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**NICOLE  
OLIVER**  
HONOUR ROLES

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**Q&A** WITH **WOVENFARE.CA**





**Nicole  
Oliver**

# Honour Roles

Being a wife and mother, as well as an actress, TV host, voice-over artist and businesswoman, Nicole Oliver admits it is difficult to find the time to honour all those pieces in a valid way.

“When any one of them is off-kilter, it can feel like I’m having an identity crisis,” says the Canadian actress. “It’s difficult sometimes to find the time to be just plain Nicole.”

Interesting comments coming from someone who has spent her career assuming the identities of the roles she has played.

If you are in the acting business, you find yourself doing a lot of costume changes. And according to Nicole, to be successful at this profession, you need to recognize that you are running your own business, which means it’s also necessary to change more than your costumes.

“One of the biggest challenges for a creative individual in managing your career is to be able to take off the egocentric hat and step outside of yourself by wearing your business hat,” explains Nicole.

As she began acting when she was 16, Nicole has had time to accumulate some pretty impressive business skills over the years.

Luckily, as a young woman wanting to pursue an acting career, Nicole made a deal with her mom and dad and agreed to get a degree that she could fall back on in case acting didn’t pan out. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours from York University.

“At university, I learned to think,” she says. “I went into this industry with a head on my shoulders instead of just being blinded by the footlights.”

And just like any other businesswoman, Nicole says she has all the “gak,” as she calls the equipment that fills up her home-based office; computer, fax machine and “every PDA and plugged-in device known to womankind.”

“It’s also important to have the right people on your team to help you run your business,” says Nicole.

Among others, some of the members on Nicole’s team are her agency, The Characters, her publicists, The Promotion People, her web designer, her nanny and, of course, her husband Chris Ainscough.

“Chris is awesome,” says Nicole. “There’s no way I could be working as much as I am without his support.”

An example she gives of his support is the time she had to work on a film on Vancouver Island when William was 11-weeks-old and Chris was left at home looking after him. Nicole made sure there was a rider on her contract that included fridges for storage in both her trailer and her hotel room, time set aside during her working day so she could pump her milk and provisions for the milk to be flown home to Vancouver.

“Chris would meet the plane at the other end and whisk the precious ‘holy grail’ home to our baby boy,” she remembers.

Running her career also requires making business decisions.

“If I’m considering auditioning for a part, I first look at the project to see if I’m interested in the role and ask myself a lot of questions. Will it be the kind of role I believe in and can be proud of? Will it grow or hinder my business?”

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She says she made decisions as a younger actress that she would definitely not make today because of consideration for her family's needs.

Several years ago, Nicole tried the L.A. scene for a while but that lifestyle wasn't for her. The lack of privacy in actors' personal lives was not something she wanted to deal with. She moved back to Canada and much prefers her life without all the hoopla that goes with being an actor in Hollywood.

"Here I can just be normal. I have a husband and children (William is four and a half and Grady is three). I have a garden to putter in and I can go for a walk in my neighbourhood or to the store in my pajamas if I want to" says Nicole. "I have my anonymity and I like that!"

Nicole also says that celebrity magazines and television shows portray a very misleading image to women of how they are "supposed" to be.

"Being a mom in Hollywood right now is hot, so finally I'm trendy. It's actually something I can relate to," she says. "But that said, all the celebrity photos and stories paint such a false picture – this idea that you are perfectly coifed in public and can fit into your old jeans three weeks after your child is born is so unrealistic."

In this industry, looks are important. After having her children only 18 months apart, Nicole's hormones and thyroid were totally out-of-whack and that led to weight gain. To combat that, she works out with a personal trainer and at a gym and even finds time to do some running, which all bring a great sense of balance to her life.

But looks aren't everything to this actress. She believes that becoming a mom enabled her to bring more depth to the characters she plays.

"I used to do leading roles at size six and then did some character roles when I was heavier. Just after William was born, I was wearing a size 14 when I played my first comedic role in *I Want To Marry Ryan Banks*," she reminisces. "That was one of my favourite roles ever. It was very invigorating and freeing to not have to be tiny and pretty."

Never one to stop in the pursuit of learning and personal growth, Nicole sat on the board of the Union of B.C. Performers (division of ACTRA) for over three years and was involved with contract negotiations for actors to determine what their pay and working conditions would be.

