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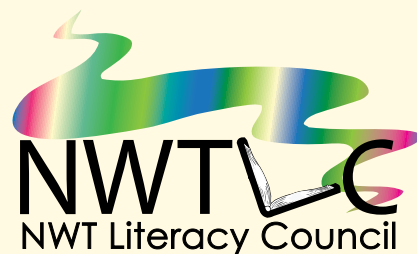
Adult  
Learner  
Stories

# It Feels So Good Inside

Stories of Progress  
on a Learning Journey



Government of  
Northwest Territories



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## Introduction

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In 2007 – 08 the NWT Literacy Council carried out a study to explore non-academic outcomes among Aboriginal adult learners. We designed the research around learners' stories, using journey as a metaphor.

We interviewed 56 learners from three NWT Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) programs:

- 39 current learners and 17 former learners.
- 71% Dene, 25% Inuvialuit, and 4% Metis.
- Most under 30 years of age.
- Most completed less than Grade 10 at school.
- 70% had children, 21% were single parents.

The NWT has many adults with low levels of English and other literacy skills. Only a small percentage enrolls in ALBE. And it's often difficult for learners to stay in the program when they do enroll.

This study is the first time the NWT has formally documented non-academic outcomes, though adult literacy practitioners are familiar with them. The study provides insights into the complexity of Aboriginal learners' situations, told in their own words.

Contact the NWT Literacy Council to get a copy of the research report or download it from our website.

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## Acknowledgements

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The NWT Literacy Council sincerely thanks all the learners who shared their stories.

We also thank the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the NWT for their financial contributions to this project.



The opinions expressed in this document are solely those of the authors. The CCL has no responsibility for the content.

All documents that the CCL produces are available in French and English. Documents the CCL supports, that other organizations produce, are posted on the CCL website and may be available only in English or French. If needed, the CCL makes available an executive summary of the document in the other official language.

The NWT Literacy Council is a not-for-profit organization that supports literacy development in all eleven official languages of the NWT.

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## List of Stories

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Each story records a personal learning journey - words each learner spoke during interviews. Some learners use their own name; others use a different name, to stay anonymous.

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## Aline's Story

**Aline** is Dene. She has four adult children. Aline's first language is Slavey and she also speaks English. Aline has a full-time job. She completed Grade 10 at school and was in an ALBE program for two years.

I went back to school to get more education, to get a better job. I never went back for reading and writing - I just went back to get more out of what I'm looking for.

**... I just went back to get more out of what I'm looking for.**

But other than that my reading was kind of low. In my spare time I do some art. I hardly ever go out on the land - I have to stay home. But if I do I like it.

I liked reading best when I was in the ALBE program. And doing a lot of writing. I practice so hard at writing. I still practice in writing. It's good because you meet other people; you learn from other people. That's good, I think. Like, if you're stuck on something, someone else can help you.

One of the challenges for me was always being there. Sometimes you miss for no reason. You fall back in your work and it's just - you don't know where you're at.

Sometimes I struggle, mostly with algebra. Yeah, and I can never get it so I just say, "I'll skip that over, I'll get back to it." I just need to get it into my head. Algebra was the only math I was stuck on.

**Now I can speak out ... I can speak out for myself.**

Now I'm not shy like I used to be. Now I can speak out in English - I can speak out for myself. My friends tell me I keep yapping. Even literacy too - it really helped me out.

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## Aline's Story

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If I like something I'll stick with it, if not I'm scared to try new things. They keep telling me at literacy, "You should come back."

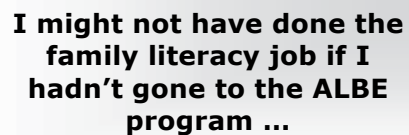
My attitude is pretty good from being in the program. I like to learn and meet other people. I like learning; I'm more open. I really had fun in that program. I was happy in it.

I did Slavey in the ALBE program. It's good to learn Slavey. I'm still learning over there (at the Aboriginal Headstart Program) to write. They say that you need to be able to write it to teach it. So I'm learning.

Improving my skills and learning were my biggest successes in the ALBE program. For myself there was a big change for me - just caring for my son for example.

I'm always cooking. I didn't before because I was too busy. Now I cook for my grandkids. How funny! My grandkids like my cooking. My grandson also likes to play hide and seek with his brothers and sisters. They hunt till they find somebody.

I might not have done the family literacy job if I hadn't gone to the ALBE program - although I always want to learn something different in my life. I'm good at English, but now I speak Slavey all the time. So I guess I'm a role model.



**I might not have done the family literacy job if I hadn't gone to the ALBE program ...**

Yeah, I'm always speaking Slavey and teaching it. It wasn't my skill, but now I have it. I got the skill from working at the family literacy program and going to training, and coming to the ALBE program. They gave me so much. I wanted to prepare. Now I don't know what to prepare for.

What I did back there, when I really wanted to go back to school - but I didn't know how, because I was always putting my kids first. Now that my kids got a little bit older I can think of myself.



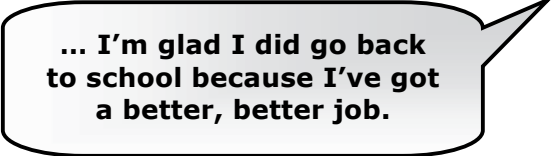
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## Aline's Story

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I've got to do something. I'm not going to work when I'm older, but right now I've got to do something. And something is telling me that I need to work with kids. Like I keep having this dream of teaching. So I went back to school and I got my certificate in early childhood.

I went back to school to get a good education. But I'm glad I did go back to school because I've got a better, better job. Being in that class proved I could do things.



**... I'm glad I did go back to school because I've got a better, better job.**

You know - you always think you're so dumb, but you're not. Go out there and show them and yourself you can do it.

Like, I'm not shy any more; I speak out. I was in ALBE in 1992 – a long time ago. But I still talk about that program. I was proud to go back to school so that I could learn a little bit more. Maybe I'll go back to teach there.

My goal is that I want to be able to talk for my people. If I go to a meeting I speak out. A lot. Sometimes they have a meeting and I get up and talk, but before I'd just sit there. When you go there you can't just sit there, you need to ask questions, it's the only way you'll know. So now I'm not shy about asking questions.



**So now I'm not shy about asking questions.**

I've been through a lot of programs – ever since 1991. I've been travelling a lot. I just got back from Vancouver last week.

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## Archie's Story

**Archie** is Dene. He has no children. Archie speaks English and some Slavey. He completed Grade 11 at school and has attended several ALBE programs, including pre-employment training and access programs.

I came back to school because I wanted to further my education - to go and do a trade or whatever comes along. Whatever they throw at me. I wanted more education.

I'm good at sports. I play hockey, just hockey.

**... I wanted to further my education ... I wanted more education.**

We had hunting and fishing, trapping. I have a couple of uncles that take me out every now and then. But right now I just give them a hand. We go look for whatever they buy for hunting and trapping - that's what we'll eat. Moose. Caribou. Usually close at hand.

That depends on the surroundings or the area, or if you see tracks. And then you'll try to track it yourself. Or if you get lucky, just go as far - as much gas as you can take. Then come back the same way - burn half and burn half back.

It was no decision for me to come back to school. I just had encouragement from my parents so I decided to come back. Besides that I was almost there. I just needed somebody to refresh my memory so this was it.

My brain just blacked out for a while. I just used to hang out with friends and then do whatever comes to mind, whatever is on hand.

## Archie's Story

But coming to school changed my life quite a bit – more of a routine. It gave me more confidence to go to the pre-employment in carpentry, which I went into. Or the introduction to carpentry - that is the one I took.

Just to go out and do it, and don't be afraid to fail - but keep coming back. I was afraid to fail before, and until I came here I didn't know I could do it. It was a commitment on my part. Which I did and I passed. It was good anyways.

**... until I came here I didn't know I could do it.**

You go out and just try to get stuff done for yourself. It just gave me that confidence not to be scared. You never know until you try. That's what it gave me.

I didn't speak out very much -- just when I had to. Then I will, which was pretty good. Most of the time I probably had to anyways, which gave me more confidence. Just speak out for myself, and whatever.

My brother and sister always looked up to me. When I came back to school they saw that you could at least try again - which gave my brother more confidence to graduate a couple of years ago, I think.

It's good for my little sister too - she's got two more years. When I came back she saw me doing homework, so it made her do her homework that much more, eh? I was kind of a role model in my family. Which is good.

**Going back to school made me go out more ... Gave me more confidence ...**

Going back to school made me go out more to meet more people, to go to training, which was pretty good. Gave me more confidence to do whatever.

I was in (Fort) Smith last fall, not this fall. Pre-employment carpentry. It wasn't bad. Just the fact that I was with people that are older than me. People help each other, which was pretty good.

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## Archie's Story

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My biggest success was making a commitment to come every day. Just to get up and come here and stay here for the full day, and for whatever duration that time was. I came most days, all the time. I finished quite early, eh?

Most of my books - finished a month early. So the teacher gave me most of the month off and next month. I finished my books and had nothing else to do - so I just came here every now and then, and just read whatever books they had there.

When I finished I felt really good. It really helped my confidence knowing that I still had it in me. I knew I always did and then people in the community always told me that.

**It really helped my confidence knowing that I still had it in me.**

I always knew I had it because I always used to do homework when I was young. But I left school because of personal problems. That is the only reason why I left. I managed to overcome them, which was pretty good.

If someone asked me about coming back to school I'd tell them it was worthwhile. If you are committed to it then in the end it will be worth it. And at least you will have a good steady job in the end.

**If someone asked me about coming back to school, I'd tell them it was worthwhile.**

I was working for my apprenticeship in carpentry, but I got laid off for a while because they couldn't find trades people. No one was available. So I got laid off for a while.

I'm going to try to go back to them, but there is something else with the housing corporation. They are looking for apprentices, so I put an application in there.

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## Archie's Story

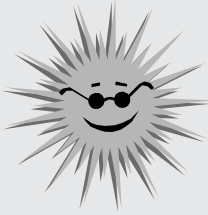
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When I was in pre-employment carpentry I sat an exam the last day I was there - the Friday or the Thursday, I'm not too sure. I wasn't quite successful.

But they said you could do a supplemental exam, and we could still get our hours at the same time. Which is pretty good. So we could go back in the fall, maybe. Just needed our hours - that was it.

Before we started working, I worked at the friendship centre and was using my boat to take kids to have a ride. Yeah, whatever program they had on, so boating and whatever, just from place to place. I was a volunteer for about a week maybe.

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## Betty's Story

**Betty** is Dene. She has one child. Betty speaks English and she works full-time in a preschool. Betty completed Grade 11 at school and now attends a women's pre-employment training program. She's been there for less than a year.

I came back to school for the math. I'm good at listening. I got a job, so that was one good thing to happen as a result of being in the program. I got along with my classmates, cooking and helping.

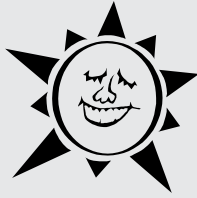
**I got a job ... one good thing to happen as a result of being in the program.**

The program is good for getting along with people. When you're going to school you want to socialize. You see people there you don't usually hang around with, and then you see them in town and you talk. So it's good for relationships.

I'm still friendly with some of the people who were in my class. Some of them you don't know until you go to that class and get to know them. I was in the program in October last year. It was pretty good. My English is better and my writing is better than before. I can say big words. Before I'd be shy, I'd blush - but not any more.

One of my biggest challenges was trying not to miss. And I was successful. I had a lot of support while I was in the program. Everyone wanted me to do well. They didn't want me to miss a day. I never missed school. Another challenge was learning to talk in front of people because I get shy and blush when I'm reading. By the end I wasn't scared.

If someone asked me about going to this kind of program I'd tell them to come and learn, and meet friends, and not be scared. I was scared about learning and about speaking out because I blush easy. I have more confidence too.



## Cecilia's Story

**Cecilia** is Dene. She has three children. Cecilia's first language is English and she speaks some Slavey. Cecilia completed Grade 10 at school and took some ALBE and trades access programs. She's now in a women's pre-employment training program.

I've gone back to school a number of times. I think this is probably my fourth or fifth course. I went to Introductory Cooking, to the Bridging program. Then I took the Guide Level One in (Fort) Smith. First I took ABE here. And now I'm in the Building Trades.

**I've gone back to school a number of times. ... I like the challenges of going back to school.**

I don't know why I've gone back to school so many times. I like it, I guess. For me it's rewarding because there's something coming out of it at the end. I learn more - then it's good. I like it.

I like the challenges of going back to school. There's a risk. When I'm successful at something, it makes me feel good, like I did it. Awesome. I like it. I like the challenge and rush, is that what they say?

I just like it because it makes me feel more confident in myself and it feels good. I think I've had the most benefit out of this one, the Building Trades Helper. I like it because the other courses I went to - I thought maybe it'll be interesting, but it wasn't what I was looking for. But this one is. I like it.

**... it makes me feel more confident in myself and it feels good.**

I get to build things and take them apart. Next week I think we're starting the utility shed. That's what we're starting when we get back from having a week off school - starting tomorrow.

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## Cecilia's Story

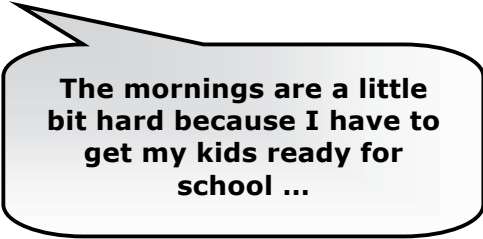
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I think I have skills out on the land - like I know a lot of things when I go out on the land. Some I learned in Guide Level One that I didn't know - things you're supposed to do in the bush and that. There's that.

And then there's that cooking course. There are certain things that you have to do and it's good. This one is really, really good. I like it, because it's all about measurements and things that we do. And after you've done your project you look at it - you're just like, "I did it." Feels good.

I made a push stick. It's when you have that big saw - like you know, has a blade right? And you're pushing your board. They use it to push the board.

That's it - because I wasn't here for that saw horse. But then there was one there that was five years old that the instructor let me fix. So, it looked like new when I was done with it. The math is challenging but it's good, it's understandable.



**The mornings are a little bit hard because I have to get my kids ready for school ...**

The mornings are a little bit hard because I have to get my kids ready for school.

And when I'm done that I just have time to get myself ready and I'm off to school. Yeah, like that. Rush there, rushing back home.

And I've got to make supper and lunch. Yeah, but it's good. I'm on my feet all the time - I like that. I can't sit in one spot. I like this course because I'm always doing things.

Going back to school is good because it helps me - like all what I know, like my skills and all that. Like what I'm good at and what I can do. I know this one would be good for that, yeah.

I never thought I'd be able to do things like using a jigsaw, or a skill saw, a mitre saw. I never used a mitre saw until today. Some of the other girls knew how, but I didn't because I wasn't here that day.



## Cecilia's Story

When I find out I can actually do something that I didn't know I could do - it just feels good, like it's easy for me. I thought it was hard because in the past my common law had an accident. He cut his hand with a saw. For me I was always scared of it. But now it's not like that anymore. I overcame that fear. Feels good.

**I have more confidence in myself ... that I can actually do things ...**

I have more confidence in myself than I did before that I can actually do things - because before I wasn't up to doing anything most of the time. Just not into anything. But now it just feels good.

I want to do everything on time. Only time I'm ready to sit down is when I'm ready to go to bed. So that's how I feel. Always got to be on my feet - it's good for me to move around.

I also feel a lot more independent now. I used to be able to be quiet, like shy. But now it's not like that. It feels better - like I always have a happy attitude every time I come here. It feels good when I come here, because I'm always happy.

My friends are here. It's good because I learn new things every day. I'm learning from them and they're learning from me, right? That's good. It's good. It's a really good course.

My kids like me going to school because they know that I'm here and they're here, and whenever they have trouble they just come and see me here. That's good. At least we know that they are in the same building as me. It feels good though, going to school now.

**I think I was a role model for my kids - when I went to school.**

I think I was a role model for my kids - when I went to school. Because they know that I have to be here and they're here with me all the time. Feels good. They come to school every day like I do.

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## Cecilia's Story

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I volunteer at the youth centre - they have a youth centre there. I just volunteer my time in the evening to supervise the building. Or when they have dances and that, I'm a chaperone.

I also clean up and do projects with those kids, new projects. There's like a walk - walks in the summertime. It's good because then we can go in the bush on a walk and stuff like that. Yeah and we get sticks for our dream catchers, stuff like that. The kids like it. They know when we're going out for walks, so they're always there early. They're waiting for us to go. It's good.

I used to work at the youth centre - but it was kind of hard because it was late in the evenings, and I couldn't really find anybody to watch my kids that late. It was too much. Like then, I couldn't afford a sitter. But it was good. And I just wanted to start volunteering there. It feels good for me to be around kids because it takes me away from everything else.



**I'm most proud of getting all my certificates - of actually finishing the course.**

I'm most proud of getting all my certificates - of actually finishing the course.

Yeah, just getting those certificates at the end. It's a big achievement for me. It's good because I know I'll do it, because I know I will do it, and I can.

When I first went back to school I never thought about that. I thought for sure I'd fail. Or because when I took off to (Fort) Smith - I think that was the first time I went back to school. When I was doing the cooking course I met some people that were saying I couldn't do it and stuff like that.

And out of four months I didn't come home. I came home one weekend - Easter weekend - that was it. I stayed there another two months - it was good. And then I finished my course. Actually it wasn't hard at all. It was good. It showed me I could do it.

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## Cecilia's Story

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If someone asked me about going back to school I'd say, "It's definitely worth it. Just to have those skills and your certificate. Think about that. And what you're qualified for. You know, you get more qualifications. It makes you feel good, gives you a better attitude. It makes you feel good about yourself when you're done."



**It makes you feel good  
about yourself when  
you're done.**

That's what I can say about being in this program. That I feel good about it. Feels good, makes me feel like I did it.

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## Cindy's Story

**Cindy** is Inuvialuit. She's a single mom with three children. Cindy's first language is English. She works part-time at the college. Cindy completed Grade 10 at school. She also took ALBE, UCAP, Office Admin, and now Management Studies.

I'm not sure when I came back to school. I remember my daughter being in grade one. She's nine now and in grade four - so four years ago. I wanted to better my education to look after my kids - to bring them up in an environment where they could have things, good things.

**I wanted to better my education to look after my kids ...**

When my oldest daughter was in kindergarten I struggled to get her to school all the time. And I thought, "Well, she has to go to school for sure all the time. That's the best thing for her." The only way I can get her to do that is if I go back to school. That way I'd be able to get her to school and I'll be doing something with my life as well - bringing up my education levels.

I never set any goals. My main focus was to get her to school. If she saw the routine of going to school all the time it would be normal. And she wouldn't have to struggle and adjust to go to school.

