

# Lisa Conkin

It wasn't the skills training, resume writing or interview techniques that helped Lisa Conkin the most on her way to a new career – it was something much more important: the opportunity to seek guidance and talk.

While the training aspect of her job preparation was important, what Lisa found invaluable was the support and sympathetic ear of Jeanette Karasiuk, an employment and career counselor at Employment Connections in Fort St. John.

"If it wasn't for Jeanette, I couldn't have done it," she says. "She was a fabulous person to talk to. I gained confidence talking to her – she helped me stay focused and find out which direction I should take."

Lisa, 27, first came to Employment Connections in the spring of 2006, after being terminated from a previous position. Resourceful and articulate, she nevertheless felt her self-confidence had taken a blow, and was ready to make some plans for the future.

She attended the Career Development Workshop at Employment Connections and completed several related assignments. Working with Jeanette, she determined that it would be a good idea to pursue further education. After she pinpointed her love of the outdoors, she enrolled in the two-year Land Management Program at Northern Lights College.

Life dealt Lisa a major challenge while she was in her final semester of college. Her partner Chad's ex-wife died suddenly, leaving the couple with sole responsibility for their two boys; nine-year-old Dylan and twelve-year-old Clinton. Not only was Lisa embarking on a new career, she suddenly became a full-time stepmother.

"It was a stressful time," she recalls. "I met with Jeanette every two weeks to ensure that I was completing short term goals. Staying committed to my goals ultimately helped me to succeed and get my diploma!"

She graduated in April 2008 and is now employed as an environmental technician with Sharp Environmental in Fort St. John. She gets to spend her workdays outdoors examining soil conditions as part of the company's mandate to assess sites for oil and gas exploration.

"I love being outside," Lisa said. "I'm always glancing at the ground identifying plants with the intent of taking in as much of the outdoors as humanly possible. I really do love that going to school has enabled me to get closer to my dreams."

