

Where Can UVic English Take You? An Interview with John Thompson (BA Hons, 2004)

What is your job?

For the past four years I've worked as a web editor for *Nunatsiaq News*, a newspaper that reports on Canada's eastern Arctic. It's my second incarnation at the newspaper—shortly after graduating from UVic, I moved to Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, and spent several years working for *Nunatsiaq News* as a reporter.

Afterwards I moved to Whitehorse and worked as a reporter and later became the editor of the *Yukon News*. I've also worked as the managing editor of *Arctic Deeply*, an online news publication that focussed on how climate change was impacting the North.

After spending nearly two decades working in journalism, I'm about to embark on a career change and join the Yukon government as a communications analyst.



What led you to pursue an interest in editing?

Many newspaper editors start off as reporters, and that was my path as well, beginning with my time volunteering for the *Martlet*, UVic's student newspaper. I started off writing a lot, but one thing led to another and I eventually became the newspaper's editor.

What does a typical professional day look like for you?

Each day we're trying to find compelling stories to publish on our newspaper's website and share on social media. I work with a team of six journalists and two other editors. My job is remote, so I work from home and spend a lot of time communicating with colleagues via Zoom and Slack. The editing work can really vary—sometimes I'm working with the writer to do a complete structural overhaul, other times I'm giving a piece a light copy edit.

What's your favourite part of your work?

I learn new things every day, and I get to work with an interesting group of people. It's especially satisfying to help a reporter who's working on a story you know is going to resonate with readers, and be able to shepherd that piece towards publication in a way that makes it as clear as possible, without trampling on the writer's voice.

How did UVic English help prepare you for this work?

I was never very good at doing my assignments before the last minute, so I ended up getting a lot of practice for writing on deadline! My English major also taught me to read really quickly and made me good at quickly synthesizing information and presenting my thoughts in a clear, organized way. I use these skills every day.

I also did a minor in professional communication, and while I didn't get a great grade in my copyediting class, it taught me an awful lot about the principles of editing. And I used the co-op

program to land some summer jobs working for community newspapers on Vancouver Island, which helped me get my career off and running.