**...that's when I decided I want to have a good paying job.**

I think probably when I went into my second year of schooling that's when I decided I want to have a good paying job. I didn't really know what courses to take. I took office administration.

First I was in Adult Literacy Basic Education (ALBE) and they started me right from the lowest level. I was getting no funding, but I was a single mom of three.

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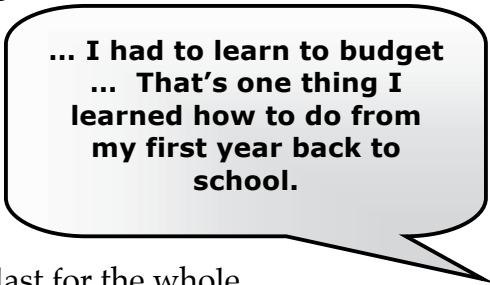
## Cindy's Story

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It was all the struggles of going through school. I completed the ALBE and thought, "How did I do it?" I toughed it out without any funding - and I was getting help from Education, Culture and Employment. They helped me a lot through that year. The basic part was the attendance - you have to show up, you can't miss courses. So, it sure wasn't easy.

After ALBE I jumped into a University College Access Program (UCAP). That allows you to build up your education level more, to get into a university course or program. It was getting a little bit easier because I was getting funding.


When I was in the ALBE program I had to learn to budget whatever little money I had. So from that experience I knew how to control and how to budget my money to last for the whole month. That's one thing I learned how to do from my first year back to school.



**... I had to learn to budget  
... That's one thing I  
learned how to do from  
my first year back to  
school.**

UCAP was kind of hard at the start. In my first semester, my auntie - my dad's sister - passed away in September. And a month later my dad's brother passed away. And then another month later his other sister passed away. So in September, October, November we had all these deaths in the family. But I toughed it out and thought, "No, I have to get my schooling done." I encouraged myself. I wasn't there for the family and it was hard. But I made it. Right now I look back at that and I think, "I accomplished that."

The other thing that I learned was that coming to school on a daily basis and on time was a part of life. When I start a job in the future I'll have to be at work 8:30 to 5:00. And you have to be there to make the money. That's something that people have to learn if they want to take care of themselves - if they want good things for themselves or their families. They have to make that choice to go and just keep going.



**... I learned ... coming to  
school on a daily basis and  
on time was a part of life.**

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## Cindy's Story


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There are so many things in life that you go through. Good times, bad times, it doesn't matter - you have to get through because that's the way it goes. So I made it right through UCAP. I completed that year.

I also won the Staff to Student Legacy Award and the Council of the Federation Literacy Award. That was a big experience for me. I think back then it didn't really mean much to receive these. It happened so fast, so maybe I didn't see my accomplishments - and I didn't see how much I'm trying or how much I did. I went to Yellowknife to pick up the award from the Minister (of Education, Culture and Employment), which was really nice and really exciting.

I think back at how much I accomplished then and in Office Admin. When I was in the UCAP program I wanted to take Management Studies but I thought, "Okay that's a really high course, tough course. It's something challenging." But I want to be a manager, that's my goal. That was my focus. I don't want to be doing reception work - it's just not my personal choice.

But to get a feeling of Management Studies I took Office Admin - to get familiar with the environment of working in an office - because I've never really had that experience. That's when I realized there is no way I'm going to do this. If I want to reach my goal I have to go through Management Studies. It's a two-year program in the evenings, so that's the hard part.




**If I want to reach my goal  
I have to go through  
Management Studies.**

I think because I took Office Admin it made Management Studies a little bit easier on me - because there are a couple courses that are offered in Office Admin that they offer in Management Studies. That means I'm able to take one night off so I have that extra time with my kids. That really helped a lot.

Taking Office Admin was fun. I enjoyed doing it, but it's not something that I really want to do with my life. Then I started Management Studies

and it is tough. But I have to say I passed all my mid terms. Now we're stepping up to finals. There's all this build up of finals and school, and work and kids. I wouldn't say it was stressful, but there's a lot of stuff happening right now.

One of the main challenges for me was transportation. I am really proud of myself right now because three weeks ago I ended up with my driver's license. It's really good to have a license. It benefits me, the kids, work, and I find there's more freedom.



**I am really proud of myself right now because ... I ended up with my driver's license.**

I actually went for my learner's test in April of 2005 - so I had my learners for two years. Now I'm looking to get a vehicle, but I'm borrowing one for now. It's good to have a license - that's one accomplishment that school helped with.

I've seen so many people - my friends - who laugh about this all the time or you know we laugh about taking the learner's test. For me, I read the book and I went to go do the test. It was computerized. I found it really hard to take because once you click 'yes', or 'no', or 'true', or 'false', or whatever, you are rushed to get it done. So you read it and you press the wrong button. There were a couple questions that I didn't answer - like it skipped. So that was the hard part - so I didn't bother with that.

When I went to take my test again it was a written test, so that sure helped. It was better to see it in writing. You're able to go back to a question or you have more time to do the test. Reading the test on the computer is like proof reading. I guess you could say it was like reading but some people don't have the drive to sit and read.

When I was going to school here at the learning centre - and I was in ALBE and UCAP - I used to read to my kids. But I used to read my textbooks to them. It was like other novels or chapter books. To get my

## Cindy's Story

reading done, I'd read to them at night. Once in a while I'd treat them with one of their own books. But most days it was reading my textbook.

When I first started school I was shy; I was quiet - I never talked to anybody. That's just the way I grew up. I was always scared to ask people or to talk to people. I was always nervous to meet people. And right now I could talk to anybody. I opened up more and I'm not scared to meet people; I'm not scared to talk to people.

**I opened up more and I'm not scared to meet people .. to talk to people.**

School brought my confidence level up - but I don't believe that it went up because of my education level. It's because I'm bringing it up. I'm no better than anybody - I'm not putting down people, it's just I have the same feelings.

I have feelings, emotions - I get hurt, angry, sad, I have all the emotions. I am a human being just like anybody else. Just because my education level is going up, it doesn't mean that I am better than anybody who quit in grade nine.

If I see new students who are starting in ALBE - I don't know if it's just an instinct or a reaction of mine to say, "Tough it out." You may not get any money now, but you have to get it over and done with in order to get yourself to the next stage.

I realized a few times that I'd see myself encouraging somebody, but only after I tell them, "Tough it out! Look at what I did." I guess I just encourage people. Some people may think I'm a role model to other people, but personally I don't see it - maybe when I'm older.

**Learning and being more open, that's how I see myself.**

Learning and being more open, that's how I see myself. When I first started school I was really shy and quiet. After going through a couple semesters and



## Cindy's Story

starting a new semester of UCAP I took a step back. And I looked and thought, "Why am I trying to be shy?" I used to feel that when I was asking the teacher a simple question. You have that feeling of people saying, "Oh, that's such an easy question." I used to worry about what people thought.

When I went into University College Access Program I thought, "Well, they're not going to pay my bills, they're not going to get me up to school every morning, they're not going to go out and work for me and my kids. So if I am stuck on something, I am going to ask."

I'd say my attitude has changed. I guess I'm more in tune with the way everything is around me. If I don't know something I'll ask, even if I think it is a silly question.

**I'd say my attitude has changed. ... If I don't know something, I'll ask, even if I think it is a silly question.**

It may be silly to other people but if I want to know, I'll ask. Now everybody at the college knows I am the person that will talk to anybody. That's a really big change.

I come from a family who plays music. They all play the guitar and the bass, and any kind of instrument there is. I used to be so shy to go up on stage and sing. I sing quietly and have to face the other way to sing.

Now, it doesn't bother me. You still get butterflies but they're not as extreme as they used to be. So my attitude has changed - my perception on life, I guess.

I was young when I got married - thinking and believing that my husband was going to take care of me and provide for me.

**So my attitude has changed - my perception on life, I guess.**

That was the way I thought life was going to be. I didn't think it was going to be a bed of roses but I thought, "Okay, this person is going to love me, going to take care of me, is going to be there for me and help me

## Cindy's Story

raise kids. And I'll be a stay-home mom until they get to school." That's the way I thought it was going to be.

When that ended I thought, "Who's going to take care of me? Who's going to get us what we need?" Now I realize that life is about hard work and you need determination to keep going in every job.

Everybody has problems, issues, good times, bad times, in anything, anything they do in the workforce. It is never a piece of cake. That's what I see now. A smile makes a big difference.

All I knew was that I had to get this work done and do my best with what I had. I thank my family a lot. They helped me with the kids. And everybody at the college has helped me breeze through everything. They helped me out lots. Thinking back to ALBE, I had a lot of support from everybody – being in a non-funded program with three little ones.

**I thank my family a lot. ...  
I had a lot of support from  
everybody ...**

When I was in high school the teachers there always told me that they could see something about me - that I would be able to go far in life. I never paid attention to it. I never bothered with it.

Back in ALBE my main focus was getting the kids to school. There's a certain age in their life where they learn to read and write, and once they pass that age it's harder for them to comprehend everything. They learn better when they are a little younger. So I knew my main purpose was making sure they learned how to read and write - and from there everything else would fall into place.

**... I really grew in life ... I  
found out what I like to do  
and where I want to be.**

It was a struggle but I think I really grew in life. I found out who I was. I found out what I like to do and where I want to be.

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## Cindy's Story

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I thought about trying to get into Nursing or the Teacher Education Program. But that is something I don't really want to do. It would be nice, but I'm really enjoying the theory of the Management Studies.

I am not afraid to ask people anything. I guess what helped too was a few years ago I had to sell tickets for the jamboree. I was kind of shy.

I had one afternoon off and I went walking downtown to offices, selling tickets to anybody. "Do you want to buy tickets?" I started talking to people and selling tickets for the learning centre or the college or the College Grad Committee, things like that. It really helped me open up to be more friendly.

**School built up my confidence a lot and now my education level is pretty good.**

I would say I really grew over the years. School built up my confidence a lot and now my education level is pretty good. I do the best I can. I just want the same as everyone else – happiness.

I always tell people, "Go back to school." I've had so many people come to me because they know I've been in school for years. I know a lot of people nowadays, because of my different attitude toward everything. If you wear a smile, you get somebody's attention. I don't ask for attention, I don't want attention.

Going back to school is the best thing people could do for themselves. Because nobody is going to be there for you to go and make you money - if you want a vehicle or if you want your own house, or even little things that people have.

**Going back to school is the best thing people could do for themselves.**

When I was 14 years old I worked at the Northern store. I had some friends who'd mock me but, you know, I was getting paid. I could afford my own clothes, afford things I wanted - and it just felt good to do things for yourself. For anybody, going back to

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## Cindy's Story

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school is probably the best thing they could do - because there is so much more out there that people don't know about.

**... there is so much more out there that people don't know about.**

I wasn't nominated by anybody to be valedictorian. The deadline to enter or nominate somebody was the day before - so I never got nominated before that deadline. But I guess some people had a meeting and they said, "Okay, we're going to nominate you for valedictorian."

I had to quickly draw up a speech and figure out what I was going to do. I had a lot of help from my instructor. I ended up getting elected for valedictorian and it turns out it was pretty nice.

So, I think I've been through a lot. From being shy in ALBE to being the Master of Ceremonies the next year at the completion ceremony there was a big change. I just want my kids to be proud.

**... I've been through a lot. From being shy in ALBE to being the Master of Ceremonies ... there was a big change.**

One thing that really opened my eyes was my brother. He dropped out of school two years back and he was trying to apply to go back to school, and get into an access program. Or just go back to school to build up his education level.

His friend was walking by and his friend said, "Hey, what are you doing going back to school? You're trying to go back to school, you're trying to be smart." He was mocking him - but we're adults.

I thought that's kind of crazy because you shouldn't make fun. But my brother just looked at them, put out his arms and said, "Hey, education is free." I never ever thought of it like that. I went to ALBE with no funding, but I didn't have to pay for tuition, for books, for anything.

## Cindy's Story

By building up my education level I'll be contributing to my community - wherever I work it will benefit everybody.

**By building up my education level I'll be contributing to my community ...**

Everybody helped me get to where I am. Why not give it back, share what I've learned? So when they were mocking him I felt bad. But he came out with a good answer - education is free.

Maybe because I'm Inuvialuit – Aboriginal - I don't have to pay for tuition and books, and things like that. Maybe in the near future I might have to - times are sure changing. I might as well do what I have to, help around, encourage people to just go back to school. It doesn't cost you anything.

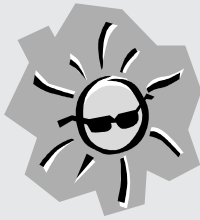
Right now I am working at the college as an admin assistant. That environment is a good place to work – to see those students going to school on a daily basis and completing it. I have met people who say, "I think I'm done. I think I'm going to drop out of school."

It's hard financially - it's hard mentally, emotionally. It's too much work, but that's just how life is. I remember being in that situation where I wanted to quit, where I wanted to give up. But I thought, "If I do, I'll have to start from square one again." So being at Aurora College has helped me.

**Now I'm encouraging people to go back and get their education.**

Now I'm encouraging people to go back and get their education. If you need help I'm here. Or if you need help, somebody is there for you, and will help you get back to school. All you need is that little bit of encouragement to keep going.

So many times I wanted to quit, but I knew I wasn't going to because I was not going to start from square one. I have too much to lose if I did that. It's too costly, too time consuming.



## Colin's Story

**Colin** is Dene. He has two children. Colin's first language is English. He completed Grade 10 at school. Colin has attended a trades access program for less than one year.

I felt I wasn't getting enough attention in high school. I thought Aurora College could help me move into a career that I really wanted to do. It gave me the confidence to try and do what I needed to do for my career - and an outline of how to try and do things - how to do the job right.

**I thought Aurora College could help me move into a career that I really wanted to do.**

Not only that but it gave me a lot of things as an individual too. It was better than high school. Because not only were things explained to me properly; but the instructor was always there to give me a hand.

In high school you have 20 to 30 kids there and they all need help. When I was in high school I wasn't really into school that much, but as I became an adult I thought I really needed it.

As a kid I was out playing hockey, sports - I was more into sports than learning. I travelled a lot with the hockey team and did a lot of sports. But all the sports didn't really deal with academics.

I went back to school to get some hands on experience, at least in the career I wanted to do. I wanted to be a carpenter.

The principal told me, "There's a carpentry program coming up for a couple of months. You can do that if you want or you can go back to high school." She left the choice up to me - so I was the one that decided to come here.

And that was great because they gave me more responsibility to be here. They didn't treat me like a young kid any more. You have to be an adult. You've got all these different responsibilities - like I lived on my own and had to pay bills.

**... they gave me more responsibility to be here. ... didn't treat me like a young kid any more.**

I was actually talking to my wife about going back to school. I'm thinking about it right now, but I don't know what to do.

When people come back to school - maybe other people think they are not very good at math or English, but they have lots of other skills. For example, I like building things. When it came to the part where I was supposed to build something it was all in my head, and I had to try to put it out of my head onto where it was supposed to be.

Probably the best advantage I had was math. I was really great at math. But that was then and this is now. I am kind of scared now to go back to school because it's been six or five years that I've been out of school.

One of the major challenges for me was my responsibilities. I was paying bills and had to put food on the table. Not only that, but my weakest academic course was science. I wasn't good at science and that proved to be the most challenging, because I couldn't really understand it. The teacher was trying to explain it to me but I really couldn't get it.

**My biggest success was just proving that I could probably do it.**

My biggest success was just proving that I could probably do it. I came close to getting into the access program. I was one per cent away. I got 69% and my instructor at that time told me, "You know, you were that close. Why don't you just go away, come back and try it again. Maybe this time, you'll get in."

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## Colin's Story

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At the time I wasn't really into going back to school. I was more on making money - because at the time I wasn't working. I thought a lot about going back to school but I was too busy doing other things.


I became more confident. I didn't put the education that I learned here to use right away. I wanted to work but I couldn't find any work - so I was doing odd jobs here and there for people out of town, which wasn't really paying enough money to keep me satisfied.

How I ended up in my present job is quite a funny story. I applied for it when I wasn't working. I wasn't really looking forward to trying it out because I heard their pay wasn't really that good. But there was no other place to work in town. So I tried it out and my friend who was my supervisor said, "I'm taking off to Rae for a couple weeks. We need you to stay here at the store and take care of the orders, make sure the groceries are okay and everything." So I stepped up to the challenge.

I thought it would be hard, but it wasn't - it was totally easy. Working with him was great because we both worked together - both heads together. We knew what was right for the store and we knew what was going on. It was good working with him. My people skills weren't really that strong until I started working at the store. Then I started to have more people skills when I started working.

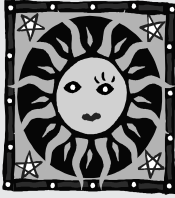
It's worthwhile for people to go back to school - to know that they can do it. I see some people who are still going to school and I think they are doing better than I am.

I have a couple friends there that took carpentry too. The first time they failed, but the second time they passed and made it. I think they have their first or second year apprentice right now. They're making pretty good money too. I say if you fail the first time, just keep on trying. It doesn't hurt to try at all.



**... if you fail the first time,  
just keep on trying. It  
doesn't hurt to try ...**





## Darlene's Story

**Darlene** is Inuvialuit. She has one child. Darlene's first language is English. She completed Grade 10 at school. Darlene was in an ALBE program and she's now working full-time.

A lot of things have changed since I had my daughter - so I would like a higher paying job. I would like to get into social work, and maybe psychology. So I need all these courses because of the requirements to get into these courses. My daughter is six years old.

**... I would like a higher paying job.  
... I would like to get into social work, and maybe psychology.**

Finances were the big thing. I get funding from the band in Fort Resolution. It's from the AHRDA fund. Yes, but I didn't know that. If I was going to be doing upgrading in Inuvik I wouldn't have been funded, because the Inuvialuit wouldn't sponsor me - or fund me as well. In their eyes I should already have my Grade 12. I found that out when I started school. So I am very lucky to be getting funding.

Another challenge is the homework - the load. Sometimes it can be very hard, with deadlines and stuff - and also trying to help my daughter with her homework as well as mine. She has to read every day. Plus I help her with her spelling and her math, and her reading.

My daughter is pretty proud of me for coming back to school. Because I drive her to school every day she thinks it is pretty cool that her mom was also going to school.

Like I said before - financially it's the biggest challenge because I am only getting \$550 every two weeks. I just thank god I am living with my dad


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## Darlene's Story

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because I wouldn't be able to afford to get an apartment with me and my daughter.

And it works out okay because my dad works out at the mine - two weeks out, two weeks in - so sometimes we're on our own. My family - my dad's pretty supportive of me going back to school.

