a course-based Master's. And with the intent that in the summer semester, I would go back and work in a procurement project. But it just so happened that the week before that summer semester was supposed to begin, there was a fire at the building I was supposed to go work at. And fortunately, I had just wrapped up like a one semester project. And I just loved this project. I was like, how can I, can I just do this forever? I like it was so, it just tickled all those like pieces of my brain that, yeah it was super fun. And so when this fire happened, I'm like, I kind of need some other way to be employed this summer. And I requested that instead of doing a course based Master's, I would transfer and do a thesis masters and take that one semester project and just run with it for the following year and a half. So I was super lucky that the military was like yeah, yeah, this is great we're really busy trying to figure out where to employ these 1000 people now like that sounds great, you're taking care of that, see you at the end of the year!

VANESSA
Nice. So you were just able to run with it. That's great.

JESSICA
Absolutely. Yeah. So there you go random events, sometimes, um, that one really formulated, had a real shaping effect on the rest of my masters and then just my own confidence in identifying an opportunity and just kind of like pulling that thread and seeing where I could go with it. Which was super fun.

VANESSA
Awesome. That sounds really cool. One aspect of that story that I love is you basically took it on yourself to step in and just say, I think this is how this can work. And you advocated for yourself. And they, I mean, granted, you said they were maybe a little distracted, but also they were like, yeah, that works. Let's do it. Like, I love that it turned out all for the best. So that's awesome. Yeah, cool. I'd love to ask if you can think of one of your most memorable moments from your career or education that you might want to share?

JESSICA
Sure, well, I again, like I had so much fun doing a masters at, I was studying at UOttawa, and that was after, so again, like back it up for context here, I had just been working in Petawawa, like very small army town, great community, but very small town, and everyone thinks the same because that's, it's normal. Like we all work the same place, we all live together, see each other every day. So then to go to UOttawa, like a very liberal, like open minded campus. For me, there was so much personal growth there. I volunteered at the Women's Center for a semester. And like, let me tell you, there's no women center like that in Petawawa at that time, and it was really eye opening for me, for someone who considered, I really consider myself to be you know, I'm from Vancouver, I'm very open minded

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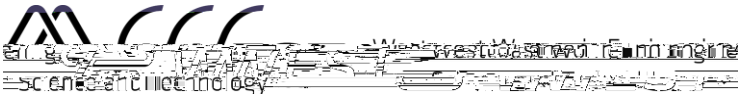
VANESSA



JESSICA
Yeah, that's right. So it's the course that's typically a prerequisite to be promoted from Major to Leftenant Colonel The military is great for kind of programming deliberate, professional developments throughout our careers. So this is a year long course, we get to bring together not just the army, but Air Force and Navy officers and kind of help, you know, intermingle our various points of view our experiences. Because as we move higher to the ranks, it's much more likely we'll be employed in a joint headquarters, where we'll be supporting all these other elements basically. And so we need to understand them and have points of contact in them. Yeah, so that's next year I'm very, excited for the course there's a bunch of my friends that I haven't seen either since basic, or since I graduated from Military College will be on the course. So it'll be a bit of a reunion. After that, what's pretty normal, is to be employed within Ottawa within a key headquarters job, kind of various ways we could be employed here, whether it's in procurement in an operational headquarters in one of the elemental headquarters, and I'm not exactly sure where I'll end up yet, and I guess I'm also still learning what each of those possible opportunities could entail. And really, I'd be looking for a role where I would fill in a gap in my own experience, because I spent a lot of time in Petawawa and I loved it, but I know, I haven't worked at an operational headquarters yet. Kind of leaning towards something in that regard.

VANESSA
Nice. So to get there, is it typical that you, after I don't know, a few years or a while you do more professional development and then kind of climb the ranks that way?

JESSICA
Yeah, that sounds about right. So um, yeah, so I would be working in one of these various headquarters, and then to progress to the next rank even further, the requirement is typically to command at the next rank level. So it'd be you know, in a few years down the road, I'd be looking to compete for an opportunity to command a Service Battalion or a Technical Services Battalion for that experience, check in the box to show that, you know, well not just to show but to actually gain a lot of experience needed at that higher rank, dealing with those different headquarters to then progress further on in my career.

VANESSA
Nice. Well, I wish you the best of luck.

JESSICA
Oh, thank you.

VANESSA
Of course. And how do you define success for yourself? What does that look like for you personally?

