

Apprise Timeline of NELLIE

Nellie began her Master's in North America when her children were approaching their teens and were more independent. While raising them, she had done volunteer work. She continued on to a PhD when her supervisor suggested it and hoped for a position in a research-intensive university. She joined the Canadian study in her fourth year of the degree and graduated when she was 48.

What struck us about Nellie's story was:

Work-life balance and separation from family in post-PhD position (personal)

Advancing her research profile and managing in a toxic department in position (work experience)

Job seeking during the degree and dealing with re-appointment in her post (career thinking)

Year	Personal	Work experience	Career Thinking
PhD Year 4	Partner and children supportive, but still juggling home and PhD responsibilities; spread too thin, pulled in all directions.	Funded through RAship and fellowship. Struggled to find time to write and transcribe data. 1st article published; supervisor said 1 of best papers he had seen; learned peer-review process not always fair. Support of supervisor in publishing paper led to collaborative writing with him.	Taught regularly in department; very fulfilling, but without a PhD some students questioned her expertise.
PhD Year 5	Family financial issues. Friends, family, and supervisor gave her lots of pep talks.	Procrastinated on data analysis for weeks. Realized she was getting behind her peers; without getting on with it, she would never finish.	Job seeking at conference job fair; number of interviews but no call backs; realised looking too soon.
PhD Year 6	Family not moving so wanted to be in commutable distance.	Huge motivation to finish; still, heading off to uncharted waters without her family.	Same job fair; 5 interviews and 3 call backs; offered 2 positions in 2 different jurisdictions. Chose 1 within occasional commuting distance.
Post-PhD Year 1	Extremely lonely; 1st time on own since she had married; learned to spend time on work at university; in summer, spent time with family.	Dismayed at animosity in department among senior faculty; hidden during interview.	Submitted re-appointment dossier.
Post-PhD Year 2	Rolled with the punches because older, more experienced. Hoped to win the game; if not, it was not about her but about economics and politics.	Better understanding of departmental dynamic; merging and moving of departments like turning a super-tanker.	Re-appointed but appalling process; vote not unanimous; had to maximise research output (more sole-authored pieces to show focus of work). 3 years before applying for tenure; universities in her jurisdiction had tenure rejection rates up to 75%.
Post-PhD Year 3	All well at home; children at university; partner transitioning into new career and moving closer to her.	No PhD program in department so sat on committees in other departments. Continued enjoying and investing in teaching. Had never applied for grant, so decided to try for internal one. Had rarely written as sole author, so tried to start doing this.	Interim supportive Chair said should invest in research to ensure tenure so could continue to invest in teaching.
Post-PhD Year 4	Felt more settled; bought condo after renting for 3 years; partner moved closer and started consulting business.	Successful with internal grant application. Completed 1st data collection phase of pilot project in preparation for external grant application. Positive changes in department: new faculty and Chair; 2 new colleagues to collaborate with and support each other.	Thought about tenure documentation to be submitted in following year.
Post-PhD Year 5	Major surgery; recovered well. Children established; partner's business going well; hoped for more peaceful existence. Partner would always come first over job.	Felt had future in current institution; imagined remaining for about 10 years since work was exciting.	If did not get tenure, not going to take it personally; would seek a position elsewhere but still close to family.
Post-PhD Year 6			Got tenure.
What struck us	Work-life balance. Separation from family.	Advancing her research profile. Managing in toxic department.	Openness to various post-PhD careers- Advancing her career options.



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