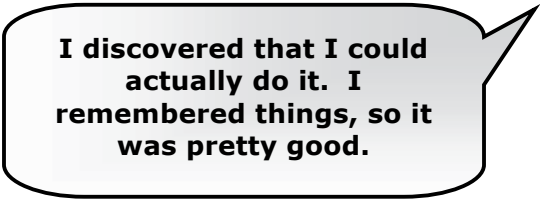


**I look to the future - like when I'm done and where I want to be.**

I look to the future - like when I'm done and I'm where I want to be. My long-term goal is to get into social work or psychology. Maybe social work first, then psychology, and then become a counsellor.

I have been out of school 15 years already. I decided to come back - so just the thought of coming back to school was scary. Am I going to remember this, and all that? When I first started I took applied math 10. That was my first semester. I was on EI (employment insurance) so that was good. I was able to just concentrate on my math and get back into it.

Once I was into the swing of things it was really good, and it just made me feel so much better - more self-confident. I discovered that I could actually do it. I remembered things, so it was pretty good.



**I discovered that I could actually do it. I remembered things, so it was pretty good.**

I want my daughter to go to college when she is older. I'm letting her know that it's good to go back to school and things like that. I am kind of like a role model to her that way. That was one of the main reasons why I went back to school.

It was also too because I was working for the government - but I was just casual. The position came up and I didn't get it because I didn't have my Grade 12. So that was the other main reason why I went back to school.

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## Darlene's Story

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But even when I'm done I still won't have my Grade 12 credits and stuff. But a whole bunch of other doors will open. Since then I've realized that I want to get into social work and psychology.

In the NWT they only offer social work in Yellowknife - but I'm probably going to go to Alberta. It's cheaper there. I'll be getting more money too.



**It has been pretty good overall, coming back to school.**

I think you can get either Student Financial Assistance or your claimant group funding - but hopefully one of them will fund me. It's like a one year or two year course as well. It has been pretty good overall, coming back to school.

I did some distance learning. That was challenging at times because the instructor is not here physically, but we have his phone number, his e-mail. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings we have math. And Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 12:40 I have English. We're struggling right now - our last online math instructor wasn't very good.

Distance learning is hard, very hard. When you get it, you understand what they are saying. But when you don't, that is when it becomes challenging.

I go onto YouTube and I find what I need, because there is some math tutoring on there. And then the college got the Barracuda (net blocker) put in so we couldn't go to YouTube anymore. So I do it at home. Plus we go to other math sites as well on the Internet.

It sure helps out a lot when you can get help from anywhere, when your instructor is not available. We do get tutoring on his blogs - so he is available Tuesday and Thursday.

People have more responsibilities when they go back to school - but those responsibilities can motivate them more in a way. I wish I hadn't quit

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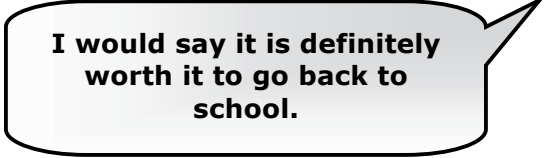
## Darlene's Story

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school because now coming back it's all online and the teachers aren't there physically.

When I was a teenager I took advantage of all that, so it is a great benefit to come back. I would say it is definitely worth it to go back to school. There are challenges and you just have to beat them and keep playing.

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**I would say it is definitely worth it to go back to school.**



## Dion's Story

**Dion** is Dene. He has no children. Dion's first language is English and he speaks some Slavey. He works at the elementary school. Dion completed Grade 10 at school. He has attended ALBE programs for four or five years.

When I first started the ALBE program my challenge was I wanted to gain my education – reading and writing and doing math, and mostly English. I liked doing research – of history and legends and some of the cultural stuff.

**... I wanted to gain my education – reading and writing and doing math ...**

I like to go out on the land and do cultural stuff. I go outside and do my own thing.

And I like trapping too - but it's not very good weather for trapping this year. The ice is too soft, so we've got to wait till the middle of December.

This isn't the first time I came back to an adult education program. I came here for four or five years. I came back here every year, but this year I missed because I wanted to do something different.

I took that underground mining training - for about six weeks. I was going to go for the twelve weeks but I didn't get it because I owed Aurora College. But I'm working on that now.

I'm working at the elementary school with kindergarten and grade one and two. I'm teaching them a little bit of Slavey. I don't really know that much Slavey, just some certain words. I'm an assistant, helping – trying just to keep them in line.

I'm good at most of the things during my youth, in my twenties, and that. I like to do everything, going out on the land. I like to work with things, to get my hands on things. I like to do things like fixing skidoos, fixing

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## Dion's Story

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trucks, cars, and a little bit of carpentry. And the thing is I really want to go back for welding. That's the thing I really want to do.

**... I really want to go back for welding. That's the thing I really want to do.**

You can't do welding and underground mining together because you got sulphur and airborne gas. So you can't have that - airborne sulphur and airborne gas, and sulphur. One little spark and your whole team is finished.

Your head rocks and your foot rocks - those are what you have to watch. Just in case the roof or the head rocks - might collapse even on you or the equipment. Every little space you have you might as well just get into it and save yourself.

I was thinking to myself I was more independent and more successful for myself. I know that I'm gaining more. I'm getting smarter and smarter. I challenge myself.

**I'm getting smarter and smarter. I challenge myself.**

I help some people around the community once in a while. Some of them don't really know how to read and write. Some of them I just help them with some of the things they don't know. I just talk to them and explain it to them. I did that before I came into the program, talking to the elders. Mostly I'm going out for travelling and drumming.

I'm a drummer ever since I was eleven years old. But now the thing is I want to start learning new songs. There's a workshop coming up next week. It's on December 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>.

It's a men's workshop. Talking about your emotions and the knowledge that you learn in life - what you succeed in. I've just got to put my little side of a story - saying how I feel and if I gained any more knowledge. I know I gained more confidence in myself. I like to do a lot of things. I like to bake - bread, pies, muffins, bannock.

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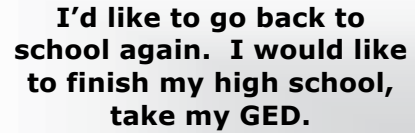
## Dion's Story

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I'd like to go back to school again. I would like to finish my high school, take my GED. That's the only way I could have my high school diploma.

That way I could get into apprenticeship - go for a year. Then I could have my apprenticeship course here. Then I could get my Red Seal. So then I have a career for the rest of my life.

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**I'd like to go back to school again. I would like to finish my high school, take my GED.**



## Elsie's Story

**Elsie** is Dene. She has eight children. Elsie's first language is English and she also speaks Slavey and some French. Elsie has a full-time job. She completed Grade 9 at school. Elsie attended an ALBE program for two years.

I went back to school many years ago – I forget when – the first time the friendship centre did ABE at their program. I thought, "I'll go and try." There was a good feeling in me that I was right back in school - it makes you think back.

I didn't go very long because it was a short program, only three months I think. I felt so good being around other people, being out of my home. So my husband said, "Well, apply at Aurora College."

**There was a good feeling  
in me that I was right  
back in school ...**

At first I didn't because my kids were just small. I thought when my little boy turned five years old and had to go to kindergarten I could go to school. I could go to school with him too. My husband encouraged me to try, so I put my name in and got in.

It was funny at first because my daughter was there too. It felt so good. I got to see classmates that I went to school with before. It just opened things up for me. I came here to learn. I was bored at home after all my kids had grown up. My husband said, "Maybe you should go to school instead of staying home." So I took advantage of it and it felt good.

Our instructor was really open to us too. After that I applied again and got in again. At that time they started the other program, so there were lots of us.



## Elsie's Story

One of the things I liked best was in the spring when the instructor took us on the land - for a picnic and to do other things. It makes you feel good. This program had job shadowing - so you got to go to places where you wanted to go. I thought, "I'll try the senior's home." And now that's where I work.

**One of the things I like best was in the spring when the instructor took us on the land ...**

Twice I went there. After that when the two ladies who worked there were going for training or on their days off, they would call me to work for them. I started working with them as a summer job. After that I continued with them.

Then I went as a casual for a while. I worked with them for three years, and then they had an opening, so I thought, "I should take advantage of it." My co-workers told me I should apply so I thought, "I'll put my application in." I got in - so this is my second year there full-time. That was a result of being in the program.

**... this is my second year there (senior's home) full-time. That was a result of being in the program.**

My life changed when I came back to school. For instance, for me - I was just a housewife, staying at home. I thought I was there just to clean up. When I came here and went home I felt good about myself, like I was at school.

It got me more into reading, into magazines that I never used to read. Now I go through the newspaper. Before I didn't even think of things like that. I thought all women were supposed to do was stay home and be a mother. We fund-raise to go on trips to the colleges. I went to Grande Prairie. And we went to Fort Smith and then to Fort Simpson.

I learned to make bread and things. I still make them at home. We still keep the little recipe that the instructor gave us. Before we used to make stew but I wonder how we made it. Now we use carrots and celery, and we know it's healthy food. Sometimes when we bake at home some

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## Elsie's Story

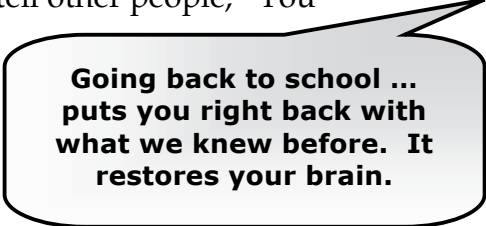
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friends ask how to make buns. My girls sometimes will come over and ask, "Mom, how do you make buns?" My recipes are there so now they know how.

I think the program makes people more confident. Before, we used to be shy - too shy to even look at each other. We would get shy, but now we are open to people. This is good - especially for me working with the elders.

I know how to work with the community, the health centre, the band. Before I used to be so shy. I would always tell other people, "You first, you first." That's what I said - "You go first."

Going back to school and doing math and all this stuff puts you right back with what we knew before. It restores your brain.



**Going back to school ...  
puts you right back with  
what we knew before. It  
restores your brain.**



## Esther's Story

**Esther** is Inuvialuit. She has three children. Esther's first language is English. She works in the homeless shelter and volunteers for Muskrat Jamboree and Northern Games.

My goal is to get my grade twelve and hopefully become a teacher. My mother is a teacher, so I'm in her field of work. Going into the school with my mom really helped. I used to help her every year to set up her classroom. At the end of the year I always helped her take her stuff down and put it away.

**My goal is to get my grade 12 and hopefully become a teacher.**

She was my son's teacher. So I went in and I sat and watched. I've always helped her as much as I could, because I liked what she was doing - especially with the language.

She's an Inuvialuktun teacher. I thought it was so neat how quickly the kids were learning to pick up our language. I don't understand the language myself - but I think it's interesting. Some of these kids aren't even Inuvialuit. They're all different backgrounds, so I think that's really neat.

My cousin is her assistant, so I think that's what I want to do - try to become an assistant. I like to work under somebody. I'd rather work under somebody than be the teacher.

I applied to come back to school two years ago. I was on a waiting list but I forgot about it and did odd jobs here and there. Then I applied again this summer and got accepted.

I was so excited. I always wanted to go back to school, but I had kids. Now my kids are all in school and I can do my schooling.

## Esther's Story

I just love English. I loved English in high school. I enjoy writing and reading. It's not the same in math. That's still challenging for me, but I'm learning things that I didn't know before. I understand it better.

**... I'm learning things that I didn't know before. I understand better.**

It feels good – knowing that I'm making progress. I've made progress in social studies. That was my worst subject in high school, but now I'm learning it. There's so much to remember in socials, but I'm learning about the political and economic systems. Now when I watch the news I get what they're talking about and how it affects me. Before it was just, "Switch the channel. I'm not interested." I didn't like politics.

Coming back to school and knowing that in the future I will have the education to get a good job has helped me. Nowadays it's so expensive. I want to find a job that I enjoy and get security for the future. I want to make sure that my kids have what they need to get their education, as well as a home and food in the fridge.

**I know that it will be better in the future if I start now and not wait until I'm 50.**

I know that it will be better in the future if I start now and not wait until I'm 50. I enjoy learning too. In school I enjoyed learning, but it was mostly sports. I'm a sports person - I just love soccer. In order for me to go travelling with my soccer team my grades had to be over 65. So I always met 65%.

Here (at the learning centre) you're with people who are more grown up and your own age. There's nobody around to annoy you like in school - to bug you or tease you. Here you can concentrate more on your work.

In high school teachers just teach at the front of the class. Here you work at your own pace and the instructors don't let you move on until you understand what you're really doing.

## Esther's Story

For example, in math they have modules. We don't move on unless they really think we understand what we're doing. In high school - if you took a test and failed - then you had to take the course over. When I was in school anyway, which was long ago.

Here the teachers teach students and let them move on if they understand. In high school it was their job to teach what was in their books. They went by day-by-day schedules. "This is what we're doing today." You pass - or you fail and go back and take it again. Here at least you know you're making progress and you're starting to understand.

One of the challenges for me was trying to balance my home life and school. When I started school I'd go home and I'd have homework - and I'd be thinking, "Wow, I haven't had homework in so many years." I'd sit there and I'd just be lost.

**One of the challenges for me was trying to balance my home life and school.**

But my sister would always be around - she works for the government. And when I'd need help she'd help me. It was always good to have someone around who could help. My common law would say, "You have no more time for me - you're always doing your homework." And I said I'd try to do as much as I can in school.

Now it's different because I'm always interested in school. My common law says, "Your head is always in your books." So I try to balance it - home and school, home and school. But we're flexible. He encourages me and I find that I'm more self-confident about myself, and being with my family. They know I'm doing better for myself and for my kids.

**It always feels good just knowing that I'm here every day -**

It always feels good just knowing that I'm here every day - that I'm getting up. Sometimes it's hard, but I know I have something to look forward to in the future for myself and my kids.

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## Esther's Story

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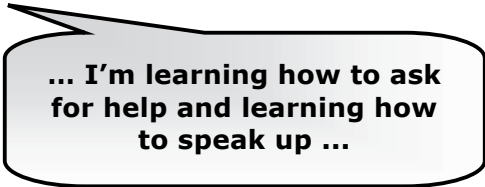
My attitude is more positive I'd say. I'm happier and I'm not worrying as much about what I'm going to be doing the next day. Because I know I'm going to be in school and I'll be doing this and that.

And when it comes to weekends I'm just happy because I love being on the land as well. So I'm trying to learn my traditional life as well as be able to live in today's society.

It's good to have students like K. in your school. When I'm stuck I always ask her for help. She explains things to me and I understand them more. She takes her time - time from her work to help me. It's good to have students like her around, especially when you're in first year.

I was really scared to come back to school. I thought I was going to be in the main college with a bunch of students. But this (the learning centre) is a comfortable place to be. I don't feel so pressured from being around so many people. It's a good start for me, because there are not as many students around. And I know that nobody is going to laugh at me because I failed my tests.

Before I never used to ask questions. I'd just look at my work and try to do it. But now I'm learning how to ask for help and learning how to speak up, instead of trying to do things on my own. It's harder when you're stuck on something and you try to work on it for hours. If you learn how to ask for help, it's not as hard you think.



**... I'm learning how to ask for help and learning how to speak up ...**

Before I wouldn't be able to talk in group-discussions. But now I feel I'm more confident in doing that. It helps associating with other people - getting other people's ideas and comparing the two minds - before I write something down on paper.

It means I'm thinking more, instead of just writing - trying to figure things out before I write them on paper. Trying to solve things instead of going

right at it. I see different points of view – not just what's right in front of you, but seeing what's out there.

If someone asked me about going back to school I'd tell them to go now and not wait. I waited and waited, and felt I wasn't ready. Over the years I kept putting it off, working at minimum wage jobs.

But coming back to school I found out that there's so much out there that I didn't know about before. When I applied for school I didn't know what I wanted to apply for. I knew I wanted to go back to school and get my education. I just wanted to get my grade 12.

**... I found out that there's so much out there that I didn't know about before.**

If someone wanted to go back to school, I'd say the learning centre is a good place to start. It's right at my level. I'm not being pressured or anything, and I'm confident now in what I'm doing - whereas when I started I was scared. Now I'm comfortable. There's no one to pressure me and the instructors make sure I understand before I move on.

**It just gives you a really good feeling inside that you're learning something.**

It just gives you a really good feeling inside that you're learning something. You've slacked off before and now you're where you want to be. You're learning things you didn't know before. It's interesting what things come up.

I like writing. I like making up my own poems. I do that for my family whenever I have the time. In English I'm learning how to use words that I never used before, and starting to use a dictionary and a thesaurus - more to help me understand what I'm really saying.

When we go out to the bush I'm always asking my dad questions - because he reads encyclopaedias lots and he's really good at Jeopardy. He learned all that on his own. I think he went to grade nine.

## Esther's Story

My parents find that I'm always asking them questions. And my dad is always so willing to tell me and to teach me - to help me learn and understand better. My dad says, "I just know you're learning because every time you come out to the bush you have something else to ask me."

My mom too - as a teacher she knows a lot. So when I ask questions she always has a good answer for me. One day she was skinning (muskrats) and she just looked at me and said, "I'm such a lucky woman. I still have my traditional knowledge, my language - yet I can still be in society and work, and do what I have to do to pay my bills." She just loves her job. She's got two lifestyles - and she's so lucky to have that. That's what I want to have.

**(My mom's) got two lifestyles ... That's what I want to have.**

Just being challenged makes me learn things. Things come up but you have more confidence in yourself and you can think for yourself. For example when I get involved in the community I find myself.

Before, I volunteered to do the games. But now I sit with the committee and put my thoughts into it. Before, I wouldn't say anything because I thought that was for other people. But now I'm finding myself. I can talk and express myself more. I like it.

I'm on the committees for the Muskrat Jamboree and the Northern Games - traditional stuff. I really enjoy being with different people and learning, and letting them know we don't live in igloos.

**By going to school you have a much more positive outlook on life.**

I really want to learn my language now too. By going to school you have a much more positive outlook on life. That's what I find about myself. Before my outlook wasn't so positive.

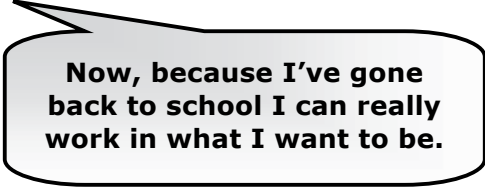


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## Esther's Story

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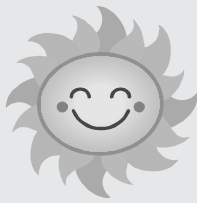
Before I just did day-to-day things, like going to work. How boring! Now I'm going to school. I'm excited to go to school. Before I was doing something I didn't enjoy - just doing it because I needed the money.



**Now, because I've gone back to school I can really work in what I want to be.**

Now, because I've gone back to school I can really work in what I want to be - and maybe enjoy working and stuff like that.

