



Celebrating Adult Learners' Week

April 3 – 9, 2022

Introduction

Adult Learners' Week (ALW) in Nova Scotia is an annual celebration of lifelong learning. It is always a highlight for Literacy Nova Scotia (LNS) when we celebrate Adult Learners' Week with promotion and awareness initiatives, a learning opportunity and public events or presentations. Premier Tim Houston proclaimed April 3 – 9, 2022, Adult Learners' Week in Nova Scotia.

Literacy Nova Scotia continued to offer the Adult Learners' Week writing workshop again this year with funding from the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. Jenni Blackmore has facilitated the in-person workshops for LNS for over 10 years and the sessions are a popular and welcomed choice for many organizations. We now have the capability to offer online training. However, it was wonderful to present the 2022 workshops in person in Eskasoni, New Glasgow, and Windsor.

We invited learners to share their stories and entered eligible submissions into a draw for an iPad mini. Cory Nash, a learner at Shelburne County Learning Network, was the lucky winner in the English stream. Équipe d'alphabétisation-Nouvelle-Écosse held a contest for French speaking Nova Scotians. Katherine Ann from Cheticamp was the winner.

The submissions received are featured in this e-booklet. Literacy Nova Scotia thanks all who shared their stories and enthusiasm for adult learning. These writings demonstrate how learning has made a difference and will inspire others for years to come.



Nova Scotia

Proclamation

Adult Learners' Week 2022

WHEREAS Nova Scotians mark the exceptional achievements and dedication of adult learners during Adult Learners' Week (April 3rd to 9th, 2022) at events across the province; and

WHEREAS literacy and lifelong learning give Nova Scotians the confidence to realize their full potential in our growing workforce and help to develop the skills to engage meaningfully with a wide range of texts and technologies so that we can become responsible consumers of information; and

WHEREAS the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to supporting Nova Scotians in the development of their education and essential skills through the delivery of adult learning programs, which have seen over 2,600 learners and almost 300 graduates achieving their Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults in the past year, and empowering them to access the many rewarding academic and employment opportunities that this province has to offer;

THEREFORE be it resolved that I, Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of April 3rd to 9th, 2022, as International Adult Learners' Week in the Province of Nova Scotia, and encourage all Nova Scotians to celebrate the value of literacy and learning and the role it plays in building the foundation for the social and economic wellbeing of our province.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Houston".

Honourable Tim Houston, M.L.A.
Premier of Nova Scotia

Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Video Entries

Lifelong Learning----Carrie Croucher
Helping Others Is Rewarding----Barbara Jones
It's The Way of the World Today----Pat Stienburg
Sharing Experiences Together----James Hatch
You Never Know Where It Might Lead----Tom Chambers
Learning Video----Barbie Barrett
Video----Vicky Neves
Effie's Video----Effy McManus
Leta's Story----Leta Jarvis

Written Entries

Every New Day is Another Change to Change Your Life----Lisa Denton
Why I Finally Chose Me----Natasha Vaughan
Learning Changes Lives----Chandler Francis
Learning Changes Lives----Lisa Marshall
My Learning Journey----Mustafa Izzeldin
Old Dogs and New Tricks----Randy Harris
Learning Changes Lives----Lena MacLeod
Journey to My Future----Cynthia Caldwell
Don't Stop Until You're Proud----Mackenzie Delorey Beaton
Literacy Changed My Life----Heather Kaye
Math Upgrade====Cory Nash
Everyone Can Learn----Jennifer Jordan
Life Changes----Teresa Connors
Her Journey to Digital Learning----Marlene Whitehead
Don't Be Afraid... ASK----Andrew Tufts
How Did Adult Learning Change My Life? ----Joseph Johnson
Why I Went Back to School----Sabrina Grant

Learning As a Way Forward----Bill Brooker

My Adult Learning Experience----Jason Bates

Computers Aren't So Scary----Brenda O'Rourke

Going Back to School----Jacqueline Pitts

How Adult Learning Changed My Life----Nancy Sutherland

NOW My Life Begins----Sarah MacInnis

Literacy Nova Scotia Essay----Linda MacPherson

Learning Changes Lives----Ann Tanner

My Journey----Tracy MacDonald

My Story----Ahmed Ibrahim

Video Entries

Lifelong Learning Carrie Croucher
Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley Learning Network

<https://youtu.be/HXNPMj0FZXo>

Helping Others Is Rewarding Barbara Jones
Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley Learning Network

<https://youtu.be/D5scrElfTqw>

It's The Way of the World Today Pat Stienburg
Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley Learning Network

https://youtu.be/aCs9X9A_fm

Sharing Experiences Together James Hatch
Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley Learning Network

<https://youtu.be/C5IOUhyaSml>

You Never Know Where It Might Lead Tom Chambers
Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley Learning Network

<https://youtu.be/Myk2A8K2iu0>

Learning Video Barbie Barrett
Colchester Adult Learning Association

<https://youtu.be/1K5jB5mfies>

Video Vicky Neves
Colchester Adult Learning Association

https://youtu.be/M_NfTlclIAs

Effie's Video Effy McManus
Colchester Adult Learning Association

<https://youtu.be/BXX2sDLqZZA>

Leta's Story Leta Jarvis
Colchester Adult Learning Association

<https://youtu.be/tr1eenAKjmo>

Every New Day is Another Change to Change Your Life Lisa Denton

Literacy Nova Scotia (Empowerment for Employment Bridgetown)

I am Lisa Denton I've been out of school since 2002. I have been a person who has not had it easy. I am 40 years old. Returning to this program, I hope that changes my life for the better.