JESSICA
That's a great question. And that's always a challenging one. Because it's easy to dwell on the things that like I could have done this, o

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JESSICA
Yeah, I would say I'm gonna keep a Canadian and say the Maritimes I only experienced New Brunswick doing army training which was traumatizing but I've heard fabulous things about the Maritimes and I would like to update my impression of the Maritimes.

VANESSA
The Maritimes are lovely I went there for university and definitely need to go back for a visit. Yes, yes, definitely. Okay, I'll do a couple more. Which person dead or alive would you most like to have coffee with?

JESSICA
Ooh, so my daughter has this fabulous book of women in science and one of the, I knew of most of them I'd come across them in various studies but one I had never seen before was Maria Sibylla Merian, and she was a botanist and an artist in like the late 1600s, early 1700s. And this woman was incredible. She like, you know, got married, had kids, but was an artist and eventually divorced her husband like in the late 1600s and went to Suriname to draw pictures of insects in her 50s so she's just so awesome and an impressive.

VANESSA
That's a really good answer.

JESSICA
Yeah, super beautiful pictures.

VANESSA
Nice. Last one. If you could travel back in time, what time period would you visit?

JESSICA
Oh my goodness. So I mean, can I come back? Oh, yes. Okay, good. So I'm very concerned having watched a lot of sci fi about upsetting the space time continuum mostly by watching Loki. I think I would go to like Pompeii, like right before it you know, the volcano erupted. To see, like a prosperous, beautiful town. But like, I know, I couldn't really cause too much damage personally.

VANESSA
Oh, yeah, absolutely. I know. I think if somebody were to ask me this question, I would overanalyze it.

JESSICA
Yeah. Oh, there's like so many things that could go wrong.

VANESSA
Exactly. It's like what happens if I like step on an insect?

JESSICA
Yeah. Oh my, I didn't think of that. I mean everything gets destroyed. So I'm not too worried.

VANESSA
True, but it still feels stressful.

JESSICA
I'm like, am I the only one that thinks about that, stepping on insects?

VANESSA
I have thought about it more than I probably should have. Awesome. Well, thanks for engaging with me on the lightning round.

JESSICA
Kind of a slowed down to lightning.

VANESSA
It's all good. Every person is unique in the way that it unfolds, so it's all good. As we finish up, I'd love to ask if you have any advice for the next generation of STEM professionals? Or people who are in the army?

JESSICA
Certainly, I guess it applies to both. And really, it's just keep an open mind. I'm reading a great book right now called Think Again by Adam Grant. And it's a, man I'm like scribbling all through it. It's like, oh my gosh, yes like the army does this, or engineers I work with do this. And just being able to engage with ideas and not let your own identity get tied up so much into an idea that you're unable to consider alternative views. I think that's super important. And I think it lends well to I mean, everyone's going to encounter failures, and sometimes, like even just being, even learning that something you thought was true was not true. Like in an experiment, you know, your hypothesis has proved false, it can feel not great. Or you can just not get in the army when you thought you were gonna for sure get in the army, and being able to pick yourself up and how you deal with that. I mean, you don't even have to call it a failure, how you deal with that adversity and decide to move forward, it is so powerful and speaks so much to your character. And you know, will enable you to overcome other challenges in personal, professional life that you 100% will encounter.

VANESSA
Awesome, thank you for that. And thank you so much for joining me on the podcast.

JESSICA
It's been so much fun. It's really been a pleasure.

VANESSA
Awesome. Where can people connect with you?

JESSICA
I'm on LinkedIn. Although I don't, I will have to check it more often now that I'm back at school. I found it more useful at school.

VANESSA
Okay, awesome. Well, thank you again, so much for joining me today.

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JESSICA
Thank you. This was super fun. I really appreciate your time and your own energy in putting together like really thoughtful questions and guiding me through it because I'm still kind of an awkward nerdy engineer a lot of the time so thank you.

VANESSA
Absolutely.

VANESSA
We acknowledge that Best of the WWEST is hosted and produced on the unceded territories of the Ø Í ʃË Ù m (Musqueam), Swǿwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Best of the WWEST is also produced on Treaty 6 territory. Best of the WWEST has featured many guests and has been hosted and produced by people of different lands, countries, and cultures, but we also acknowledge that we are settlers on this land. We are grateful for the privilege to be working as visitors on these unceded and ancestral territories of all the Metis, Inuit, First Nations, and Indigenous people that call this land home. Thank you again for listening.

Outro
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