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## Evelyn's Story

**Evelyn** is Inuvialuit. She has one child. Evelyn's first language is English. She completed grade 12 at school. Evelyn and her partner have both attended an ALBE program for one year.

Initially we started school after we had our little girl. It was pretty much right after we had her. That was what pushed us to go forward with it. We wanted more for her.

**We wanted more for her (our little girl). ... didn't want to end up in a dead end job**

We didn't want to end up in a dead end job, and only have so much to offer her.

We all grew up differently - but we wanted so much more for her.

I liked the interaction. We had some pretty good stories from our instructors. They may have been off topic, but we learned a lot from them.

When we first went back we had our little girl - so it was hard just getting back into a routine, that kind of thing. We had to put time aside to do homework and that kind of stuff. But other than that we were pretty good with not missing.

Not missing is a key thing - because if you miss, then you have pieces missing here and there from your learning.

You get so used to having an income - knowing how much you're going to get every month. It's different when you've got to really tone down your budget. You know you're only getting this much a month now - as opposed to what you used to get, probably double. That's what you get, unless you have a part-time job. Your budget gets cut right in half. That's what we noticed. But otherwise it was pretty good.

## Evelyn's Story

I really enjoyed it once I got into the routine. After that I loved the challenge. I actually really liked studying because I was pretty competitive. I always wanted the highest mark in my tests, so I studied hard.

**I always wanted the highest mark in my tests, so I studied hard.**

Yeah. One success made me want more successes. There were bad things though.

We'd always do that – (argue over who got the right answers). We were in the same class and then we'd go and ask our instructors. Yeah. I think that my best time was here.

When you think back - if you didn't do as good as you wish you could have done - you look back and think, "What a waste!" Maybe not so much of a waste, but I mean having to do something over again - just to improve it. That's kind of a waste.

One of my cousins just graduated two years ago, and another one's going to graduate. I always tell them, "Try to do your best. I'm not just saying this. If you didn't do as well as you wished - you're going to wish that you did. Because you're going to have to go back, and you're going to have to do it over again."

**"Do your best!" Then you don't have to upgrade ..."**

Anyone I know who is graduating - I always tell them, "Do your best!" Then you don't have to upgrade, you can just start with everyone else, as opposed to having to go back. You also have so much more time when you're in high school to get things done.

At Yukon College one semester is three months. That's like a whole grade crammed into three months. And you constantly have homework - not like high school. Honestly, you could do so much better at high school with the time that you have to do it. If students were put in an

## Evelyn's Story

environment like college or university - even for a week - they'd probably realize how easy they have it.

We got more education as a result of going back to school - better grades. I really wanted to learn.

It looks good on your résumé - a little more to add here and there. It helps to keep your résumé updated to show your accomplishments.

I actually wouldn't have picked the path I'm on now if I hadn't come here. I had ideas of what I wanted to do - but after going into the science classes it made me remember how much I enjoyed science.

**I actually wouldn't have picked the path I'm on now if I hadn't come here.**

Previously I wanted to be a pilot. And then I started doing sciences and I really enjoyed them. I liked being on top - I didn't want anyone to have higher marks than me. I actually really excelled in the science class that I did here, and that made me explore other sciences.

I did my first year university science at Yukon College. I'm going to do it now through correspondence, because I really want to finish it. Physics is a toughie, but it's good though. I mean it's really practical - so I really want to crack that one. I want to do good in that.

I haven't got around to applying for any of the courses yet, because we just got back. We just got back last April or May. I started working right away and then I got offered a full-time job.

I actually really enjoy that position right now. It's in health promotions, through our Inuvialuit organization here. That has brought me a lot of experience as well. Going to meetings and travelling really builds up your confidence as well. It gets you speaking up more and expressing your ideas more. So I've met a lot of people and they were very helpful with what I've been doing.

**Going to meetings and travelling really builds up your confidence as well.**

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## Evelyn's Story

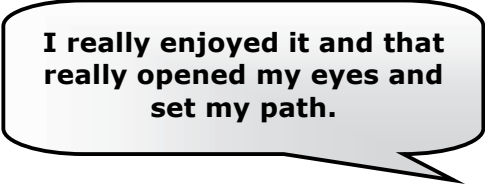
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She's (our daughter is) so smart. She just missed the cut-off for kindergarten this year. She was born a month and a half after the cut-off date for kindergarten.

But she'll be even smarter when she goes - because she already knows a lot and I'm so proud of her. I don't want her to think I'm going to be pushy, but she's not going to get away with not having good marks - not the way I was brought up.

My grandparents brought me up, and they didn't have much formal education themselves. So they didn't really monitor how I was doing in school and what I was doing. They didn't really understand it.

But I still did my best and I graduated. But I ended up doing upgrading when I came here. I really enjoyed it and that really opened my eyes and set my path.



**I really enjoyed it and that really opened my eyes and set my path.**

I know that I'm going to monitor my daughter's schooling a whole lot more. I don't know, but I guess I would probably push her to do better.

I'm not going to be one of those parents that make it easy for their kids - you know, give them the answer as opposed to letting them figure it out on their own. When you figure stuff out on your own you remember it. If you have things too easy then it's just going to be pushed aside.

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## Frank's Story

**Frank** is Inuvialuit. He has no children. Frank's first language is English. He likes to volunteer in the community. Frank completed Grade 11 at school. Now he's in the first year of an ALBE program.

I believe I know where I'm going. Throughout my life I've had some really good, positive influences - growing up in my home community and here in Inuvik.

I've always found that my most positive influences were my teachers. I've had Gwich'in or Inuvialuit teachers in the schools in my community, and throughout my employment history. I worked in the education field.

**I've always found that my most positive influences were my teachers.**

I was an early childhood educator for the pre-school program. I was also an education assistant at the school for one year. When I moved here a few years back I landed a job at the school as an education assistant. I've worked there for over a year.

I decided this is my year to go back to school. I knew if I wanted to make positive changes in my life I'd have to start going back to school - getting that completed and then go on to university or college. My goal is to go to the University of Alberta to become an educator.

**I knew if I wanted to make positive changes in my life I'd have to start going back to school ...**

I had to really adjust to come back to school. I'd been working, like I said - in the education field. I had to get my mind back into studying.

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## Frank's Story

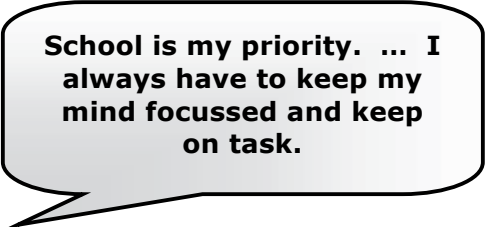
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When I first came to school I was nervous. I didn't know anybody and I kept asking myself, "Do I really want to be here?" I had to keep telling myself I was here for a purpose and reason, and that was to teach. If I want to become a teacher that means I'm going to have to get used to school.

On my first day of school I had no idea my aunt was here too. I'm a people person, so before I started school I emailed everybody and said, "I'm going back to school. And I know that the only way I'll make it is if I get a bit of encouragement from all of you."

My family and friends have been really encouraging – they were actually surprised. They didn't expect this. They thought I was gonna be working for the rest of my life.

School is my priority. I've had a lot of my friends say, "Let's do something tonight, let's go out." I said, "Are you going to do all my homework? Can you not bother me until the weekend?" It is very hard - so I always have to keep my mind focussed and keep on task.



**School is my priority. ... I always have to keep my mind focussed and keep on task.**

Here we all work well together. It's like nobody gets left behind. I push myself sometimes. I make use of the Student Success Centre. It's nice and quiet there - you can always get your homework and other work done. When I go there in the evenings there are always other part-time students who work there, so that's good. We get to work together.

I'd say one of the benefits of coming back to school is creating new friendships - not only with your classmates, but with your teachers and your instructors. A lot of positive things come out of going to school.

Some people say, "Are you seriously going to school?" And I say, "Yes, I am. I'm going back." I knew I had to go back if I wanted to make a


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## Frank's Story

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difference in the communities. I'd say it's beneficial for me because I have everybody around me to support me.

A lot of people look up to me now. I feel a lot better and a lot more comfortable in this school setting. When I first started I was quiet and shy, and I worked by myself. People would say, "That kid's so quiet."



**I knew I had to go back if I wanted to make a difference in the communities.**

But I was still trying to adjust to school. After a while you get more relaxed and stuff. I found out I could do things I didn't necessarily know I could do.

I'd say another positive for me is my previous employment at the Head Start program. I gave them notice saying I was going back to school, and that officially I wouldn't be working as an early childhood educator. A lot of the parents who came in gave me words of encouragement.

So yeah, I'm going to go to school. But I know I'm going to have a life-long path that I can follow. It makes me feel great that I know I'm doing something positive in my life.

Another reason as to why I came back to school was because my brother is fifteen. He's grade 10. He's my only brother from my mom – there are just two of us. Knowing that my brother is going to graduate pushed me even harder to come back to school. Hopefully we're going to be finishing school in the same year.

I've had a few of my friends who have asked me already, "Should I go back to school?" You know if you're going to make that decision to go back to school, you're going to have to have commitment and all those other things that follow to complete your education.

I just tell them to take it one day at a time. You're chasing your dreams and there are lots of opportunities.

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## Geraldine's Story

**Geraldine** is Dene. She has three children. Geraldine speaks English. She completed grade 12 at school. Now she's in a pre-employment training program. She's been in the program less than one year.

I decided to go back to school to learn more - for experience. More experience; just more experience. And to help out with kids at home too.

I've been in an upgrading program before. Now I'm taking the Building Trades Helper program. The questions and answers to get into the program were pretty easy to answer. I thought it would be something different to learn.

**I decided to go back to school to learn more - for experience.**

I do lots of traditional stuff - beading, replacing stuff, tuning it up. Maybe that's why I wanted to go into carpentry. For me one of the challenges was that you are forgetting a little bit more.

I have three boys. It's a bit of a challenge getting up in the morning and scheduling yourself for the whole day - and studying and helping out with the kids. But I want to do it for more experience - to get ahead in life.

**I have more confidence now than before. ... Now I'm doing something a bit more worthwhile.**

I have more confidence now than before. More than just staying at home and beading, trying to waste the hours by just keeping occupied. Now I'm doing something a bit more worthwhile.

I'm not sure I'm more independent right now. But if I get a job right after this, I'll really be independent. Work 8:30 to 5:30.

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## Geraldine's Story

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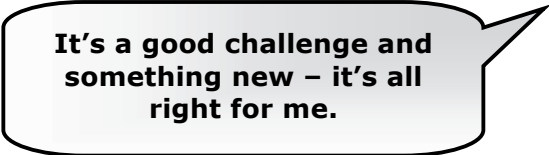
I guess we now have a choice about speaking out. We can do it only if we want to. But then there's just too much words come out all at once - there is no challenge in it.

When someone tries to ask a question - I don't know. Like when you say something, you should say it the right way. Or somebody will say it the right way, or sometimes you go the longest way, instead of taking the shorter way. It gets kind of complicated.

My boys are in school. I guess they're happy I'm back at school. They don't disturb me. We'll just have supper, talk about our days - especially for homework. But when he doesn't bring homework home there's lots of talking. It's good.

I have homework every day. So my kids see me doing homework every day. They say, "When can I have friends?" Because we're all studying it's too noisy for other kids to come.

Just going by self-esteem, it's been good for my self-esteem. Getting up early, it's good. Try and finish up the project. Yeah. I don't mind. It's a good challenge and something new - it's all right for me.



**It's a good challenge and something new - it's all right for me.**

If someone asked me about going on this journey I'd say, "It's better than just sitting in one spot and reading and writing." Not moving around, your blood is flowing slow - not much energy. So this is good - it's like moving around.

At the end of this course I hope to be doing carpentry. I'd like to go further. Like to take another full month of it again.

Yeah, there's stuff to do around the community. But it's just for people that are on probation - that have to do community hours or community

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## Geraldine's Story

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service. But it would be nice to get into those old houses and do some ripping.

We're going to be building sheds. People will be able to buy them because the money will go back to the college. Use it for the college. The instructor has another course coming up - maybe she could use that money for it again. They built a house for her grandma.




**All this makes me feel great. Feel good.**

All this makes me feel great. Feel good.

But I think we need our own separate college from the school. We're crammed in here. Also it's disturbing - it's noisy. The high school students use the college side and they're using the lockers. And we share a kitchen with them and the shop, and share a bathroom. Good thing we don't have to share a cup with them!

I heard this here is the highest college student enrolment. We are the only one with students that are always there and stay right until the course is over. In some programs many of them usually like just drop out, and they end up with maybe two or three students.

We didn't drop out because we're contractors. We're contractors until it's over. Contractors are good too because it gets us motivated.



**We signed a contract before we started our course. Which is good ...**

We signed a contract before we started our course. Which is good, because if we drop out then we have to pay the money back, which we don't want to. That'll screw up our income taxes.

I think we need to have people come over here to see our centre. Visit the little small places, besides Yellowknife and Fort Smith.

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## Gina's Story

**Gina** is Dene. She has two children. Gina speaks English and some Slavey. She completed grade 8 at school. Gina took upgrading before and she's now in an ALBE program. She's been in the program less than one year.

I went on this journey mostly for myself - because I want to learn how to read and write, and to do English and math, and other things like that.

**I went on this journey mostly for myself - because I want to learn ...**

A friend of mine went to school first. She told me about it and she sounded pretty excited about it - about learning how to read and write.

So I took a chance and I got in, which is great. I'm learning lots of new stuff - a lot of reading and my math. I want to catch up with my math and my English. So that's what I'm doing now, and it's exciting.

The highest grade I went up to at school was grade eight. Coming back here to school is good, because it helps me help my son to read. He's learning on the way too. He's fourteen now.

I've been in ALBE before but I haven't been going for a couple of years now. It's getting good. It's getting better. The first time I went I finished the course.

**... I got tired of babysitting ... I thought I'd try going back to school again.**

I'm good at being organized. When I'm not in school I'm mostly babysitting for people in town, and things like that. But I got tired of babysitting and staying at home - and so I thought I'd try going back to school again.

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## Gina's Story

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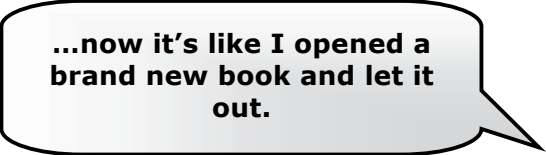
Most of the time I baby-sit. That makes it kind of hard for me to do things during the day, because I have to constantly watch one or two kids - sometimes three.

After they go home with their parents I have the evening to myself, and I want to enjoy it. If it's summer then I cook outside and go camping on the weekends. I still go out on the land, which is good. And I'm learning how to make dry fish.

There are camps here and there out on the land. When I go out with these old ladies I just sit and watch them. I tried to dry fish once with my mother-in-law, which was pretty bad. She put sticks up to hang the fish. I told her I was learning, which was good too.

When my dad was alive I learnt through him a lot. Because of him I now know how to cut and skin a rabbit.

Going back to school is helping refresh my memory. One of the things that has changed for me is reading. I'm not used to reading in front of other people. We're doing a novel, which makes us read. The instructor makes us take over and read out loud, which is good. It makes you learn more.



**...now it's like I opened a brand new book and let it out.**

I feel more confident now about reading out loud. I used to be shy with new people. But now it's like I opened a brand new book and let it out. I'm not shy anymore and I'm happier. Sitting here with friends, all learning together, it's great.

It changed my attitude. I'm not shy to say 'hi' to anyone anymore. I used to just pass by - not saying anything. Now it's good. I've changed.


We help one another in class and my spouse helps me at home. He tells me to do my math because I keep forgetting. He helps me and my son

with homework. And he's pressuring my youngest one to keep going to school and keep it up. He's helped us out a lot with our work.

We might not know how to do something - so you're stuck doing nothing. And you've got to go ask someone to help you. They'll help you and you just move from there, which is good. They get you started and you get going again.

We sometimes go to community meetings. They don't always ask for the public to speak out, so we just listen. But you can speak out at some of the council meetings in the hamlet. I just want to make them notice me, see that I'm there.

I have to remind myself to stay quiet because sometimes I start talking and I get excited. I just keep talking, talking, talking. I can't stay quiet now.



**I'm doing this for my kids.  
... I want to help my  
granddaughter.**

I'm doing this for my kids. I'm a grandma now. I want to help my granddaughter. I read to her now, but I wouldn't have read to her before. I wouldn't have known any of those words in those books. But now I've got books and I read to her - and she likes it! She just sits there and listens. She's eight months old. They know the stories by heart.

I like learning new things. You get tired of doing the same old things. Sometimes I think, "I'm tired of doing the same thing over and over, like cleaning." It's an every day thing but you still have to do it. Going back to school is a change - so it's not just clean, clean, clean any more. I have other things in my life that are important - like my kids.

I like learning English and math the most. I'm on chapter one of *Two Old Women*. It's really good. I heard it's funny. I was just reading the part about abuse. It's crazy that people actually did that - treated elders like that. I couldn't believe it. I wonder what the second part is going to be - more of the abuse.

## Gina's Story

If I can read the *Far North* I can read *Two Old Women*. *Far North* is about a kid from Texas who comes to the North. It's a good novel. I couldn't believe all the hardship they had to survive.

I help my mother-in-law more now - she talks mostly Slavey. So I talk to her in Slavey, which really changes my language. Now I know how to speak better Slavey because I'm taking it in class. It's good.

**I help my mother-in-law more now. ... I talk to her in Slavey, which really changes my language.**

When she needs to go to her medical in Yellowknife I go too, and talk to the doctors for her. I wouldn't have done that before.

The first time I took her I couldn't speak Slavey. I could speak a little, but there were words I didn't know. I'd have to say them in English and Slavey to the doctor, because some parts I'd understand and some parts I didn't. It was pretty hard at first.

Even when the doctor told me to tell my mother-in-law that she doesn't have to come back if she doesn't want to - I couldn't say that in Slavey. I had to tell her "The doctor says you don't have to come back if you don't want to" - in English.

But now I could say it to her in Slavey. I had to come back and tell my spouse to tell his mother what the doctor said.

I speak simple Slavey words to my son. I say it first in Slavey and he says, "Huh?" Then I say it in English so he knows what I'm talking about.

If I met someone else that was going to go to school I'd say, "Go for it! Yeah, go for it! It's good. It's great. Learn new things." That's what my friend said to me, and I went for it.

**... I'd say, "Go for it! ... It's great. ... Learn new things."**

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## Gina's Story

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I thought maybe I wouldn't get accepted - but I got accepted right away, which was good. I was so excited.

At first I was scared because I didn't know if there would be people there who would tell me I'm too old to go to school.

But they made me feel welcome, which was really good.



**... they made me feel welcome, which was really good.**

And slowly I got to know them and started to enjoy their company. The instructor was good – she made me feel really welcome too.