School was a challenge for me, and I dropped out in grade 11. With this program, I would have the opportunity to do my goal in life. So far, this program has been great.

I have had an interest in becoming a CCA for several years. I enjoy helping people and spending time with the elderly. My grandmother is a disabled individual who requires extensive care with her daily routines. On several occasions, I have cared for her providing both companionship and personal care. I have also assisted other elderly people in the community and find it very rewarding.

My mother has been a PCW for several years. I am very familiar with the long hours of work required the physical and emotional requirements of the job and requirement for shift work. I am fully prepared to fulfill these requirements.

I have two teenagers one of the main reasons that I would like to become LTC and on to CCA is so that I can improve myself and provide a better life for myself and my children while doing this course. It would be great to get back on track.

Having lived in Digby area most of my life, I'm familiar with the community my goal is to become a CCA when I am done with this program. To work at a nursing faculty is my passion. So, this would be my goal. My biggest drive is my grandmother.

Why I Finally Chose Me Natasha Vaughan

Literacy Nova Scotia (Empowerment for Employment Bridgetown)

Hello, my name is Natasha I am 39 years old. I have, for the last 19 years, put my life on hold due to making sure everyone around me was taken care of. I always put my husband, my kids, my extended family, and friends before myself often leading to exhaustion and burnout. The last thing I wanted to load on my plate was working and further educating myself to better myself and get a career.

I have always had a passion for working in healthcare, so when LNS launched the LTCA program I knew it was now or never – it was time to put myself first. It was time to find myself again and make something out of myself and be a example to my kids and others that no matter how old you are anything is possible.

Learning Changes Lives Chandler Francis

Unama'ki Training and Education Centre

My name is Chandler Francis. I come from the community of Eskasoni, and I'm 18 years old. I am a proud Mi'kmaq of my community. I'm the third oldest of nine of my siblings. My hobbies are hunting and fishing. I go to school at Eskasoni Training and Education Center. I just recently enrolled in the Adult Learning Program because the high school I was in did not fulfill my need for a more one on one learning environment. The adult learning program offers a more relaxed learning space. This essay is going to talk about where and how learning changed my life.

I came back to school so I can finish my education and to be the first one in my household to get my grade 12. The reason why I want my grade 12 is so I can get a good job that will pay a lot more money because I will have my grade 12 and to further my career and I need my high school diploma. Also, I'm a new dad and I want to start a goal for my daughter when she gets older. She will look up to me always because I will have my education and I will make her proud that I finished school.

Learning changed my life because I wake up knowing I have school and knowing I'm going to go learn something new every day, and the more I go to school I learn new things like math and how to read and write. Going to school and learning every day made me a different person.

My goals for the future are to finish school and to become a Department of Natural Resources officer or stay in school and maybe become a businessperson, because I already have my own little business. But my main business is detailing cars. I'm the CEO of my own business and it is called Chandlers Car Cleaning. Right now, my business is doing well but I would like to make it bigger.

Learning Changes Lives Lisa Marshall

Unama'ki Training and Education Centre

My name is Lisa Marshall, and I am a proud Mikmaq First Nations woman. I come from the community of Eskasoni, Nova Scotia with the population of about 5000 people on the reserve. I am 27 years old with no kids and I have been struggling on and off for about 10 years with drugs and alcohol. I am currently a year and a half sober again and I finally decided to go back to school and try to get my high school equivalent and try to do something with my life instead of just sitting at home doing nothing. I am currently attending Eskasoni Training Education Center. In this essay I am going to be talking about why I decided to return to school, how learning changed and is how its going to change my life and what my goals are for the year and the future.

The reason I decided to return to school this year was because I finally realized I actually needed to do something with my life instead of being at home most of my time and doing nothing with my time throughout the day. I have future and yearly goals and the only way I can obtain those goals is if I get my grade 12. I really want to get my high school equivalent this year because most people need to have that in order to get a job, or most jobs. I have a lot of extra time on my hands this year. So, I finally decided to come back to school and get educated in order to get through life without being held back anymore from not having my grade 12.

Learning has changed my life in many ways. It has changed my view on life, and it has changed my mindset. Learning is going to help me get my grade 12 and just to become educated in many ways as possible. Learning is going to give me the tools to live the life that I truly want. We live and we learn everyday, and I finally decided for my self to get sober again because I realized I was wasting time and I was slowly ruining my life when I could of spent that time educating myself and getting my grade 12. I wasted a lot of years from drugs and alcohol, and I plan on catching up with the 10 years I let go down the drain.

My goals for the future and for the year are to get my high school equivalent and I want to try and get my beginners so I can get my license so I wouldn't feel so stuck. I want to be able to find a job and just be stable in my life for once. The most important thing I need to focus on this year is just staying sober so I can continue to learn and learn the tools to get through life. My future goals are to have my grade 12 and to have a stable job so I can just start making my own family. I have always wanted to have kids, but I just knew at the moment it wasn't the right time because I wasn't in the right place and right state of mind on and off the past 10 years. I feel that if I stay sober and just stick to trying to get my grade 12 and just accomplish my yearly and future goals then I can get on the path of starting to try having kids and giving them a stable life in the future, I just want to make sure I build a stable life before I even think about doing that. Hoping and praying that I stay on the path that I am on right now and just take everything one day at a time.

