

**Student. Graduate. Media Professional**  
**By Lyla Miklos with Editor's notes by Barry Rueger**  
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Editor's Note: Because I work at a campus radio station, I'm often reminded that radio is a pretty tough field to break into. Most of the articles in this issue of Wavelength assume that you're already working actively in radio, whether it's community, commercial, or the CBC. So I asked Lyla to take some time to write about what it's like to be fresh out of Radio School and trying to get a career off the launching pad.

Another Editor's Note: Lyla is also majorly into Musical Theatre, and does a passable Ethel Merman!

The reason I ended up going to Mohawk College was because I could not justify putting myself into thousands of dollars of debt to go into theatre or fine arts at University. I was accepted at three Universities, but I was paying my own way so I had to make a pragmatic financial choice. I finally decided to attend the college in my hometown of Hamilton. I opened up the Mohawk College application and looked for courses that I thought would hold my interest. I picked Early Childhood Education, Radio Broadcasting and Broadcast Journalism. I was accepted into all three, but finally chose Radio Broadcasting.

My first year at Mohawk I was a real keener. I diligently did my work, showed up for class and studied, studied, studied. By the end of the year I was feeling a little on the under challenged side. It was easy for me to slack off and still get great marks. I found many of my classmates lacked maturity, commitment, enthusiasm, intelligence or anything even resembling a work ethic. I also found most of my courses and professors pedestrian at best. I was beginning to regret the fact that I chose college after all.

Once I started my second year I felt the school work itself wasn't enough for me, so I took on lots of side projects. I hosted shows on CHMR Cable FM (now C101.5), I ran for Student Council President and the Board of Governors. I worked in about six different departments in the college and became the editor of the school newspaper. I helped to co-found Mohawk Pride (the first social club for queer students), and I even got pulled out of class by the Dean of Language Studies for writing a letter to the paper pointing out that a certain course was an utter farce.

I was also something of a mercenary. When I found out that Mohawk College had gads and gads of awards I applied for every single one that I was even vaguely eligible for. At the end of my three years at Mohawk College I had two diplomas (Radio-1997 & BJ-1998) and seven awards to show for it. Talk about an impact statement!

After graduation I headed into the job market. Since graduation from Radio in 1997 I have been to more than one hundred interviews in my quest for a professional career. I finally got a job working with a large communications corporation. It was just as an administrative assistant, but it was a foot in the door and I was excited! My excitement would quickly be dashed when two weeks later I was fired because I was "too spunky"! So it was back to the interview grindstone. I would apply for anything that had even the smell of media in the job description.

I was amazed that sexism and homophobia are still found in broadcasting. There was more than one job interview where I was getting an obvious once over by the interviewer. I was told that “women aren’t as good on the radio as men. They all sound shrill and no one respects the sound of a woman’s voice on the air”. An interview with the news director of one Ontario radio station ended when he said “Oh yah and you’ll want to kick off the newscast with that story about Toronto Gay Pride . . . those fucking queers eh?”

A Sales Director for a small town paper in the NWT looked good, but the pay was a joke and they were not even offering to help pay for me to get there. I’ve lived in the arctic and I know that the cost of living is triple what it is down South. It was a risk I wasn’t willing to take.

I left another office job because my boss was a psychotic wacko who told me that I was allowed one half hour break for working eight hours. She also told me: “I don’t care if we all take off for 15 minute smoke breaks, since you don’t smoke, you don’t get a fifteen minute break”. This time I left after two weeks.

I had an interview at City TV’s all news channel to be a part of the Q-Files, a newsmagazine show for Queers. It was all set. It was just going to be a volunteer gig, but I could imagine the experiences I would gain from it. Then the producer was told that using all these volunteers conflicted with union rules at CITY. Big sigh!

By this point, I was out of work for almost two months and was living off my credit cards. I was wandering the local mall and ended up getting a job at a brand new Hudson’s Bay store. Phew! Money! I can pay bills again! I was working tons and tons of hours and since I knew how to use a computer I ended up being a valued employee. I even got a promotion!

Still, a career in retail was not what I was aiming for. While I worked at The Bay I still kept flogging that resume and running off to interviews. A Theatre Company in Toronto wanted an Education/Public Relations Assistant. With all my media and theatre background I was practically a shoo-in. Once again it looked as if I had found my dream job. The position was mine. I could taste it. I went in to meet with the company’s brand new artistic director and was told that I would be called tomorrow first thing. The morning came and went and then it came: “I’m sorry Lyla, but the artistic director picked someone else.”

The next interview was with a campus/community radio station – I was on the short list to be a Station Manager. But when I went for the interview I was reminded all over again why I can’t stand student governments! I felt like saying that a radio station isn’t a social statement, it’s a business and should be run like one. I was actually rather relieved that I didn’t get the job. Besides, the position was about as secure as a rubber dingy in the middle of a hurricane.

When I applied for the job I have now, I remember the President asking me how others describe me. I couldn’t resist and told him: “Some people tell me I’m spunky”! He responded with: “That’s great! We like people with spunk here!”

I was hired by Specialized Media Sales/Specialty Data Systems (SMS/SDS) to be their receptionist/administrative assistant/accounting assistant/traffic back up. Since I came on board in October of 1998 there have been many changes. We moved our offices from Yonge and Eglinton to Bay and Bloor, and have a brand new client – The Aboriginal Peoples Network (APTN). Things seem to be growing and changing, and I even got a promotion. I'm now the Traffic Coordinator for Vision TV.

I'm crossing my fingers and toes that I'll keep on working here for a while yet. Unless I finally land that perfect radio job, or until Andrew Lloyd Webber calls and asks me to star in his newest musical.

Lyla Miklos is the host of Centre Stage on C101.5 FM – Mohawk College Radio. Along with her duties as Vision TV's Traffic Coordinator Lyla still works part-time for The Hudson Bay, DJ's for The Right Note Disk Jockey Service, is a Director on The Mohawk College Alumni Association Board, is the Media and Community Relations Director for the 1999 Hamilton Gay Pride Committee and is a volunteer with several community theatre groups and local sci-fi conventions.