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## Jackie's Story

**Jackie** is Dene. She has three young children. Jackie's first language is English. She completed grade 12 at school. Jackie's now in a pre-employment training program. She's been in the program for less than one year.

I came back to school to learn more. After grade twelve I didn't go to school for two years. Then I took a program to get my skills back. I took a nursing access program before, but withdrew because of my daughter.

**I came back to school to learn more.**

I thought this program would be something different from staying home. It sounded like fun too. It is fun. It's hands on, with tools.

I'm good at sewing. I've sewn for a very long time. I sew just about everything, with beads. I put little purses together.

I have three kids. My son is one year old; my girls are two and three. That makes it a little bit tougher attendance wise.

When you were in high school you had to have good attendance. But as you get older you only have so many days you can miss. Yet you've got a lot more responsibility as an adult. And you want to be home with your kids at the same time. It's really tough.

I think this will have an impact on my kids when they're older. That's what I tell my daughter when I potty train her. "You want to go to school - you have to go (to the bathroom) in the pot." She's going to be going to school this fall.

## Jackie's Story

When my partner went back to school - it had an influence on me, because I was bored being at home. I wanted to get out. I wanted to go to school, but my son was just a baby so I stayed home.

**My biggest achievement is being able to be in the real world.**

My biggest achievement is being able to be in the real world. You need education to get somewhere. If someone asked me about going back to school I'd say, "Go for it. It's simple."

I mean most of the stuff you learn here is hands on. In the classroom you learn the hand tools and what they're used for. But you don't really know until you get into the shop and you actually touch those tools. You use them - it's simple and hands on.

I like the hands on part. Now I can build my own things, like stools. I would say I have a bit more confidence now. I've always been independent.

**I would say I have a bit more confidence now. ... I want to go back to school this fall.**

I want to go back to school this fall. I don't know what I'm going to take yet, but I'm talking about small business. My partner is in his first year carpentry apprentice, so we're going to try to put something together.

There's not very much to do here in the community. You can go to the friendship centre. They have women's night and other activities just about every day - during the afternoon and sometimes during the evening. They have literacy night here and I bring my kids out once in a while.

We're supposed to be building sheds - building them and un-building them, and taking them out and building them again. We have less than five weeks left.

## Jackie's Story

That house they built - that's my granny's house. The house is way past where the ferry is. When we're finished a project, it feels good.

**If you want to see success  
you have it right here.**

This is a great learning centre. If you want to see success, you have it right here.

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## Janice Kendra's Story

**Janice Kendra** is Inuvialuit. She has one young child. Janice Kendra belongs to a drum dance group. She completed grade 11 at school. She has returned to school more than once and has been in the current ALBE program for two years.

I came back to school because I am trying to upgrade. All I need is my math 150 and that's what I'm in now. I'm hoping to go to NAIT in the fall for Culinary Arts because I love cooking - mostly baking. I need math 150. I already have English.

... I'm trying to upgrade.  
... I'm hoping to go to  
NAIT in the fall ...

Since I was little I helped with everything in the kitchen. I helped my whole family - my mom, my aunties, and my grandmother. I helped them even with little things.

Now I'm older I help a lot more. I love making pastries. People love my pies. I make the crust. Now I'm trying to learn how to make the filling. I like to make all different kinds. My grandfather wants me to bake him a pie - so I've got to bake one for him soon.

It's a one to two year program at NAIT. I'll get a certificate. Maybe I'll come back here and work at one of the restaurants. But I'm also thinking of staying down south for a little bit. That would let me be more independent.

When you come back to school you have to get used to it again. You have to try and remember everything that you did - how many years ago? Now I have a young one. It's a lot harder with babysitters, money, and everything.

## Janice Kendra's Story

When you're a kid you just go to school and then go home. Your mom gives you everything you need – your food, a house, clothes. I have to provide all that for my daughter - but I get a little help from my mom.

My family supports me being back in school. They're all happy. From last September - 2006 I think - until December, I went to Fort Smith for a cooking program - to learn to be a camp cook. It was good. I liked it so I decided, "I'll do that."

**My family supports me being back in school.**

That seems like a good job to do. So if I finish this program then I want to go to NAIT to become a chef or own a bakery. I'm mostly leaning towards bakery because that's what I love the most.

But then when you see the other stuff people bake like all the food and everything - it looks so good. You want to learn how to do that, right? It's interesting. I like that.

The biggest challenge of coming back to school for me is getting along with people, my family - and trying to get support from my daughter's father with money and everything. I get support from other people, especially my mom. My sisters also help me.

When I have a hard day at school they take my baby away so I can relax at home. Or they take her for the night and let her sleep over. She's fine with that because she wants to be out every night.

One of the benefits of going back to school is being able to upgrade everything - getting to know more. I have to have four classes to be a full term student and so I picked biology. I've never been in a bio class before. And this is bio 30 - so it's like grade 12 level.

**One of the benefits of going back to school is ... getting to know more.**

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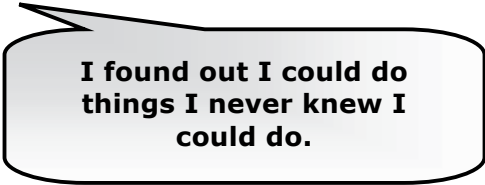
## Janice Kendra's Story

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The rest of the people in the class took bio before and I haven't - so that's a challenge. But I'm doing okay - a little behind but not much. I think I'm doing good.

Coming back to school has helped me with my confidence. I didn't think I'd be able to do what I do in bio class. I've now got the confidence to know that I can learn it.

All this stuff is new - but after a while it just sinks in and I remember it. I found out I could do things I never knew I could do. And then English. I don't like English but I'm going to do it - get used to it a little bit.



**I found out I could do things I never knew I could do.**

I try to walk with my daughter lots. Since she was little we walk lots. And now, for a couple of years - we've been in the drum dance group. She's in it as well. The whole group went to Barrow - not last summer but the summer before that. And we drum danced there. She loved it.

She didn't like being in the vehicle. She got cranky driving all the way to Fairbanks. But it was a good experience for her. She loves drum dancing. She tries to sing, drum, everything when she's into it.

She plays with her cousins - she likes doing that. And she's got a new bike today, so she's all happy. She can bike around with her cousins more. Instead of walking she can bike everywhere.

I've been living on my own just over two years and I've been so independent. It's so different for me because I lived with my mom for twenty years or so. My daughter makes me feel independent. I can do this.

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## Janice Kendra's Story

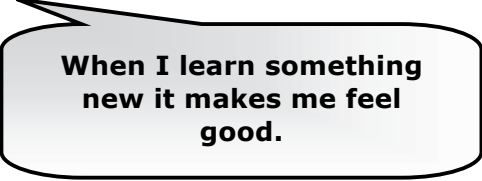
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I don't need help from anybody. I try to do everything myself - like pay my bills, look after my baby. I try not to bother people. I try to fix stuff at home and all that myself.

I don't like English. The subject I like the most is math. I don't know why. I think I was good at math at school because I would usually get 70s, 80s, maybe 90s here and there. I like it - adding, subtracting, and all that. It's fun. I like learning all those things.

I feel a little stressed when I learn something new because it's so much to absorb. I'm getting a little bit behind but not that much. When I learn something new it makes me feel good.

If someone asked me about going on this journey I would say you should - because you learn, you upgrade your skills, and you can put that on your résumé. You'll be able to get a better job because you'll have higher skills than you had before.



**When I learn something  
new it makes me feel  
good.**



## Jennifer's Story

**Jennifer** is Inuvialuit. She has one child. Her first language is English and she speaks some Inuvialuktun. She completed grade 12 at school. Jennifer first attended the Teacher Education Access program; now she's in the Office Admin program.

The main reason I'm here is because I have a daughter. She's nine now so I'm able to go to school. After eight years of having odd jobs here and there - it wasn't enough for me.

I thought to myself, "I graduated from high school." But I knew there was more out there for me. I got tired of the same routine - and the money barely gets me by. I woke up one day and said, "That's it. I'm going to do something".

**... I knew there was more out there for me.**

When I was going out on my break I ran into the community's ALBE instructor. I told her how I was feeling and she said, "How about going to school? Have you ever thought about going back to school?" I thought, "Yeah, maybe I should. I can't be here forever working in a store, doing this and that."

So I connected with her and she gave me a pre-test. In September, October, November, and December I did whatever my weaknesses were - like math, or those subjects.

Then I transferred here to Inuvik. I'm just upgrading. When I graduated from high school they only looked at credits. We didn't look at the percentages that we'd need for college. In high school there's a lot of playing around. But adults here are serious. You're learning for your life and your kids.

**You're learning for your life and your kids.**



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## Jennifer's Story

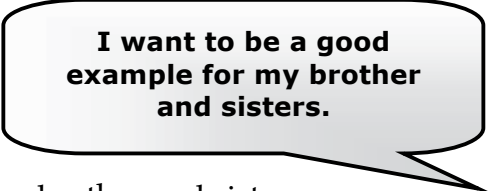
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From February to June I did the NRTP (Natural Resources Technology Program) Access and did well – much better than in high school. Now I'm here doing the last bit until I get to where I'm going.

I had friends who helped me get up and go do everything I needed to do. Their support helped me stay here. They kept telling me I'm here for my girl – for the future. I want her to look up to me.

She's one of the challenges too - all the time, every day. It's hard to be a mom. She's my only girl – she's all I have. That keeps coming back to me. This is for my girl. It's not for anybody else. She comes first before all these - before everything else.

There are other people who are helping me. I learn from talking to them. It helps me too. It makes me open up. My family of course is always supporting me. They're always there. I can always pay them back.



**I want to be a good example for my brother and sisters.**

I'm the only one who graduated out of my siblings. That's another reason that I'm here – I want to be a good example for my brother and sisters. What's going to happen when our parents are gone?

I ask them, "Where are you guys gonna be? When you're on your own where are you going to get the money?"

You'll be saying, "Jeez, I should have gone to school. Jeez, I should have at least looked for something." I keep encouraging them.

I see a lot of changes in me since I've come back to school – a whole lot. It's surprised me. I understand what's important – my daughter. That's a change – that she comes first.

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## Jennifer's Story

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My education, like math, is unbelievable. I never really liked math and now I enjoy it. That's a change. And English - I wasn't so fond of it. But now I see I'm on board and focussed.

I've been finding out what I'm interested in - finding out what my strengths and weaknesses are. I didn't know that I was so into the environment until I came here.

Now I have an overall direction. I feel more appreciated by my family. They're happy for me - they think I'm actually going somewhere. I can see the change - I can feel it in the air. The atmosphere is so different. They look at you and maybe say, "Wow this is my kid. Look at where she is now." They're really proud of me.

Just before my grandfather passed away - when he was on his deathbed - he told me with his finger - he was too weak to speak, "Watch, baby, good." He really encouraged me to go to school.



**It's totally worth it to go  
back to school.**

It's totally worth it to go back to school. It means a whole lot. It makes you want to explore more. There are more things out there. You can't stop - you can just keep going and going.

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## John's Story

**John** is Dene. He has three children. John's first language is English and he speaks some Slavey. He completed grade 9 at school. John was in a pre-trades program for less than a year.

I was in the pre-employment program last year. I decided to come back to school because that's the only way you get jobs out there. That was my main reason - to be able to get a job.

**I decided to come back to school ... to be able to get a job.**

I've worked around the community before. I was slashing bush. I knew what I wanted to do - environmental monitoring. About a couple of months ago I took that monitoring - for about five weeks. So it was probably good for me because they're having a clean up at X Point.

They're hiring actually in the summer or something for X Point. I already have a job there. Actually I got my ticket for that already. But now I want my ticket in carpentry.

In the program we help each other. At first I was kind of shy - in like I didn't know those guys. So I just went on from there. There were two women in the program.

For me the challenge of coming back to school was mostly a personal challenge. I really liked the practical stuff - monitoring and all the GPS, going through that. I also did safety in the workplace. Actually school was a lot of fun. Going back to school gave me more confidence and taught me a lot. And I was learning lots and there were other people. It was good.

**Going back to school gave me more confidence and taught me a lot.**

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## John's Story

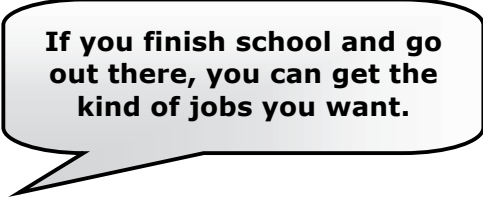
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It's like going to the monitoring. I didn't know anything about that thing. And about a week after I get to go with all those tools - all that - it's pretty good. From there I took off with those guys. It was a good experience for me.

My monitoring course was in Hay River - so I had to live away from home for a while. That was a challenge. I'm really proud of getting my monitoring ticket. That's a good one.

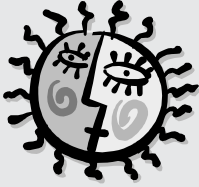
My wife is in the pre-employment training program too. I guess she saw I had gone back to school and she liked the idea. It's like you're learning lots.

If you finish school and go out there, you can get the kind of jobs you want. There's going to be a lot of jobs coming up. You just need to be qualified.



**If you finish school and go out there, you can get the kind of jobs you want.**

## Jonas' Story



**Jonas** is Dene. His first language is Slavey; his second language is English. Jonas volunteers in the community with Dene hand-games. He completed grade 12 at school and was in an ALBE program for a year. Jonas now has a full-time job.

I came back to school in the late 1990s to upgrade my skills, so that I can work better. I'm good at hunting and trapping – traditional skills. I liked to go out on the land and set snares for rabbits. That was part of the program.

**I came back to school ... to upgrade my skills, so that I can work better.**

There were a couple of us here that did literacy level one and level two. Some of it was in Slavey - reading and writing.

Then I got a call and have been working for the Aboriginal Head Start Program. I was working there and taking night classes here to get my GED. I finished.

I thought it was just a couple of grades - I didn't know it was important until I grew up. Being in the class has helped me and my parents understand how important education is. I'm not the only one in my family to finish my GED – my sister finished before me. My parents are making it easier for me to finish.

I learned that it isn't easy to finish the program. When I finished it I felt big. I felt like crying because I was so happy. My parents felt really proud. I wanted to be a good role model for children and families in my community.

I'm also good at singing. We went out on the land and I shared my experience and stories with everybody.

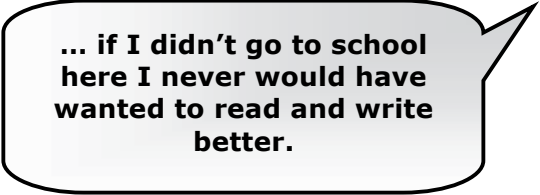
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## Jonas' Story

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When I came back to school I liked math, socials, and science - things I didn't know about before. We did science with water and ice.

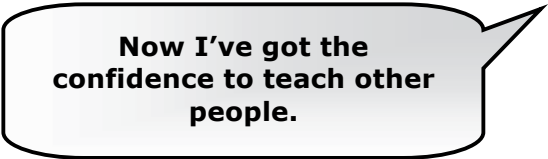
I also realized that my culture was important. That happened as a result of being in the program - because if I didn't go to school here I never would have wanted to read and write better. If I wasn't here I wouldn't do it.



**... if I didn't go to school here I never would have wanted to read and write better.**

I use Slavey in the Head Start Program all the time - with the staff too, even if they don't understand it. If you keep talking to them they'll learn the Slavey language. Some of them want to know their language. They don't understand - but they want to know. That's why they're studying it.

I'm also doing a class for the parents. Before I came to this program I would never have seen myself teaching Slavey. Now I've got the confidence to teach other people.



**Now I've got the confidence to teach other people.**

We serve the students traditional food. We've made up some games in Slavey for the pre-school kids. It was good - quite a bit of fun.

I used to be shy before. Growing up I only spoke Slavey. But after I came here I became a more confident speaker in English. I wasn't worried about making a mistake while I was talking. It broadened my horizons because I became a more positive speaker.

Growing up I wasn't confident and now I am. I think I also show leadership. I've learned how to speak out for peoples' rights and talk with confidence. The elders tell me that about myself.

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## Jonas' Story

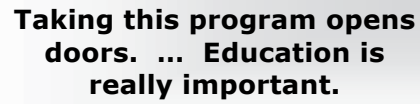
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I attended the ALBE program in '98. At that time I was substituting for someone at the pre-school program over there - singing. I also did odd jobs at the store and trapping.

If someone asked me if they should come to a program like this I'd tell them, "Come. It's a good start for going back to school."

I first came back to do the driver training course. It's a good start for going back to school. They take you through all the pages - what you need to graduate. I took safety courses. It prepares you for tests. I was very nervous. Everybody gets nervous when they try for their driving license - but I passed.

I think the reason I got the job at the Aboriginal Head Start was because I had come back to school and upgraded. I would just have worked at odd jobs otherwise.



**Taking this program opens doors. ... Education is really important.**

Taking this program opens doors. My friends want to go back to school too, but they're scared. I tell them, "Don't be scared! Education is really important."

I think the kids see me as a role model - especially the little boys. They like to play guitar and sing. Some of them are shy. You've got to encourage them not to be shy. After a while they're not shy any more.



**It's legal now. Now we even have Dene fonts on the computer.**

It's good to see because some of them have a real talent for it. Some of the kids who are three or four years old know how to speak the language better than their parents. Sometimes parents will speak it at home. It's legal now. Now we even have Dene fonts on the computer.

If this program was just reading, writing, and math I don't think it would have been as good. I don't think I would have had enough options.

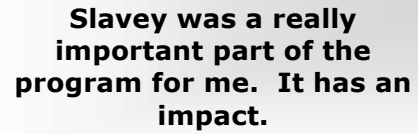
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## Jonas' Story

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Slavey was a really important part of the program for me. It has an impact. We've lost a lot of languages.

I've become more confident around strangers. I was shy but now I've overcome that shyness. I'm still a bit shy.



**Slavey was a really important part of the program for me. It has an impact.**

I try to communicate, when we're teaching the kids as a team - don't be shy. Be more confident; be more communicative. I'm more of a people person now.

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## Judy's Story

**Judy** is Inuvialuit. She has one child. Judy's first language is English. She completed grade 12 at school. Judy is now in a nursing access program.

I'm taking this program so I can get my grades to where they need to be to enter the nursing program. There isn't one here so I think I'm going to go to Edmonton. I've always wanted to be a nurse ever since I was little - so I'm finally taking the steps I need to become a nurse.

**... I'm finally taking the steps I need to become a nurse.**

I was at Grade 12 when I left school. My marks weren't high enough in my bio. I didn't have to take bio 30 at school so I dropped out of that class. It's going all right.