My Learning Journey Mustafa Izzeldin

Halifax Community Learning Network

Hello, my name is Mustafa and I am from the Sudan in Africa. The region I grew up in is western Sudan in Al-Jeneina State. I was born in a small village surrounded by big mountains and large farms. We have rivers and lakes to swim in. I ate mangos in the orchard. I enrolled in elementary school at Tarshana School. In 2003, the war started, and I left school. War interrupted my schooling, and I was in and out of school for most of my younger years. Schools were destroyed by war. In 2010 things got bad again when the government kicked out the NGOs, people who were teaching and helping us. I lived in displacement camps. In 2012, I moved to Israel, where I worked during the days and took English and Hebrew courses at night. On September 3, 2019, I emigrated to Canada. I did a language test for the Canadian Language Benchmark. My results were not high, so I committed to go to school; I joined the ISANS program and have done many different courses. Through the library, I got wonderful tutoring, and this pushes me forward.

I value education in my life because it is the key that opens many doors. You can achieve your target goals. Education today expands my horizons so that I can see new things today that I couldn't see yesterday. I am able to have new solutions. I realize that no matter what employment I have, I need an education. With the education I had, I can get a minimum wage or low paying job that no one else wants. I could not spell the words I needed. Moreover, for so many unskilled newcomers, people like me, jobs qualifications are hard to get.

I was discouraged, but now I know I can get my high school diploma. Without vocabulary, it's hard to communicate and share ideas. Here in Canada, starting from zero, you can build your skills. I am prepared to put some time and talent into my schoolwork. I started with Literacy Nova Scotia's Adult Learners and needed to learn more vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling. This will help me to become a part of the community.

I am making progress toward my goals. Yesterday, I knew what felt comfortable to me in English and writing and vocabulary. Today I know that this level exceeds the requirements to enter the ALP program. However, in math I need some practice to get to the level they require. First of all, I want to gain my high school diploma; then I would like to go to college and become a mechanical engineer. When I finish school, I hope to get an enjoyable job of my choice, not one I have to take because it is all my education from the past will allow. Education helps me figure out the way I will go.

Also, I value support. You in this room support me to go forward. It includes the people I support. My blog article could support someone who is new to running. My roommate and I support each other by paying half of the rent. We share housekeeping duties. My roommate is from my country Sudan, so we can enjoy old home recipes and share cooking. Support is about building community. It is empowering.

I value working and learning more than anything. I hope my roommate learns this value. I try to pass this value along by learning from the community how to move forward. I show up for my classes and for tutoring. I hope this will inspire my roommate to do more than say that he'll go back to school in September.

Old Dogs and New Tricks Randy Harris

Literacy Nova Scotia (Empowerment for Employment Bridgewater)

I'm recently retired and had been looking to make some positive use of my spare time when I came across the Long-Term Care Assistant program being offered by Literacy Nova Scotia.

Initially the prospect of being a mature student was cause for concern on my part, however I found that I not only enjoy being back in a classroom full of mostly younger students, but the instructor makes great effort to encourage and integrate all of the students into the daily course work in some way and we even have a few laughs along the way. There is something to that saying about the Old Dog and New Tricks - some of the material is familiar to me for sure but I'm learning new ways to use old skills in new and exciting ways.

Learning Changes Lives Lena MacLeod

Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Returning to learning and going back to school has changed my life and has made me able to have a better future. My goal for the future is to get a good job and have a happy family. I love going to school to learn. I know that I will have a better future in life by improving my essential skills. I know that I will have learned more and that I'll be able to do anything I put my mind to.

I now enjoy writing poems and short stories and that would not have been possible if I did not have someone to teach me. I have learned a lot since returning to school. I love learning and trying new things now. I have learned how to use a computer since I joined the Adult Learning Association classes and now, I'm really good at it.

I attend classes as much as possible and keep improving my skills and I have come to believe it is possible for me to continue to learn even more. I just enjoy it so much and I really want a great future so that is why I will continue learning as much as I can. I will continue to write poems and work on all my skills so I can accomplish more in life and be the best that I can be. This is how learning changed my life in every way. I am learning in school to keep setting new goals and learning new things everyday. I want to continue learning as long as I can so that I will have a better future in life.

Journey to My Future Cynthia Caldwell

Unama'ki Training and Education Centre

Hi, my name is Cynthia Caldwell I'm 49 years old, I'm currently attending Adult Program at Unamaki Training and Education Center. I also went to NSCC I'm married and have no children, I live in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia. I have four sisters and three brothers I'm the second oldest of all my siblings. My brother and I are both adopted. Going back to school can be difficult especially during the pandemic, Online learning at the beginning was interesting, at the beginning, I felt I could concentrate on my studies and focus more, I also think being in school is good also, cause the teacher is there and could explain everything on the board especially with math.

I believe there are many benefits in getting an education, it will open many doors and opportunities when you want to have a career. Returning back to school was a very natural decision for me. It's the next logical step in getting my personal goals and career goals. I need to push myself more to achieve my goals. Going back to school has many challenges, but with hard work and studying I believe it can be achieved. Math is one of the hardest subjects for me and the most challenging, but I believe with practice and tutoring I can overcome it and be able to pass, but I have to work for it to achieve passing.