"So, there I was on the negotiating team that sat across the table from the producers," she says. "I realized if those issues were going to be governing my own time at work, I better understand the ins and outs of the process."

That board participation was a valuable learning experience for her.

"Creative people don't usually care about dotting the i's and crossing the t's but, since I made learning those things a priority, it has really benefited me and influences how I make my own career decisions," she says. "It showed me I could be a catalyst to creating positive change in my career and in my industry."

There was a turning point in Nicole's life when she began to look at her career and her life from a different perspective.


"My dad passed away suddenly from a heart attack at 52. At his funeral, nobody was talking about all the big business deals he had made over the years. They spoke about who he was as a husband and father."

She realized then that she didn't want her own life's credits to be about what shows she had starred in. She wants them to be about who she was as a person. That is when she decided she would look at diversifying her career so that she could live in Canada and still be successful as an actress but also be able to live the way she wanted to. That decision eventually led to her branching out into the voice-over and advertising markets. And she certainly hasn't suffered from being short of acting roles since then either. (See sidebar on next page for some of Nicole's many credits.)

Giving back and making a difference is also important to Nicole.

She is featured on Natural Celebrities Salad Dressing (currently on shelves at Save On Foods across Canada). Part of the proceeds of Natural Celebrities go to each celebrity's charity and Nicole's is the Heart and Stroke foundation. They also have an annual golf tournament in her father's name for the foundation in Toronto.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada invited Nicole to be one of their celebrity models at this year's inaugural Red Dress Fashion Show, The Heart Truth's signature event held in Toronto in March. The show featured a stunning collection of red dresses created by Canada's top designers and modeled by a group of our nation's most prominent and influential women in entertainment, media, the arts, sport and business.

So, what hat is Nicole wearing these days? Well, because spring has already arrived on Canada's west coast, it's probably safe to assume it's her gardening hat. She'll be out there in her yard puttering and planting and finding the time to honour her green thumb role. 



## NICOLE OLIVER

Multi-talented Nicole Oliver has signed on to host the fifth season of Slice Network's successful TV series *Crash Test Mommy*.

Nicole's most recent role is the recurring character on Jpod as Babett, which is now airing on CBC. She has also taken a liking to being behind the camera and is currently directing her first project. Her most recent television highlights include a promotional appearance on HGTV's series *She's Crafty* with gal pal Wendy Russell and a guest star role in season two of the USA Networks hot comedy show, *Psych*.

As a film and television actor, Nicole's credits include numerous leads in various MOW's and television shows for Warner Brothers, NBC and CBS. Nicole's television appearances and recurring roles include *Kung Fu, FX: The Series, The Collector, Outer Limits, The Sentinel Millennium, Stargate SG-1* and *PSI Factor*, just to name a few.

Nicole's most recent feature film was the lead role of Lori Towers in Rampage Entertainment's golf reunion comedy *The Foursome*.

It doesn't stop there for Nicole Oliver. This voice-over extraordinaire, has an endless list of animation projects on the go. *Stormhawks* is currently airing on the Cartoon Network in the U S, Europe and Latin America. Nicole can also be heard this year in her recurring roles as Mrs. 2 Shoes in Warner Brothers *The New Adventures of Tom and Jerry* and in an exciting new animated series called *Sushi Pack* as Chief Flume on Saturday mornings on CBS. Nicole's most current animation projects include *Fairytopia 4*, Amberwood Entertainment's *Rollbots* and Studio B's *Martha Speaks*.

Nicole has also worked with producer Stan Lee, (*Spider Man and X-Men*), starring as Agent Newell in the recently released to DVD animation movie *Mosaic*.

She has also worked extensively in animation series including, *Barbie Fairytopia-Mermadia*, *Krypto the Superdog*, *He-Man* and *Masters of the Universe*.

Nicole is also in high demand in the competitive voice-over market as the voice of American Express, Starbucks, Salon Selectives, Lever 2000 and Oldsmobile Intrigue to name but a few. Nicole's most current voice over work includes the voice of Swiss Chalet and Club House. She also narrated *Greenpeace, Making a Stand*, which aired on Global Television.

For more information on Nicole Oliver, please visit [www.nicoleoliver.com](http://www.nicoleoliver.com).