I just came to school in February and the other students were already four modules ahead. So I had to catch up on that. I'm still doing it now. My instructor is giving me until the end of the school year to catch up on the four modules that I missed.

That's going on all right. I just finished one module and we're doing the other module in class. It's a big workload. You've got to learn it by yourself unless you stay after school. And I can't because I have a son.

The biggest challenge for me is a babysitter. I've gone through a lot of babysitters so far. It's tough missing school that much because of the babysitters.

It's pretty expensive too for a babysitter. I pay about \$600 a month. My son's dad helps me out although we aren't together anymore. I also get funding through the Inuvialuit Education Foundation, so that helps.

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## Judy's Story

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My own motivation helps me stay in school. I didn't want to be one of those people who just stays at home and does nothing - and always says they're going to go out and get their education, but doesn't do it.

**My own motivation helps me stay in school.**

I didn't want to just have high school and have no opportunities to work in good paying jobs. Nowadays you need education - so I'm getting an education to help me get a good job and support my son.

As a result of coming back to school, I'm getting out more. I used to stay home all the time. I'm a really shy person so coming back to school is helping me. It makes me speak out in front of people.

**... coming back to school is helping me. ... my confidence level has gone up.**

I'm also getting to see my old friends - some of them are going to school here too. I was always confident but I was shy. Now I think my confidence level has gone up. I don't know how to say it.

People I know are really proud of me. My mom and dad are really proud of me for going back to school - and making the effort to do what I want to do, even though I have a son. Just because I have a son doesn't mean I'm quitting school.

I'm going to get my education so I can support him. That's really important to me. Before I had a child I was going to take a few years off school and work. But since I had him, I decided to just come back to school.

I also do more things with my son. I take him out. I used to be the Inuvialuit Aboriginal Youth Representative so that brought me a lot of places.

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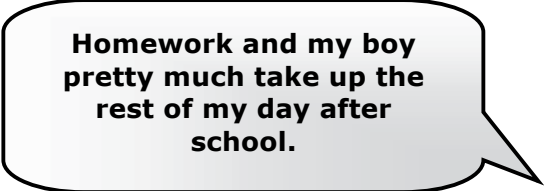
## Judy's Story

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I try spending more time with my mom and my dad - because my dad has just gotten over cancer recently. So that was a big step in my life. I was really hurt by that. That's another reason why I wanted to come back to school - to help people like my dad.

It's a big relief knowing that I've caught up with my studies and I'm that much closer to everyone else. It's going good - but it's hard because I have to do work at home when my boy is sleeping. So when I finish a module I'm relieved.

I feel good coming back to school. I feel like I was just sitting at home doing nothing. I don't really do more things in the community - because if I'm not at school, I'm at home with my boy, and spending time with my family. Or I'm doing homework.



**Homework and my boy pretty much take up the rest of my day after school.**

Homework and my boy pretty much take up the rest of my day after school. I read to my son. He's at that stage where he's really talking lots now, and pointing at the pictures. Yeah, it's fun.

It's three years since I've been in school so it was kind of tough coming back - getting into that routine again. I'm a morning person, so getting up in the morning doesn't really bother me. It was just the school part - getting the routine established.

During the first month I had to take my son to the babysitter - although the lady just lived down the road, so it wasn't that far. And then she couldn't baby-sit for me any more. The biggest change would be that I seem happier. My friends would say I seem happier - that I'm getting out more.

I really like to help people. I've always loved to help people. That's why I decided on nursing.

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## Judy's Story

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It takes four years to become a nurse so I've got this access year and another four. There's a two-year Licensed Practical Nursing Program in Yellowknife. But Registered Nursing is another four years I think.

**I'm more focused on studying and doing good ... so that I can get into that program and get my education.**

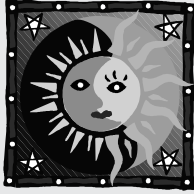
My attitude toward learning has changed too. I'm more focused on studying and doing good so that I can have better grades - so that I can get into that program and get my education.

If I met someone who was thinking about going back to school, I'd say, "Go for it."

**"Go for it." Going back to school is good ...**

Going back to school is good for them. It means they want to continue their education - to get a better education, to get a better job for themselves, to support their family.

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## Julia's Story

**Julia** is Dene / Metis. Her first language is English. Julia completed grade 12 at school. She's been in a women's pre-employment training program for less than one year.

I haven't come back to school before. I've only been in school from kindergarten to grade 12. This is the first time I have gone back to school. I graduated in 2006.

Since then I've picked up odd jobs - like the service industry or a cashier. I've been working in grocery stores on the floor - the customer service. Those kinds of jobs and that's basically it. I moved around jobs a lot.

I started this program because there's a lot of people who won't hire you - even for the little jobs that they have. I thought maybe if I went to a program - it's better having some experience than none at all. Sometimes employers don't train you. That's why I wanted to get more education. I wasn't getting hired in jobs I wanted.

**... I wanted to get more education. I wasn't getting hired in jobs I wanted.**

And because they'd never give me the chance - they wouldn't train me or anything on the job. I guess I just come off as girly or something - so they wouldn't want me to do any kind of labouring work or anything.

And because I want to work outdoors in the summer and I don't want to be inside anymore in the summertime. So with this program - Building Trades Helper - I could be more outdoors in the summer. Make more money than working as a cashier, I guess.

## Julia's Story

I've worked in Alberta also for a little while – five or six months. It doesn't compare to the north in pay. It's not that high of a pay although things are kind of expensive here.

This program is a women's program. And it was kind of short. I don't know - I just thought it seemed interesting. It's different than anything else I've ever tried to do. It just seemed like it'd be lots fun and I thought I'd learn a lot out of it.

**This program is a women's program.  
... I thought I'd learn a lot out of it.**

And like I said, I need to work outdoors and I want to apply for the bridge, the Mackenzie Bridge Project. I wouldn't mind working there. I'd be close to home.

This program is fun. Everyone's getting along. I'm learning a lot. A lot of things I never knew because I didn't really work with tools or anything like that before. And yeah, it's good. I like it.

It's almost over though. And I don't know what that means. I've got to go look for a job I guess. Maybe I should apply for another program.

I find that I'm really good with people. I think I'm a people person. I've got good communication skills I think - customer skills, the jobs.

I can adapt easily. I'm ethical. Knowing right from wrong all the time. And things I don't know, I'm a quick learner.

And I have the skills that I don't really have to do at jobs - like I work well at home and with my friends. All the little things I learned growing up.

I've learned a lot too - like just recognizing a lot of other skills that I already had, that I didn't know I had.

**I've learned a lot too -  
like just recognizing a lot  
of other skills that I  
already had ...**

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## Julia's Story

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I think it'd be like my positive attitude - where I bring it, you know, and where I shouldn't. Like not where I shouldn't but where you shouldn't have a bad attitude or anything.

And I don't know. I think I recognize that I'm not a negative person in a place I shouldn't be. You know - like when somebody disagrees with something, they show it in a different way. Instead of just giving a person the chance to speak. And then you say what you want to say, and don't try and say anything personal.

It's a big argument and just being - I guess - kind of professional about it. I realized that's a very important thing too - to recognize that, to know, to have it.

My classmates here are not who I went to school with. They're a lot older than I am. So it's a little bit different.

One of the challenges? My math. I thought that after graduation I didn't want to deal with math. I thought I forgot about it - but no. Still math is a problem.

After I finished school I had all that free time and I thought, "Nobody can make me do this and nobody can make me do that - and now I take all the responsibility." Before, I had responsibilities going to high school. But I could - like miss a few days and they wouldn't kick me out, right?



**... now I take all the responsibility.**

Now it's completely different. It's really scary. Nobody's forcing me to come to school. Nobody even wakes me up in the morning. So it's a lot more responsibility.

And if I don't do it, it's also going to affect me. For example if I try to apply for school again - I'd have to pay money and it wouldn't look good. So I don't know. That's the challenge I have - just being more responsible.

## Julia's Story

When you're at school - often somebody makes sure you're up in the morning. And breakfast is cooked. But now you're on your own.

**I'd like to hope I was more independent than before.**

I'd like to hope I was more independent than before. Also because I guess you could say I was really dependent on my parents - well my dad. I think I still can be.

After I finished school I never had to leave. Before, everything was taken care of. So yeah, going back to school is teaching me a few things. I'm still at my parents now. It's cheap. But it doesn't mean I can be too dependent on them now - they won't allow me.

I was unemployed for a few months and it really brought down my confidence when I wasn't doing anything. The job I had before wasn't the best job. I was working at the diamond mines. Everybody does, you know. And I was there and I was doing housekeeping. But I knew I was capable of more.

After I stopped working there I wasn't working at all. And I guess my self-esteem kind of dropped from doing nothing. But telling about what I'm doing now - like I went back to school and I'm happy about it. It's really great - I feel better about it, now that I have something to do during the week.

**... I feel better about it, now that I have something to do during**

And I'm learning from it. It's not just like a dead end job or something - that I feel I can't get out. I got myself into trouble, but I got out of it again. And I'm doing much better. I'm happy for myself.

Going back to school - doing whatever you want to do, whatever you think is best for you - it will bring up your confidence. Then if you feel the need to speak out you can. Especially like now. I feel better about myself now that I'm doing something.



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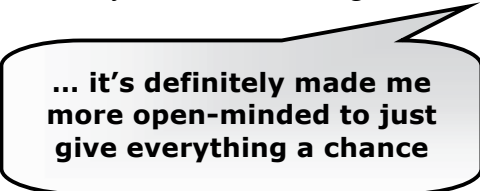
## Julia's Story

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I make sure I'm being heard if I really feel strongly and I believe I'm right about something. Then I make sure I'm being heard.

Waking myself up in the morning has been my biggest achievement in going back to school. I'm more of an evening person. I'm more awake in the evenings than I am during the morning.

I don't know. Maybe I'm more open-minded now. Like I said, this is something I wouldn't have done before. I was always into decorating this and that. But now I've got these big power tools and all these saws. And it's definitely made me more open-minded to just give everything a chance you know.

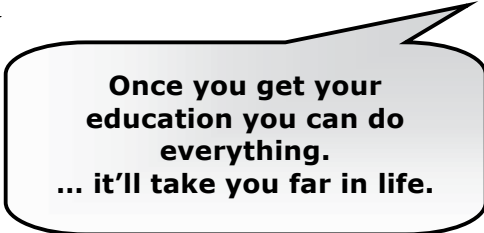


**... it's definitely made me more open-minded to just give everything a chance**

And you never know - you might like something you haven't tried before. I was already open-minded, but only about things like colours. Not like going into trades.

If someone came along and said, "I'm thinking about going back to school, do you think it's worth it?" I'd tell them, "Definitely."

I was always brought up knowing that education was the most important thing, you know. I'd never think, "I'll go back to school." You would never hear me say that. I don't seriously say that to anyone. I would just encourage them.



**Once you get your education you can do everything.  
... it'll take you far in life.**

It's a great opportunity. Once you get your education you can do everything. Nobody can take that away from you. You know it's yours - you've earned it, you've worked for it. And it'll take you far in life.

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## Kate's Story



**Kate** is Dene. She has three children. Kate's first language is English and she speaks some Slavey. Kate completed grade 8 at school. She's been in an ALBE program for less than one year.

I wanted to come back to school so I could somehow pay for myself and get a good job. Before I came back here I was working at the Northern. I worked there for almost a year.

I was good at being a mother –a mother staying at home. When I came to this program I liked the math, the writing, the reading, and having fun. It was lots of fun to be in this program.

**I wanted to come back to school so I could ... get a good job.**

I became more confident about myself and what I was doing. Because if I made a mistake I would go back and try to fix it. I wouldn't have done that before.

The program with this instructor was good. I had to get back into - like, the math. But it was good. My greatest success was when I passed my math test. I was okay at math, but not - not great. I felt proud of myself when I passed my math exam - that I actually succeeded in something.

One of the benefits from being in the program was that I ended up getting myself a job. I actually finished the program. That was a real accomplishment. I was like a role model - a role model for my children.

My daughter likes when we read. She enjoys it. A little thing we have at home - reading and playing. I read to them and play games with them.

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## Kate's Story

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I don't have time to volunteer. I have to do assignments. I became more independent. My attitude changed lots. When we were in school we weren't allowed to swear. But when I'm at home I do that a lot.

**I became more independent. My attitude changed lots.**

One of the biggest challenges was trying to bring your brain back. It was kind of hard at the start. But after I got used to it, it was ok.

I was more organized - like figuring out what my project is and how I'm going to do it. It was good. It was very, very challenging. I was trying to balance with my husband - his working and all these things.

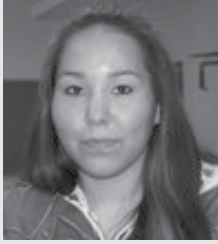
If I met someone who was thinking of coming back to school I'd tell them, "You're never too old to come back." That's what one of my friends told me.

And hopefully I'll try again after this summer. I'll probably go out to (Fort) Smith. It depends what you want to do. There's math, science, and English.

**"You're never too old to come back."  
... hopefully I'll try again after this summer.**

My son's three. He goes to Aboriginal Head Start. He learns Slavey there - and he talks in Slavey now. I did Slavey when I was in the ALBE program.

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## Katherine's Story

**Katherine** is Inuvialuit. Her first language is English. Katherine almost completed grade 10 at school. Now she's in her second year of an ALBE program.

My goal is to finish the program I'm in and go on to nursing. When I came back to school it was really sudden - I wasn't planning to.

**My goal is to finish the program ... and go on to nursing.**

I went to see my sister at her office because I was applying for a job there.

They started talking about Aurora College. I had already missed the deadline so I thought it was too late. But they told me I should try anyway.

I went to Aurora College and applied. I got accepted and got funding. I'd also like to be an aesthetician. I like doing manicures and nails. I like make-up. I came back to school because I wanted to get a good job - so I needed to get my education.

During the summer I was working somewhere I didn't really want to be. I want to work somewhere that I want to be. I think nursing is where I want to be. I'll do practicums in the hospital here.

I didn't really enjoy school before. I like ALBE way better. I didn't really like my teachers in high school. Here the teachers are different. They treat you like an adult, not like a child. I like that better. In high school the teachers don't go back to work on things you don't understand - they just move on.

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## Katherine's Story

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Most of my challenges are keeping up with my home - cleaning and stuff. Sometimes my dishes sit for days. I get most of my support from my boyfriend and my family. But I also get a lot of support from teachers.

I noticed that now I can present myself better. I can speak better. Before I started school I'd read my nephews and nieces books - and I'd be a slow reader. But now I can read it fine. I like it better.

**... I can present myself better ... I have more confidence.**

I have more confidence. I wouldn't be doing this kind of thing before. I also think I'm more positive. I've always been positive, but it's improved a little I guess.

If someone asked me about going back to school I would tell them to do it. I'd say, "Don't think about it too much - just do it. Because it will help you with your life." It will help them get on track and get a better job.

I'm glad I came back to school. It helped me so much with my writing and my math and everything. It makes me feel good, really good. When I'm talking, I notice that I use words that I would have never used before coming back to school. I use bigger words.

**I'm glad I came back to school.  
... Going back to school made me a better person.**

Going back to school made me a better person. I can do so many more things now than before coming back - so I'm glad I came back.

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## Lana's Story



**Lana** is Inuvialuit. She has two young children. Lana's first language is English. She completed grade 9 at school. She's been in an ALBE program for less than one year.

I would like to be a nurse to help people. I want to do a nursing degree in Alberta - so I'm taking upgrading to help me. I've been here since September. I came back to school because everyone needs an education.

**I came back to school because everyone needs an education.**

I have two kids - a boy and a girl. My son is in school. I read to him and do things like that. I think it was easier for me to come back because now that I'm older I'm more motivated. When you're younger it doesn't matter to you. Their dad watches them.

I get a lot of support from my other half, and from my mom. I've been living here for five years. When I told my family I was coming back to school they said, "Great, good for you."

I didn't take most of the courses I'm taking now when I was in high school. I quit school after grade nine. All my courses here are at the grade 12 level.

**I think I have more confidence as a result of coming back to school.**

I think I have more confidence as a result of coming back to school. Before I started school I took a placement test and I thought I was going to be really low. I like English and bio best. Everyday life is a challenge.

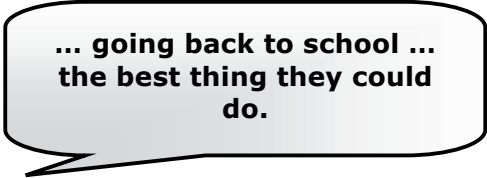
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## Lana's Story

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I think I was always independent. I think I always did lots of things with my family - like take them out, stuff like that - take them to the library. I try to do traditional things because I'm not very traditional.

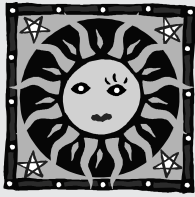
If someone told me they were going back to school I'd tell them it would be the best thing they could do. It's better for you and your family.



**... going back to school ...  
the best thing they could  
do.**

I have a pay cheque coming in every two weeks. One benefit is that you get an education. I get most of my support from my classmates because most of them are my friends. Some of them I met before. But lots of them I just met. They're nice.

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## Lily's Story

**Lily** is Dene. She has three children. Lily's first language is English. She completed grade 8 at school. She's been in an ALBE program for less than one year.

I came back to school because I wanted a better paying job. I had a job before but I didn't really like it. It was at one of the diamond mines.

**I came back to school because I wanted a better paying job.**

It was a housekeeping job. I just don't want to clean bathrooms and other rooms. It was good pay but it wasn't what I wanted to do. Plus I have to be away from home and I've got kids. I'd like to work with kids actually - at a day care or at a preschool.

I was good at math when I went back to school. I also volunteered in the community - for the school, for the kids. I also do some traditional things I learned through older people. I don't really know how to dry meat, but I know how to make dry fish. I like to do these more traditional things.

A lot of things have happened to me as a result of being in an upgrading program. My reading is better. There were some words I didn't know before. I like it. I sometimes read to my kids.

**Helping each other ... has changed my attitude towards learning.**

It's fun being back at school. We all get along. It's good. We help each other with work. We probably didn't do that at school - not allowed, probably. This is different. Helping each other and being nice to each other has changed my attitude towards learning. It's really different. It's more positive.



## Lily's Story

It's also made a difference at home. I've slowed things down at home. I used to do stuff all the time - able to clean and do laundry, keeping up. But it gets tiring sometimes with school all day. And then you go home and you just want to relax. I like it that it's slowed down.

I don't have to jump up every time and do something. I can just relax. And my kids are a little bit older so they can do their own laundry. I like it and I think I'm going to go back to school again.

**... if you don't understand the questions you have to ask. ... Now I would ask.**

There are some things that I can do now that I couldn't do before. Sometimes when you have to get a job you have to fill applications. And if you don't understand the questions you have to ask. And I'm too embarrassed to ask about it. So now I'm not so shy. Now I would ask.