Good study habits are very important and the key to achieve this, for me I believe getting a tutor will be very helpful. I passed English, now I just got three more subjects to go until I get my G.E.D, there are a lot of reasons on why I want to go back to school. One reason is to get off welfare and to make my own money to pay my bills and to feel more independent about myself.

Now as an adult I feel more motivated and determined to get my education, but I do need to work a lot harder if I'm going to get anywhere, I believe getting an education will improve my life. There are many reasons why I want to go back, [1] improve my writing skills, [2] improve on math

Now as I feel more determined and motivated in accomplish my goals, I will push myself more on studying especially on math, and my writing skills, I believe with hard work. My goal is by the end of next year I will get my G.E.D.

Don't Stop Until You're Proud Mackenzie Delorey Beaton

Antigonish County Adult Learning Association

My name is Mackenzie Delorey Beaton. I'm a 20-year-old student from Antigonish, Nova Scotia. I left high school when I was in grade 10 due to unfortunate circumstances. I was at a point in my life where I was experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues. Since then, I have turned my life around. After leaving high school I aspired to get my GED, so someday I would be able to attend college or university.

I started attending Antigonish County Adult Learning Association at our public library in January 2021. After studying the five different GED subjects over the course of the academic year, I earned my GED certificate this past December. It was a bit of an adjustment being back in a school setting, but I gained confidence and developed my academic abilities. Attending ACALA has helped prepare me for university by improving my time management, math, and literacy skills. Recently I was accepted into St. Francis Xavier University in the Bachelor of Arts with Major program. Learning has changed my life by giving me opportunities to better mine and my daughter's future.

I've always been drawn to the mental health/social services field. I am planning to major in Psychology, and I also have an interest in indigenous studies. Having lots of first-hand experiences, such as living in a youth group home and being in treatment facilities, has been a source of motivation and insight for me. My career goal is to be in a position to help others and make positive changes. I believe I have valuable knowledge and experience to offer in my potential studies. After completing my Bachelor of Arts, I plan to go on to get my master's and Ph.D. in psychology. My situation is a great example of how anyone can better their life and pursue their goals. Education is a great tool to turn your life into a positive direction and make your dreams become a reality.

Literacy Changed My Life

Heather Kaye

Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Literacy Network

Literacy NS is such a great program as I am a senior and learning new things on my computer has helped me greatly with my volunteer work as I have learned new programs and improved the way I used some older programs. The instructor is fantastic and very patient with us as we learn, not too fast and not too slow. She encourages us to try new things and always has time to explain why we are doing what we do.

It is very convenient to go to these programs at the library with lots of space to distance (since Covid). I am encouraging all my friends that want to learn more about their computers/notebooks to certainly attend these courses. I am so happy to have this opportunity to learn and socialize at the program as it very valuable to our mental health as well as keep the brain functioning properly.

Math Upgrade Cory Nash

Shelburne County Learning Network

I decided to go back to school to upgrade my math skills even though I have my grade 12. It'll help me with some future jobs. For example, if I wanted to become a floor boss at the lobster pound that I currently work at, I'd need to be better and faster with my numbers. The NSCC program that I'd like to get into requires greater math skills than what I have.

I haven't noticed much of a change yet because I haven't had to use some of my new skills anywhere, but I have been learning more math here at the learning center than I had at high school, and it makes me feel very proud of myself.

My goals for the future are to either become floor boss at my current job or to attend a course at the NSCC that'll provide me with something more long-term rather than working at the lobster pound. I would like to find a trade where I can work hands on. This is my math upgrade story and why I returned to learning.

Everyone Can Learn Jennifer Jordan

Colchester Adult Learning Association

Learning for me has always been very important, as someone with a learning disability I couldn't do some of the work in school. I always felt stupid, and I hated to go. I was in my late thirties when I went back to community college again to do Health and Human Services. Though I have never been able to work in the program I took due to a fall I had that gave me bad arthritis in both knees. I tried a course I had dreamed of doing but the mark was based on two papers which is the one thing I have the most difficulty doing.

However, at the Community College, this time I found out what my learning disability was. I have a Non-Verbal Learning Difference meaning that I have weaker muscles, I have difficulties with depth perception and directions, and putting anything in an order is hard.

I was depressed and decided I was a failure and gave up on education. I am living with my parents and most days I had problems getting out of bed. I needed something to do so I began to volunteer and was voted into the position of secretary my first meeting before I even knew what was happening. I could type but they wanted me to do other computer related things that I had no clue how to do. Someone from CALA was on this board so when they had a position left in a computer class the day before it began, they offered it to me, it took some convincing, but I agreed to give it a try, and to my surprise I was successful at it. I have since taken other computer courses from the Colchester Adult learning center and have been successful at them.

Returning to learning at age 47 has really helped my self confidence. I never thought I could learn to use a computer, and I was so scared I would fail at something else. Learning has become something I enjoy again, the teachers at CALA are great and the courses have been really key to get as a way to get my confidence back. No one should be afraid to learn, in adult learning they will help you figure out the way you learn best.

My goals right now are to take more computer courses and to look for a job I can do sitting down. I also want to do more volunteering to help me get more experience.

If you are someone with a learning disability, don't let people tell you, you can't do something, (I remember one teacher told my parents to take me out of his class because I would bring his grade point average down.) Find something you enjoy doing and find a positive way to learn how. Also find out what ways are out there to help you learn better.