I volunteer in the community - like join sports and have a bake sale and fundraising. I like to work on computers. I didn't do that before. I like it - because I didn't know how to use it and now I do.

I play a game that teaches me how to use the keyboard. Once you start doing that you get the hang of it. We have a computer at home. I go on to the computer with my son. He's good at stuff like that. He's sixteen. Teenagers know all the gadgets.

My sister talked to me and encouraged me to come back to school. She works in an office. She asked me about this course and took my name down. If someone asked me about going back to school I'd say, "Go to school!"

**I think I'm more organized as a result of going back to school ...**

I think I'm more organized as a result of going back to school - in lots of things. Like things at home, like organizing how you want to do things at home - like make sure supper is ready.

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## Lily's Story

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I always make sure my kids get water. They're teenagers - they have to have their shower every day. It means I have to get extra water ready.

I'm living with my mom right now and I always help out over there. We all pay one bill. The bills just go in circles.



**You always learn from  
your mistakes - so it's  
good.**

I had to read out loud in class. I tried some words from the book. You always learn from your mistakes - so it's good.

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## Loretta's Story

**Loretta** is Dene. She has five children. Loretta's first language is English and she speaks some Slavey. She completed grade 7 at school. Loretta is in her second year of an ALBE program.

I came back to school because I wanted to improve my grades - so that I have a chance to help my kids with their homework at home. That means they don't have to come here to school for homework studies. I can help them at home with their homework.

**I came back to school ... to improve my grades ... to help my kids with their homework ...**

Now I help them a lot. Before I only helped them off and on, because I didn't know the words then. But now that I really think about it I help them a lot - especially my oldest daughter. She's 17 and I help her a lot with her homework.

I don't like her coming here to school to do her homework because she doesn't do it. She's always on the Internet when she's supposed to be studying.

I always stayed at home - didn't prepare for my kids, didn't role model for them - cooking and cleaning. And after I was done I would just sit there and maybe read a book. If that got boring I'd go back to my sewing. I make a lot of hair clips and uppers (for slippers). I'm not a person to sew moose hair cufflinks and things like that though. I sew a lot with beads.

**I'm finding out lots of new things at school.**

I'm finding out lots of new things at school. Before when we went to school we did all kinds of programs in the morning. On my break I'd get to go on the computer. The instructor would tell us to look up something.

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## Loretta's Story

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It took me a while to get back on the computer. I'd have to go to Internet and go to Google, and find this word and that. So it took me a while to get back to the computer. Now I'm finding out lots of new things. We've got a computer and a laptop at home.

When I took that program the first time in 2005 I was doing my math. I finished one book in a month and I was on math 2 - the same math my friend was doing. I finished two math levels before I finished my program.

I came here now - and now I'm doing times, divided by. And I said, "Can I go back to that math I was doing before?" The instructor said, "No, you've got to try. If you want to go into the carpentry program, you've got to try."

I don't want to go in right away. It's the math. I really have to think back about what it means and what I have to do. After that I caught on. And I was on page 26. And now I'm at page 48.

Now I can do something I thought I couldn't do. I find that I enjoy myself every day. And even if somebody is really mad it doesn't bother me. It's them.



**Now I can do something I thought I couldn't do.**

I try not to pay attention to what other people are saying in class and just focus on my work. Even with all the noise I still do my work. But when it comes to break, everyone just wants to laugh all the time.

We do lots of activities with the kids and their parents in that family literacy program we're running. This is our last week working with them. They come from 7 to 9 pm on family literacy nights. All nine of our class rotate to do it. It'll be us tonight and somebody else tomorrow.

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## Loretta's Story

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Sometimes we get maybe three or four families. This is Easter week so we'll probably get more kids tonight. We do picture bingo and word bingo. And we do reading with them, and crafts and tell stories.

They get to take two books home to read on their own at home. They don't have to bring them back. The girl who was supposed to be doing family literacy is on maternity leave. I would never have done family literacy before coming back to school. The first literacy program I ran was reading to the kindergarteners.

**I would never have done family literacy before coming back to school.**

Our class gets invited to meetings at the arena. Every meeting that goes on we get invited to be there as a group. We have to participate in that meeting - so we sit there as a group. There's always one person who's taking notes. And at the end we have to do a report.

Our class went to (Fort) Smith last month. It was good. We went for a college tour. We also went to the museum and to Wood Buffalo National Park.

We're going to go to Edmonton next to check out the college there - and go to the science centre and the zoo, I think. I hope we go to Kingsway. And then we're going to the Georgie Jones concert on Saturday. We did lots of fundraising - about 10 thousand dollars. We still have some money. I think eight or nine people are going. I'm going to take a big hockey bag for my clothes. I'm just going to take a couple of sets of clothing, and then go shopping there.

**I'm more confident as a result of going back to school.**

I'm more confident as a result of going back to school. I'm more confident about my reading and my writing. I also enjoy speaking out more. My classmates say, "Ask Loretta - she's not shy, she's not scared. She'll ask them." Either my sister or I is the spokesperson for the group.

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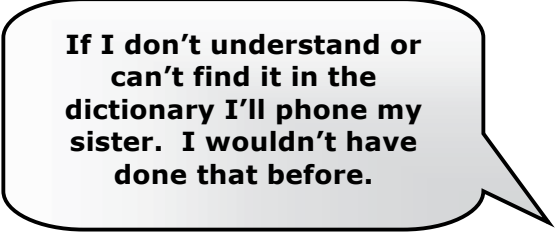
## Loretta's Story

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Now I have my five-year-old daughter in school. I read to her a lot. She asks me all these little questions about TV - or in picture books. I say, "Slow down! My head is getting sore." I find it a lot.

Sometimes I'll get a phone call at night because my classmate doesn't know the meaning of a word. I'll try to answer that person so they understand.

If I don't understand that word I'll look in my dictionary. If I don't understand or can't find it in the dictionary I'll phone my sister. I wouldn't have done that before.



**If I don't understand or can't find it in the dictionary I'll phone my sister. I wouldn't have done that before.**

If I met someone who was thinking of going to a program like this I'd tell them, "Be prepared. Just be prepared - but make sure your head is screwed on right before you go."

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## Mabel's Story

**Mabel** is Dene. She has four children. Mabel's first language is English and she speaks some Slavey. She completed grade 8 at school; she works part-time. Mabel is in an ALBE program.

I work part-time. I have to have a part-time job when I'm in school because I can't afford to live off my assistance - it's too hard.

**I have to have a part-time job when I'm in school ... I can't afford to live off my assistance ...**

Where I work we do native crafts and other programs. But the kids nowadays just want to go there and play pool. I'm not open every day for that now - only on Thursdays for that.

Right now we're running programs with adults. We're making gloves and stuff. We have somebody who comes in to help us. You have to do the beading and all. It's kind of hard work but that is what we are doing now.

Tuesday is our gym nights - so Tuesdays and Thursdays are for the kids. Mondays and Wednesdays are for the adults in the evenings. The Band funds me - I get \$400. But if I went through the rez I probably would have been getting like \$700. My friend here - she has one kid - she gets \$550 and I have four kids. So it's nuts. That is why I have to have a part-time job.

The executive director at the friendship centre hired me for evenings. It's sweet. I've been there on and off for the last four years. So I am back there again. It's hard. But when I first went back this year the director gave me extra time off in the evening, so I could take my kids to hockey. I was able to take my kids in late and still put in my time. It was awesome.

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## Mabel's Story

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I need my education. I have always wanted to come back to school - but I just didn't have the time. And now I am back home here its better.

**I need my education. I have always wanted to come back to school**

Being home is better. I want to be somebody. I want to be able to have a 9 to 5 Monday to Friday job. I can't do that with the education I have. That's why being a youth worker is good.

I want to go to school - probably in Lac La Biche - after I get my upgrading and get what I need, to go get what I want. Either accounting or recreation - one of them. I'll see how it is when I get there. What I want is probably accounting.

When I worked at the store across the river I was in the office. I didn't mind doing that accounting stuff, but I just don't have the grades. So I have to work on that.

It is a challenge coming back to school because I have to drive my kids to school and pick them up at lunch. Then they catch the bus after school. But it's a challenge for me just to get my kids up in the morning and have them out the door by 8:30.

**This is quite a challenge for me, but I am handling it.**

But I'm managing it. I managed one semester and now I'm doing the next one. It's quite a challenge when you have lots of kids. It's easier when it's just one. This is quite the challenge for me, but I am handling it.

I know a lot of people won't go back to school because of their finances - and it's rough. Some people are probably worse than I am. But some people can't go back to school till they pay off their debts. But I'm going. I just take my time day by day and see what happens to us - me and my kids.

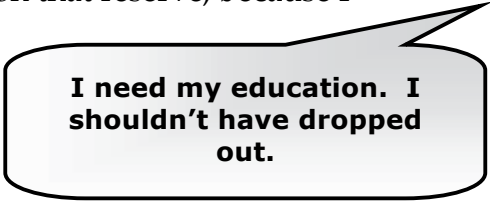


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## Mabel's Story

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I just moved home four years ago - I was living in Saskatchewan. And it was really hard for me to go back to school on that reserve, because I wasn't a band member. That made it difficult.



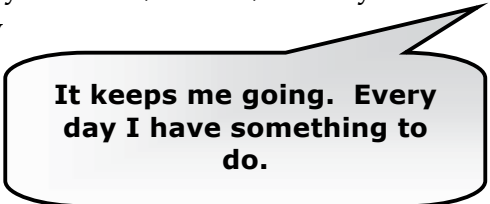
**I need my education. I shouldn't have dropped out.**

Once I moved back home my first goal was to come to school and I've been doing it since. I need my education. I shouldn't have dropped out.

That is what I always tell my daughter, "You can't drop out of school and end up like me. I don't want you to struggle. Get your education now while you can. Stick it out."

It's funny because if I don't want to go to school my kids say, "Well, you make us go to school!" So they help me stay motivated. I really have to watch what I say in front of them because it always bounces back. It may seem like they are not listening but they really are.

They liked it when I went back to school. My son said, "Mom, when you get to go to school do you get to come to my school?" I said, "No I have to go to big people's school."



**It keeps me going. Every day I have something to do.**

What do I get out of going to school?

Well, the benefits are that we get to take some courses that we can't take unless we're in school. It keeps me going. Every day I have something to do. All my days are always full.

My friends would probably say that I'd changed in one or two ways. My days are probably more structured. I have something to get up for now every morning instead of just getting my kids ready for school. There are probably more but I can't think of any right now.

It changed my life in a structured way. Now that I am back in school I have to adjust with my kids and it's kind of hard.

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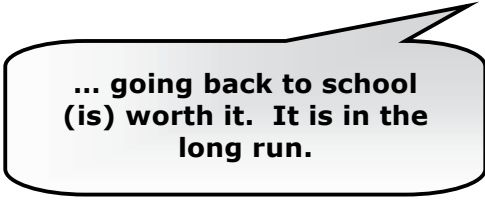
## Mabel's Story

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When I first started all I did was just the school stuff. Then after a while I started thinking about the outside, and then my kids - and trying to figure out if I am going to go to school somewhere else. Is it just going to affect me, or my kids too?

I figure Lac La Biche is a good place, because I have been there. My sister went to school there and I saw how everything is right there on campus. It's good. It would be a good place for me and my kids, I think. I haven't lived there before. I lived in Saskatchewan.

I would tell someone who was wondering about going back to school that it's worth it. It is in the long run - especially if you're younger and have only one kid it's worth it. If you've got lots of kids you have to be really prepared to handle it.



**... going back to school  
(is) worth it. It is in the  
long run.**

I don't think some people would be able to handle the stress and all that. But me - I don't worry about things that I don't have to worry about. I just worry about me and my kids - and that's it.

Some people worry about other people's stuff. But me - I just worry about me and my kids. I try not to worry about anyone else's problems. I just stick with my own. When you're older you have all these responsibilities - especially when you have a house, vehicles. You have to be really prepared.

My youngest child is five. It was hard when I was going to school at first because I had to worry about daycare. But now I don't have to. It's easier now that everybody is in school.

I used to get my Mom to baby-sit for me because I didn't want to bring them to daycare. Then this year we had an extra week of school - but the kids were off for a week.

## Mabel's Story

I asked, "Where do you get funding?" They won't fund me now because it has to be in a daycare - it can't be a day home. They switched it, eh? So I just paid it out of my pocket.

**That is another challenge  
... The whole daycare  
issue is a big issue.**

That is another challenge somebody has to take on. The whole daycare issue is a big issue. They are getting stricter. You have to have licensed sitters now - you can't just have anyone.

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## Maggie's Story

**Maggie** is Dene. She has two children. Maggie's first language is Slavey and her second language is English. She completed grade 9 at school; she works in the diamond mines. Maggie has been in an ALBE program for less than one year.

I'm hoping to have a good education as a result of coming back to school. I want to upgrade my schooling. I'd like to find a good job - to stop what I'm doing right now.

**I want to upgrade my schooling. I'd like to find a good job ...**

I don't want to be in a kitchen for the rest of my life, like I'm doing right now. I'd love to work with the government, behind a desk.

I really like working with the kids at the family literacy nights. The first time I went it was really good. Meeting the kids was really good. We did all sorts of activities with them. It was a nice thing to do. I wouldn't have known about that if I hadn't been part of this program.

I'm good at cooking. I work in the kitchen at the mines. I like to cook all kinds of food. I don't know what my favourite is.

I had lots of challenges when I came into the program. Math and English too - they're both a challenge for me. But they've both improved since I came into the program. The last time I went to this program my math and English weren't very good. And then I came back again. I can see that I'm making some progress.

My self-esteem has gone up. I'm more confident. I'm not as afraid to speak out as maybe I was before. Sometimes I can say whatever I want to say now.

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## Maggie's Story

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Before when we had to stand up and read a story - I got a little bit nervous the first time. But now I don't worry about it at all.

**I read to my kids now for school. ... This is the first time I ever did that.**

I read to my kids now for school. We get a book and I read to them. This is the first time I ever did that. My kids feel all right about me going to school. They come with me and then I take them home. They're happier now that I'm at the school here.

I also volunteer in the community. I wouldn't have done that before. If someone asked me about the program I'd say, "Yeah! C'mon! Come and join us! If you want to learn, join us. It's good if you want to learn."

We help each other in the program with some things that we don't know. At first I was kind of nervous about asking for help, but not any more.

**At first I was kind of nervous about asking for help, but not any more.**

We have to read out of a book. It's good. But sometimes there are words that you don't know - big words you don't understand.

I couldn't do math before but now I can. Now I've learned it. You know - whatever questions there are for homework I can do.

I'm also more confident in computers. I didn't know anything about computers till that girl from (Fort) Simpson showed us how to go on the Internet, and how to type. She showed us how to use the keyboard.

I have a computer at home. My girl knows more about computers than I do. Sometimes I go on the Internet. Usually when I get an email I reply - and now I'm getting better at it. But I still have to go like this (using one finger).

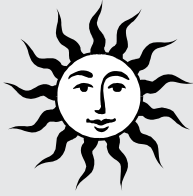
## Maggie's Story

There are lots of reasons why people should go back to school -because there are lots of things you don't know.

I like learning now - but not when I was in grade school. I feel different about it now. Maybe it's having such a good teacher. Yeah, it's different now.



**I like learning now -  
... I feel different about it  
now.**



## Marie's Story

**Marie** is Dene. She has four children. Marie's first language is English and she speaks some Slavey. She completed grade 10 at school. Marie attended an Early Childhood training program for three years.

I went back to school because I wanted to learn more, to experience more. I wanted math and that - just to make something of myself.

**... I wanted to learn more, to experience more. ... to make something of myself.**

I did an early childhood program - then I took a year off. I did the other program for three years. I want to go back next year. I took it by teleconference.

It was no problem for me to come back to school. We wanted to go to school early too. For school we had to walk our kids to school too - so the time worked in with our kids. I have four kids. They're eight, five, four, and my little one is nine months - a baby.

In the program I liked getting to be with our friends - learning, helping one another. We were all happy to be in the program because we all chum together and do things together - and that was a good feeling.

We worked together to fundraise to go on trips to the colleges, like in Grande Prairie. I went to Yellowknife. And then one time the instructor and me we took off and we went to High Level. We went to the college. We checked out this college. It was a good trip too.

Sometimes now I volunteer at the friendship centre. Just help make meal bags for people. Just get them ready and people come and pick them up.

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## Marie's Story

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We had to make bread and all this stuff - things that we didn't know how to make. The instructor taught us how to make bannock and her famous buns. My family eats healthier because I was here.

**My family eats healthier because I was here.**

I'm more confident now. I can stand up for myself more. Just going back to school and learning more was a big achievement for me. Restoring your brain - I lost it and got it back.

I think job shadowing was also a big success for me. I job shadowed at the friendship centre - and now I volunteer for the friendship centre.

**I'd say, "Go back. I was happy to go back."**

If someone asked me about going back to school, I'd say, "Go back. I was happy to go back."

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## Mary's Story

**Mary** is Inuvialuit. She has six children. Mary's first language is English and she speaks Inuvialuktun. She completed grade 8 at school. She makes crafts to earn some extra money. Mary has been in several programs: Native Artisan, Small Business, ALBE.

When I decided to come back to school it was for Traditional Arts. My aunty taught me a lot about sewing and artwork – all about crafts and how to make my clothes and everything. When she passed away - when I started to try to do sewing and I needed help - I couldn't find anyone to help me.

**When I decided to come back to school it was for Traditional Arts.**

A lot of people said I was smart and that I could do it by myself. But no one was willing to help me. I felt so lost when my aunty died. So when Traditional Arts came up I signed up for that - to get my confidence back. And I did and I had fun with Traditional Arts.

By the time I was finishing the program I wanted to become a teacher or an educator - to teach younger people. Or even just people who want to learn, or even my children. But my education was very low. I was only at a grade six level.

I applied for the Teacher Education Access Program and got accepted. A lot of things got a lot easier. I help my kids with homework and they help me. Even my husband helps. That was really positive - that kept me going.

**I almost gave up a lot of times because of homesickness. It was my biggest barrier.**

But I almost gave up a lot of times because of homesickness. It was my biggest barrier. When people pass away at home I want to go home. Or if my family is sick I want to be home. There are lots of times that I want to be home.

## Mary's Story

But my husband and my kids - and even the instructors encourage me. "You came here so far. You wanted to finish it. You want it so much."

I told my kids they can stay back in our home community if they want - and I can come here and do school. That's how bad I wanted my education - how badly I wanted my self-esteem to go up.

But they came with me. And that was really, really good. I know I can get through the homesickness with the help of my family and friends and instructors.