Life Changes

Teresa Connors

Colchester Adult Learning Association

Why I decided to make a change in my career path was mainly due to my limited physical mobility where working in my previous jobs consisted of a lot of physical strengths. I have had many obstacles through my life, especially these past 6 years and wanted to prove to myself that I can. I do enjoy the office environment and achieving new skills as I go.

Last fall I was given the opportunity to upgrade and learn new skills, along with confidence from the amazing tutors at CALA, and practice and learn more to keep up with the world of technology and put my skills to proper use.

My goal in the future is to acquire a job career maintaining what I have learned and take on any more challenges as I go and keep a positive attitude and believe in myself.

Her Journey to Digital Learning

Marlene Whitehead

Colchester Adult Learning Association

Once upon a time there was a very kind, efficient, and professional female who worked very hard to become a retail manager despite the competitive nature of this profession and her colleagues.

She was a very kind, nurturing, and supportive manager to her coworkers. She loved her job and was very successful. She believed none of this would have been possible without her faith and the love and support of her then boyfriend who became her husband throughout this journey.

It's important to mention she is a very humble person and would never normally mention that she won many awards and accomplished much professionally. However, in the next chapter you will note she has no issues sharing her proudest and most cherished title with the world.

During this chapter of her life, she could no longer deny her dream of being a mom and that she had stifled her desire long enough.

Both times she became a mom, she held her baby ever so gently gazing deep into their eyes vowing to be the very best mom she possibly could.

She embraced and loved her new role beyond words. She was a very loving, nurturing, dedicated and an overprotective mom. With a grateful heart she continues loving every part of their journey together, finding teachable moments in the beauty of nature around them and life's many blessings. She continued trying to make every day memorable and often inventing all types of simple but imaginative experiences for both of her sons, their extended family, friends and classmates.

She was so focused on making sure her sons had everything for their success she neglected doing the same for herself.

During a new chapter her eldest son began grade twelve and she decided this would be a good time to return to the workforce. Knowing retail management would not work well for her family she knew she would require a career change, so she began academic training for a new career path.

Throughout her job search journey, she immediately realized although she had acquired new academic credentials, it became evident she was lacking digital skills. The realization "Digital Literacy" wasn't a choice it was a must have skill.

She researched her options and after much contemplation decided CALA was the best fit for her needs. She is so grateful she made the phone call to CALA. She is in week five of the eight-week digital literacy program. She knows after she feels confident with the digital training, she will be able to find a job in her chosen field and begin a new chapter.

Don't Be Afraid...ASK

Andrew Tufts

Dartmouth Learning Network

My name is Andrew Tufts, and I am attending class for my GED at the age 49. I started on this new journey for self development and to do something for myself. Returning to school was something that was always in the back of my mind ever since leaving high school, but it was something I never had the opportunity to pursue as new careers and a family would never allow me the time. Through all this time something was always going on in the back of my mind and it took some time to figure out what I needed to do- after much self reflection, I realised that I was now in a position at work that I could look at returning to school to achieve a GED.

I have only been attending classes at the Dartmouth Learning Network (DLN) for a few months and it has already taught me a lesson that I wish I developed earlier in life. Do not be afraid to ask questions when you do not fully understand what is being asked. I always felt uncomfortable in a classroom or work group setting when I did not understand what was being discussed and usually sat quiet in the background. I rarely ever asked questions to help me understand what was being taught.

My first night of classes at the DLN I was nervous and also afraid that I was going to be too old to start an endeavour like this. As I was waiting for an elevator to take me to the classroom, there was another middle-aged woman waiting for the same elevator. I could also tell she seemed a little nervous as well. As we waited for the elevator, I introduced myself and I found out her name was Claire, and she was also attending the DLN for the first time. Claire and I both discussed how we were both nervous and excited to take on this new journey and we both mentioned how we were worried about not being able to keep up with the young folks. Having met a fellow classmate gave me a bit more of a confidence boost as we entered the classroom.

We were introduced to our teacher Lyssa, who made me feel very comfortable and at ease as we began our class. I understood what was being discussed and was fully engaged which is something that does not happen to me very often in a classroom setting. While the class went on a question arose and I felt that feeling again of not understanding. I did not want to fall in this rabbit hole again, so I put my hand up and asked for help. Lyssa was able to break the concepts down and helped me walk through this step by step. Within a few minutes I understood exactly what was being asked with confidence. Something inside of my mind struck me and I came to the realisation that having lived and worked for so many years, if I do not understand something it is alright to ask for guidance. Why should I be afraid to learn and expand my intelligence?

After just a few months of returning to a learning environment, I am going to continue this new learning journey for the rest of my lifetime and possibly attend university. I have found myself smiling ear to ear on my drive home from class from this new sense of accomplishment and not being afraid to ask questions. I am sure I am only seeing the beginning. The help of the DLN and my fellow classmates has ignited a new fire in me, and I am incredibly filled with gratitude.

How Did Adult Learning Change My Life?

Joseph Johnson

Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

The reason I am here to continue on the path of trying to get my GED is because it's something that I have always wanted for myself since I dropped out of school at an early age of 15 years old. This will enable me to help my grandchildren with their homework in the future.

I have learned a lot of what I didn't know for a long time since I started here at PiCCoLA adult learning centre. The staff here are very good at teaching us the right stuff that we need to know and ensuring that we understand what we need to know before going to write the GED test.

I am so glad that I am able to take part in this great group of people because I am learning new things every day which is helping greatly with my math and writing skills. I now have more confidence in myself, but I do still have some room for improvement in the math subjects and some of the other subjects as well, but I feel good about my time here, and I am sure that I will do ok when it's all said and done! This is thanks to the staff and my classmates that are great to help out when I am having problems.

My goal for moving forward is to get my GED completely and to give back to my family and community by volunteering.

Why I Went Back to School

Sabrina Grant

Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

I graduated high school 20 years ago. I did not do well in school at all, I was diagnosed with a learning disabilities at a young age, so learning was very hard for me. I always wanted to be a nurse, but my grades stopped me from doing that, so going back to school to get my GED was what I needed to do. I was raising 3 kids and found it hard to do that and go back to school.

I first tried to go back in 2019 but dropped out because there was a lot of stuff I had to do, and I had a job. I tried again in 2020, but the pandemic happened, and we moved to online classes, I found that was hard to do. I left school again because my son passed away. This time I left for a year and then came back in 2021. I am doing so much better with learning now that I am older. My math is coming along really well and so are my other subjects. I am proud of myself and know anything I put my mind to, I can do. I want to show my kids the same thing, that they can do anything they want if they work hard enough.

I am happy to be able to provide for my kids and make sure they will have everything they need. Once I am done with my GED, I will go to NSCC to do some upgrading and then apply for my nursing. It may take me a little bit to get there but that's ok, as long as I get there.

Learning As a Way Forward

Bill Brooker

Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

Going back to school was not a thing I had ever planned to do because I thought I didn't need it. Now, I'm glad I came back. It helped me find a new focus in life.

I went to NSCC in Stellarton, finished the EET (Electronic Engineering Technician) course, and got a job at Fleet Maintenance Facility Cape Scott. Moving from the little town of Trenton to the big city of Halifax was too much for a kid with anxiety problems, so I ended up quitting and moving back home. After a few years of unemployment and therapy, my doctor and I agreed that I was ready to start looking for work again. My case worker at the time, Gord, suggested that I start by taking a course at PiCCoLA to help me get back into the working world.

I was kind of wary of going back to school at first. I had no idea what to expect. I was expecting it to mostly be people who hadn't completed high school. I was already good at things like math and English, so I wasn't sure what I was going to get out of it. There were people from all different backgrounds and skill levels, and I learned a lot just from being there and interacting with them. I started talking to people more and opened up. I didn't feel as anxious anymore. What it really helped me with, was learning how to come out of my shell.

I ended up taking a few courses there, hoping that I would find a new path in life. I had been away from EET for quite a few years by this point and didn't think I had much hope of going back into that field again. One of the courses they offered had a job shadowing, internship style part to it. It seemed like as good a shot as any at getting back into the workforce. I knew a few of the people taking this course from the other one I had taken which made me a lot more talkative than I usually am around new people. I also started helping other students with their math during class. It seemed I had a bit of a knack for teaching. Not only that, I enjoyed it!

Now I've been here at PiCCoLA for a few years. I'm half volunteering, half taking courses. I started taking Practitioner Training last November and am almost finished. I'm hoping I can give back and help people in the same way the people at PiCCoLA helped me and others.

My Adult Learning Experience

Jason Bates

Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

I was indoors at my house most days because all community activities were stopped because of the covid pandemic. I was given the opportunity to go to PiCCoLA in New Glasgow for school. I got out of the house and made new friends with my peers at PiCCoLA.

With the promise of helping me learn math so I could excel at NSCC upgrading my math to graduate. I needed to upgrade my math in order to join the electrical engineer course and learn the trade. Adult learning is making this a reality. There are many skills I've learned while attending adult learning at PiCCoLA. I have learned skills I can use in school, at work, and at home.

Adult learning has furthered my education, opened many opportunities, and it feels like anything in the future is possible.

Computers Aren't So Scary

Brenda O'Rourke

Dartmouth Learning Network

I am a retired grandmother. My son looked into the computer program for me. He was tired of getting my calls for information. It was the best decision I made to attend.

My experience with computers is very limited. In fact, I was sure that if I pressed the wrong key on any computer, it would suck me into an alternate universe. The worst part was the fear of never being able to get back to my universe. Sitting down at a computer literally made me feel ill.

School gave me something to look forward to. I knew I would finish each day with some new personal achievements. There was no judgement regarding how little you knew. For instance, I didn't know where to plug the charger into my chrome book. When I asked, I was told "no problem it's just here, of course, you wouldn't know if you haven't done it before" Throughout this experience I've only received patience, kindness, and encouragement.

School has given me confidence and independence for everyday living. I can now look up phone numbers, addresses for dentists and doctors, as well as maps for driving. These were all outside my abilities previously. It seems like I've learned so much more, in leaps and bounds since I've started.

Attending school has also given me new goals. I would like to volunteer in not-for-profit offices. I know I'll be able to help my grandchildren with projects, and I never want to stop learning and exploring new possibilities. Life just keeps getting better!

Going Back to School

Jacqueline Pitts

Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

This is how my story of leaving high school and coming to PiCCoLA started. It was grade seven my first year of junior high, I started to find the work harder to understand and I also found it harder to focus and concentrate. When I asked for help the teachers would explain it out to me and walk away leaving me still confused about what I was supposed to do. One of my teachers even said “you’re in high school now, it's time to smarten up and pay attention. I'm not repeating myself to you again and again.” Another teacher said to my mom “she is slacking off and not getting her work done and I'm not chasing her for it.” Mom told her, “Maybe she needs some extra help?” My teacher just replied with “She's just a daydreamer and needs to start paying more attention”.

I FAILED THE YEAR!

Moving on to grade nine and still struggling and failing miserably, I met a wonderful lady named Mrs. Murphy, she offered me the opportunity to try OPP the Occupational Preparation Program with hands-on learning. I got an automatic pass because you had to be in grade 10 to do it. YAAY!

OPP was great! Shop class anyway, I did pretty well in that part and enjoyed it most of the time. Regular classes were another story. I still struggled and failed again. Not only was I having a hard time getting my regular class work done, I was also alone as all my friends had graduated and moved on. I GAVE UP.

When I was 21 my mother decided to take me to Bedford, where I was diagnosed with ADD by Dr. Curtis. Right around the same time I had my first seizure and ended up being diagnosed with epilepsy. This became a new struggle for me, learning how to cope with some new life changes and no longer being able to do some of the things I loved, such as most of the rides at amusement parks/fairs. Getting my driver's license also had to be put off for a while. Thankfully, I had lots of support from my husband Martin, and close family and friends.

At the age of 22 I had my daughter Sophie, and four years later my son Gabriel was born. I had tried a few times to go back to school, but never got far and had to stop because I was needed at home. The cost of childcare was just too expensive for me at the time. Now my children are fourteen going on fifteen and ten, so I decided to give school another shot and happy to say I'm doing pretty good!

Moving forward, I hope to be able to find a job working with animals or maybe even get a trade, possibly in mechanics, carpentry, or maybe even tile like my husband.

How Adult Learning Changed My Life

Nancy Sutherland

Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

Knowledge is an absolutely wonderful thing. I really wish I had this bit of information when I was younger. My parents never really pushed education on us. They were very hard workers but not college educated. I'm actually the only one of my siblings that graduated high school.

I wasn't the best student, but I was passing most subjects. I probably spent three of my teenage years in summer school. I almost quit in grade 11 but after 2 months of pumping gas, I realized maybe I should at least graduate school and figure things out from there.

After I graduated, when I was 20, I immediately went to work and just began life. I travelled and worked for 10 years and then settled down and started a family. Going back to school was never a thought because I struggled so much the first time around.

I found a job as a dishwasher and worked my way up as I started cooking, and after 15 years, I became Kitchen Manager. I continued to work in the same job for 20 years but developed arthritis. So, for health reasons, I had to leave the profession that I love.

What was I going to do now? I tried a few different jobs and was slowly realizing that I might have to actually go back to school. I had no idea what to take and did not like the idea of any kind of structured schooling. I was beginning to lose my confidence and become dependent on other people. Extremely miserable and unemployed, I ended up on employment assistance and developed bad depression.

I couldn't figure out what to do. I was so tired of being poor and unemployed, and I needed help. This is when I found Adult Learning and it was absolutely the best choice I have ever made! The staff at PiCCoLA and Bridge to Success are the most positive, supportive, kind, and encouraging support staff!

I was absolutely floored at how easy it was to learn as an adult. It has opened up my mind and given me my confidence back. I'm finding so many things out about myself that I didn't know before. For instance, the way I learn, I had no idea that I was a visual learner. I also thought math was a joke being played on just me. Now I know it's not, and I actually have been doing fractions all these years while I've been cooking. Who knew?

The benefits have been unbelievable! They have absolutely widened our perspective of the world of learning. We've taken writing workshops and a very valuable computer course. We even get to partake in courses like Mental Health First Aid, WHIMS, OHS, and many other certificates.

My goals moving forward include a great amount of career exploration to figure out what I can do next! It would be great to find a job that didn't feel like work!

NOW My Life Begins

Sarah MacInnis

Richmond County Learning Network

In September of 2021 I was asked if I was interested in joining the NOW program. Initially, I felt a sudden rush of excitement which was quickly replaced by fear, anxiety and self doubt.

At that point, I had been a stay-at-home mom for over 6 years. Although I had plans to return to school at some point, the idea of returning to learning scared me to some degree. As I got older, I could tell my brain and memory was changing. I wondered if I was still capable of writing papers, completing projects and to be honest, if I still knew how to socialize with adults. Add all of that to the fact that technology has changed so much since I've been in school, and I really wondered if I could do it.

I decided to join the NOW program mainly because I thought it would be nice to have something to put on my now very empty resume and because I thought it would be a great opportunity to practice my socialising skills. When I joined the NOW program, I had no idea how it would change my life.

The women in my class are absolutely amazing, each with their own struggles and stories that they bravely share and trust each other with, which in itself has been therapeutic. We support each other and build each other up and there's always lots of laughs in between. My teacher, Gwen Smith, makes our class so welcoming and comfortable. She places so much importance on the effort we apply and is generous with her praise.

My sister is currently taking Early Childhood Education and I am her personal proofreader. As I'm helping her with her papers and projects, I often find myself using skills that I've learned in the NOW program. Every week that passes, I feel more confident in my ability to learn and now have plans to go back to school and be successful.

The NOW program has given me an opportunity to stretch out my brain, shake off the cobwebs and put it to work. My teacher and the women in my class have given me my confidence back with their encouragement and support and literacy has given me the ability to share my story with you, in hopes that if anyone reading this feels scared to go back to learning, they may find the courage to do so or reach out and find a program that might help them dip their toes back in.

Literacy Nova Scotia Essay Linda MacPherson

Colchester Adult Learning Association

The reason I returned to learning was to improve my digital literacy skills. In today's labour market if you don't possess these skills, you will surely be overlooked by someone that does.

I started an extensive job search in 2019. I connected with Nova Scotia Works/ Future Works at the time as I needed help in updating my resume. They were wonderful at helping me do this. I applied for several jobs with the skills I possessed and had a few interviews, but still no job.

I quickly realized that if I did not go back to learning I would be stuck in positions that were physically demanding and that would not secure me with a living wage.

The career practitioner at Future Works referred me to CALA as they had a digital literacy skills program running and I signed up to take the program. From there it went to the Home and Office Skills program (4 weeks) and then the Home and Office Skills (8-week program). I am currently enrolled in The Manage Learning Online program. I hope to take the seniors program coming up in June. These programs have changed my life

The instructors at CALA teach you from the basics. They teach you how to use, understand, and create documents and spreadsheets. How to navigate the web safely. You are able to experiment in class with tasks that are assigned. This has helped me to build confidence. Learning in a respectful environment where everyone matters, and no one gets lost.

In one of the classes, we talked about goal setting and how to break down these goals, so they become more attainable. One of my goals is to work in a small office in Truro doing administrative work. If I'm unable to reach that goal before July, my back up plan is to enroll at the NSCC and take the Medical Office Assistant program 2022.

In 2021, I was enrolled to take that program. I am so glad that I waited a year and found CALA in the interim. I often joke with Vangie, one of the instructors, that taking these programs should be a prerequisite to attending college.

One of our tasks at CALA was to write down one of our favorite quotes and do research on it. One of my favorite quotes is "Knowledge is Power". I came to the conclusion that knowledge is the potential of power. Through reflection, action, and experience you gain wisdom. Using wisdom for the good helps society thrive.

I am so proud to be a CALA student, and as I continue on with my learning experiences, I would like to thank everyone that has helped me to achieve this along the way.

There are so many resources in the community that you can connect with that will help you and should be taken advantage of. From upgrading your resume to getting those skills that are needed for the next role that you want to apply for. Learning is continual and doesn't have an age group attached. I am so "grateful" to be where I am at this time in my life.

Learning Changes Lives

Ann Tanner

Employment Solutions Society Adult Learning Opportunities

If you stop and think about it, the past two generations of people did not need a grade 12 education to hold a job. I worked in health care all my life. I needed a change, so I went for a job I knew how to do. The only thing stopping me was no grade 12.

I decided, at 55, to quit my job in health care, and enroll in Adult Learning Opportunities, Employment Solutions Society, Bridgewater. I have been in classes since September. I have been adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and doing fractions. I am reading and writing everyday, and I have improved a lot already. Even though I am working part-time, I am planning to work hard and get my GED. You are never too old to do something for yourself. Just do it, just like me.

My Journey Tracy MacDonald

Queens Adult High School

I may be old, but my journey really only started about 5 years ago when I became a single mother to 4 beautiful little girls. I was working at different jobs. I started at a call centre, which was great except it was not easy to keep a sitter and my job was not very family oriented. So I ended up leaving there and stayed off work for a few months, till I found a sitter that was going to go and set up a daycare so that I would be able to get a subsidy for babysitting.

Once she had all that completed, I managed to get a Job working at Tim Horton's, where I had to drive an hour each way. I stayed there for a bit until one of the managers decided they were going to not be so nice and told us if we didn't like it, there was the door. I decided that night to apply to millennium 1 solutions which were going great.

They were very family oriented which was great. Till one day I had to fire my sitter because she was not looking after the girls the way that I would have liked for them to be. The day I fired her was the day I called the daycare. They accepted us right away. I was doing really well there until COVID then I started seeing a new guy.

The new guy was going to watch the girls while I was working. Yeah, like that actually happened. He was useless. By the summer of 2021 I was no longer able to work. As I could not afford to put the girls back in daycare and still try to provide for this guy and his 2 kids.

That is when I decided I was going to go back to school so that I could get my high school diploma. Then I would be able to further my education to become a Teacher's Assistant. In September of 2021 I started back to school. Knowing it was going to be very tight financially, in the end I would have an education and a Job that would allow me to have all the time I could get with my girls and still bring in an income.

So now I have been learning so much and my teacher has been absolutely incredible. She believed in me like no one else ever has. She has helped me grow over this past year into someone I never seen before and for that I am truly grateful.

My Story Ahmed Ibrahim

Cunard Learning Centre

I am Ahmed Ibrahim 33 years old. I'm from Sudan I came to Canada since February,6,2020.

I completed my high school diploma in 2011. After five years, I graduated from Sudan University of Science & Technology's College of Engineering. I received a bachelor's degree in Plastic Engineering.

I studied Arabic Language; I got some English in University but not that much. When I came to Canada, I had a big challenge in the language side. Last September I joined the Cunard Learning Centre to improve my language. Actually, I learned a lot.

My plan for the future is to get a high level of English to attend English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at NSCC. After NSCC, I hope to continue my engineering studies. Then I can work in my field.

Of course, education will change my life totally. First, the learning helps me to get knowledge and improve my confidence in life. Second, learning helps me to communicate with people with different mentality in society. Also, it lets me to get things easier, or to achieve my goal in an easier way.