**Now I feel a lot more confident in myself.**

Now I feel a lot more confident in myself. I am confident that I can go into a school or a place where I'm going to teach - I'm comfortable with that now.

You get support from your kids - especially when they're older. You have to push yourself when you have homework. You have to tell your children that they can do their own thing while you do your homework.

We don't need tutors now. At the beginning of the year we were really behind a bit. The instructors always tell us who the best person is who can help us in each course.

I think math is my best class now. I didn't even know, but trigonometry is fun. I think our instructor made it fun for us and a lot easier for us to understand. So it's really great.

I never got that far in school, but I finally found out that its fun. It's overwhelming at times. But once you get the hang of it and you know what you're doing its fun.

**Once you get the hang of it and you know what you're doing its fun.**

I find that when I want to work with the students, some are okay. But some say, "I'm not there yet. Wait until I get there."

## Mary's Story

This is a big place compared to the community we came from. When I first came here I was scared. I was always aware of what people would think of me. I was self-conscious a lot of times.

I talk to my children a lot. My children were a lot more brave than I was. They said, "Mom don't be scared. Just go." And that's when I started going to school - getting my confidence.

What I was afraid of was that I was going to be going to school with Dene people and non-Aboriginals - and I didn't know what they were going to think of me. In the residential school students pointed fingers and picked on me - and I was kind of afraid of that.

**In the residential school students pointed fingers and picked on me - and I was kind of afraid of that.**

But it was all support. Nobody was different; everybody was human. There was no Gwich'in, no Inuvialuit, no non-Aboriginal - we were all just the same.

And that's what really, really made me enjoy the school. It's not racist or anything, it's like wanting to learn all together. It's like the students here want to help each other fulfil their ambitions. So it's really, really good.

That's how my confidence and my self-esteem got stronger. I take care of myself and what I want to do - and I try not to be aware of anything else.

**As a result of coming back to school we're a lot stronger in the family ...**

As a result of coming back to school we're a lot stronger in the family in a lot of ways. We try to help when someone in the family needs support.

I learned to push a lot of things from home to the back of my mind. For example as soon as someone passes away, I want to go home. But now when someone passes away, I close my eyes and say a little prayer - give

## Mary's Story

my pain to the Lord and ask the Lord to let me continue what I'm doing, so I can continue.

I can't help the people at home with the feelings that I have here. And it doesn't help me. That's the way I think about it now. And that helps me learn. I can push a lot of things away to make me go forward. I never used to do that. I used to just dwell on them. I've become a lot stronger than when we first came here.

**I can push a lot of things away to make me go forward. ... I've become stronger ...**

I'm more independent. When I came my husband was going out on the land - on what do you call those - rigs? So there are times that I'm alone with the kids. I learned to be a little tougher. I used to let my husband do more. My children - especially my son - sometimes say, "Every time dad goes you get so mean." I tell them it's because I have nobody else to help.

I've found out that I speak out more. We have to talk in school. And we have to talk in front of our instructor and our classmates. And I find that I'm over being scared of that. I can talk without stuttering or turning red, or wishing to go under the table.

**... I speak out more. ... I can talk without stuttering or turning red, or wishing to go under the table.**

When I was in residential school - one time one of the nuns - I don't know what I did - had me stand up in front of all the girls in the dorm. She was using me as an example. You know they have these long dresses? I was just standing there wishing to go under her skirt. I only could remember that part - wishing to go under her skirt and hide. And now I'm not like that. I want to help and I want to be there. I don't want to miss anything.

I mostly do homework in the evenings. I read to all my children while they were growing up. I always read to them or sometimes I told stories.

## Mary's Story

They always wanted stories when they were little kids - stories of themselves.

Now when I'm trying to read some instructions - I have a hard time at times understanding them. I have to keep reading them over and over again to understand. That's just how I am. Information, instructions - I always have to re-read them a whole bunch of times to make sure I really understand.

But I can read books. I enjoy reading books. But I have to re-read information and instructions. That's why I take a little bit long on my homework at times.

**It's fun to come back to school. It's something everyone should do ...**

It's fun to come back to school. It's something everyone should do - no matter how old they get. I wouldn't have said that about grade school - not when I was a child. When we were in school - when we were kids - there were so many of us for one teacher. She couldn't go one-on-one with every person. So it was like a whole classroom all the time.

But now - even though there may be a lot of us here - there are students who can help you. And the instructors are there to help you. So it's good - a lot easier. I'm not afraid to ask questions. I don't feel dumb - I just don't know what I'm doing. That's what I realized.

When I was younger I was scared to ask questions because they might think I'm stupid. But now I don't feel that way. I'm not afraid to ask questions. I don't feel stupid to ask questions. It makes me want to ask more questions.

**If you go back to school that's the one experience you'll really enjoy.**

It's kind of like your second childhood is finally growing up. If you go back to school that's one experience you'll really enjoy.



## Mary Anne's Story

**Mary Anne** is Dene. She has one child. Mary Anne's first language is English and she speaks some Slavey. She completed grade 8 at school. She took an ALBE program in the past, and has been in a pre-employment training program for a few weeks.

I came back to school because I wanted to learn about things - like computers and some of my math. I was good at math when I came here. I was also good at computers.

**... I wanted to learn about things ... I wanted to improve everything.**

I wanted to improve everything. I just want to know about everything. I've also signed up to go to the camp on the land.

As a result of being in this program I got a job as a teacher. I just need two more courses and I graduate. One of the other things that happens in the program are the friendships, yeah.

I was in my first ALBE program two years ago. Being in the program helped me get a job and helped me with relationships - making new friends and things like that.

I'm also more confident to speak out and things like that. I wasn't nervous when I started. I knew everybody. I also think I'm more independent. I'd be shy, but talking to people in the class wasn't a problem.

I wouldn't have done some of these things like speaking out when I was in grade school. No. I went to (grade) school in Yellowknife, so I didn't know people.

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## Mary Anne's Story

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It made a big difference in my family coming back to school. My daughter will come to me for help with homework and stuff - like math. Things like problem solving. I can sit there and work it out.

**It made a big difference in my family coming back to school.**

Math is difficult - so it's good that I have some math background. Hard problems.

Going to school every day is tough. Weeks. You get tired of all that school.

I guess math is my biggest success. When I had to help my fellow classmates with math. They always came to me with math. And reading big books.

I was working at the pre-school for three or four years. And then I guess they brought someone else in there.

If someone asked me about the program I'd tell them to go because you learn a lot.

I guess I got more confident. You feel good about yourself too. And you're not sitting at home not doing anything. And you have something to look forward to. Learning something new. Going to class.

**I guess I got more confident. You feel good about yourself too.**



## Mary Jane's Story

**Mary Jane** is Dene. She has two children. Mary Jane speaks English and her Aboriginal language. She completed grade 8 at school. She took ALBE programs for several years and now attends the Office Admin program.

I came back to school because I was tired of looking for employment - looking for jobs that I wanted, but didn't have the qualifications for. I was tired of doing next to nothing for work and not getting paid for it. So that's what made me decide to go back to school.

**... I was tired of looking for ... jobs that I wanted, but didn't have qualifications for.**

From when I was very young I did jobs like washing dishes - to custodian. My last position was with the college as a custodian - twenty hours a week.

If you're in low cost housing, it's efficient to work 20 hours a week. But right now I'm in a privatized unit and my rent is \$1200 a month. So I'm barely making ends meet. It's not making me want to quit. It just makes me want to get to the end.

I know eventually that I will be able to pay my \$1200 and still have money to back me up. As a student I'm barely making ends meet. But it's just making me push myself forward saying, "Okay if I have these qualifications, I know I'll be able to get a decent job to improve my life."

**... twice I quit because things weren't working at home.**

It wasn't hard for me to come back to school. I applied for school on and off for maybe about five years. I came back here twice - and twice I quit because things weren't working at home.



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## Mary Jane's Story

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I didn't have babysitters. I didn't have the money to pay my babysitters and things like that. Now I have my daughter and my granddaughter at home, and my daughter looks after my granddaughter while I'm in school. That makes it a lot easier.

Once in a while - when she ends up with an appointment or something that she has to do - I'm able to take my granddaughter to school for half a day. And she plays, or reads books, or whatever - while I'm doing my work. That makes it easier.

This year Income Support decided to help people go back to school. I think you can get up to \$750 for day care subsidy from them. But the more they seem to help you, the worse it gets.

Before they didn't take your bursary money or your GST into consideration. Any kind of money that you get now they do. So to me the program hasn't improved. It's worse because now my student financial assistance is an income, my GST is an income, my bursary money is an income.

All that extra money helped to pull me over for the next month. When they take that other money into consideration you end up with \$20 from Income Support. What am I going to do with \$20 for a month? I'm hoping to get into housing, but the list is a mile long.



**The biggest challenge for me is financial ...**

The biggest challenge for me is financial – running my home and paying my bills, and coming to school and knowing I have got only about \$1300 to spend. I have to pay my rent so that I have a roof over my head.

A lot of the time I get native food from my family, and that's what pulls me over to the next month. So it is a very big challenge. Lately I've been thinking of just saying, "The hell with it. Go back to work because things are not working out." I'll think of that one day and then the next day

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## Mary Jane's Story

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something will come up at school and I'll say, "Hey, it's going to work eventually - it's going to work." You just have to keep plugging along.

I'm hoping I can keep going. I always thought that I couldn't work in an office environment, but in the last year I've been doing a lot of different things in administration. I find that where it would work for me is if I'm in contact with people all the time.



**I'm hoping I can keep going.**

I can't just sit at a desk where you do reports and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I'm the type of person that likes to communicate with people and do things other than just sit at a desk and answer phones. That was my biggest downfall about office admin. But the two-year diploma program looks like it's got a lot of different things in the second year. It looks challenging.

I was going to take the NRTP (Natural Resources Technology Program). But after the way a few students seemed to get into the program this year, I was disappointed.

When I first came back to school I worked really hard at all my subjects to try to get to a higher level. Then when I was talking to a few students they told me, "Well we didn't take this, didn't take that, but we're in NRTP."

When I first heard that I was very upset, very angry. I decided to switch programs and asked my instructors what kind of a program I could get into. When they advertised this two-year diploma program in office admin I thought, "That's a challenge."

I looked at the different subjects that you have to take. It's a lot of computer work for me because I just really got into computers in the last year. Before me and computers didn't like each other. Probably because I didn't know how to turn the computer on - I didn't know how to get into Windows and things like that.

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## Mary Jane's Story

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When I was in ALBE 140 they taught me how to type. I'm not the fastest and it's not the greatest - but it's a challenge that I'm willing to take to see where it's going to get me in life.

**... it's a challenge I'm willing to take to see where it's going to get me in life.**

My family supports me. My sister bugged me for about two years to go back to school. She told me I would never be anything but a custodian if I didn't challenge myself at different things in life.

The first year I came back it was a big challenge. Then the awards that I got in May of last year just threw me off. I got three different certificates. One was an NRTP Access Certificate. One was attendance and the other was something else. And I thought, "You can do that in five months! What do you think you could do in a year?" You know that really gave me a sense of speaking out.

**The benefits of coming back to school, I think, are great.**

The benefits of coming back to school, I think, are great. Aurora College helps you fix up your résumé so you can get a decent summer job. Employers are always looking for summer students that are going to go back to school in the fall.

That's one thing I'm looking forward to - fixing up my résumé and seeing what I can do this summer. If I don't get into housing then I'm going to have to look for July and August rent. And that's about \$2400. It just really offends me if I have to go to Income Support for their assistance.

I really had a boost in my confidence this year.

The one thing that really bothers me is when I tend to slack off on my work, and instructors give me a certain date that my assignment has to be in by. It's just work, work, work, work, hand it in, and before you know it you've got a pile there again.

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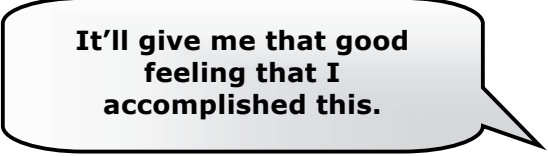
## Mary Jane's Story

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It's hard sometimes to keep up - especially in English 140. I wasn't really able to do the essays. When I went in for the English 150 in February my instructor wanted a six-page essay. I'm thinking, "That's a lot of work."

I ended up going back on my notes thinking, "This is going to show me how to do it." So far I've got two pages done out of six. I know I'm not going to get my full mark or whatever - but just the fact of actually doing it and handing it in will be enough for me.

It'll give me that good feeling that I accomplished this. I guess that's good for office admin - because you have to do reports and things, and do them properly. That's where the essay stuff comes into play.

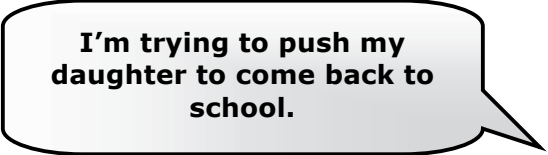


**It'll give me that good feeling that I accomplished this.**

I tend to take a book or two every evening and read to my granddaughter. She likes that. When I started she didn't really bother about it. Now it's got to be a habit. I get out of school and she holds books up to me - wanting me to read to her. I try to make a habit of it because she's having a hard time speaking. Not because of her health, or trouble with her ears, or the length of her tongue, or whatever. They say it's got nothing to do with that.

She will just blurt out one day and be able to talk - like she never had a hard time. Sometimes it's very hard to understand her. But I find when I read to her, her words tend to come out a little bit more clear. I say, "This is not the way to say it." Then I explain how to say it and she tries really hard.

I'm trying to push my daughter to come back to school. She's been out of school since grade eight. She was supposed to come back this fall but she had an accident with her ankle - so she didn't come back.



**I'm trying to push my daughter to come back to school.**

## Mary Jane's Story

Now she's saying, "I'm going to be 19 and I want to work." I'm trying to tell her if you go back to school - two or three years, maybe four years down the road, you're going to have a degree behind you. You're going to have a good job and you're going to be able to support yourself.

Right now she's frustrated with babysitting. Because the babysitters are not paying her the wage she's supposed to get. Or they're not paying her at all.

There are a lot of benefits with coming back to school - like being able to learn. You're able to do certain things that you were never able to do before, like computers.

**You're able to do certain things that you were never able to do before ...**

Before I came back to school, I didn't know how to turn a computer on - didn't know how to hook the Internet up - didn't know how to find information. Within the last year and a half I've learned quite a bit with computers.

Nowadays, kids like my daughter are computer literate. She knows how to turn it on. She knows what to look for. It's going to be so much easier for her coming back to school.

I'm still trying to talk her to come back to school before she forgets what she knows - because I think it's important for her. If she wants to move up in the world then she's going to have to come back to school. Because getting your education is how you get a good job nowadays.

**There's so much I want to do.**

I want a full time job with benefits. I want to be able to buy my own home one of these days. There's so much I want to do. But I've got to get over that hump of getting my diploma.

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## Mary Jane's Story

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Sometimes it's very frustrating because there's another essay - or I've got to get this test done. And then I'll try to think of what I'm going to get out of it. That seems to switch my mind to want to do it.

My instructor always sticks me with interviews because she says, "I think you're great at this. I see a politician in you." That's because there are times where I voice my opinion to different students or instructors - things that I don't like or things that I do like.

I'm not afraid to speak out in front of people. I'll turn around and say, "Did I say the right thing?" If I think maybe I insulted somebody or something I'll pull that person aside and say, "Sorry. I didn't mean to offend you or anything, but this is the way I feel about it. I'm sorry." That's all I can do.

**I'm not afraid to speak out in front of people.**

I was always outspoken. That's my sister's teaching. She always says, "If you know you need to say something, don't hold it back. But think about how you're going to say it, so you don't insult that person." But sometimes when you're angry things do come out the wrong way. Then I tend to fix it up - after I've cooled down.

**As a result of coming back to school I know a lot more about myself.**

As a result of coming back to school I know a lot more about myself. I know my qualities. I know my potential. I know what I'm able to do - how far I'm able to carry it on.

From when I was a young child I was always able to go, go, go, go, go. Sometimes when I get frustrated I get rid of my frustration by cleaning. Sometimes I spend six hours cleaning - just to work out that anger. Or I'll walk or go someplace where nobody goes, and I will just let it out.

A lot of times it takes a lot out of me, energy wise. Then I'll ask myself, "What can you do to get this energy back?" I'll throw open my books. I'm not much of a reader. That's where I find I'm weak - in English.

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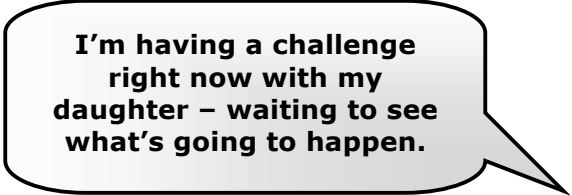
## Mary Jane's Story

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There was never a time where I opened a book and read it. There was always something that took my attention away from the book.

Right now I have the responsibility of worrying about what my daughter is going to do when she's 19. Is she going to turn to the bottle or is she even going to want to go to school? I'm not saying she's doing that right now.

It doesn't matter whether you bring a child up sober for all your life. I think that child is going to go their own way whether you brought them up well or not. So I'm having a challenge right now with my daughter - waiting to see what's going to happen.



**I'm having a challenge right now with my daughter – waiting to see what's going to happen.**

I always tell myself that my daughter is 19 years old and I have no more responsibilities. And then I catch myself.

I custom adopted my granddaughter. She's my responsibility until she's 19. I just basically took on something that I shouldn't have. She's very attached to me. She just turned four.

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## Melissa's Story

**Melissa** is Dene. She has one child. Melissa's first language is Slavey and she also speaks English. She completed grade 9 at school. She attended an ALBE program for two years.

I came back to school to learn- to learn my grades and to learn things like math, spelling, and that. I had to learn more how to do math. My math wasn't very good in high school. My English is okay. I wanted to learn more about what is spelling, and that math. I want to get a job.

**I came back to school to learn ... I want to get a job.**

I worked as a chambermaid. I worked for old folks and I went back to working for housing. But in the afternoons I went to old folk.

I worked at 1:00 - and about 7:00 or 8:00 I go home and clean up at night. I did that for seven months. Now I quit and I'm going back to school. So my sister took over. I'm planning to go back to school again in the fall.

When I was in the program it made me learn lots. It made me read too. I learned about reading, about computers - how to go through computer stuff.

When I first started school I had to learn computers because I hardly knew it. It was kind of easy. But learning the keyboard was difficult for me. When I went back to school it was hard for me to do something like math.

Getting up in the morning was also hard. My son is 15 so he can get up in the morning. I hate getting my son up in the morning - making him breakfast. In the shower, get everything ready, take off, and tired.



## Melissa's Story

But ever since I started school I never missed a day - me and my son. Not even missed once in my life. It's two years since I went back to school again. I never missed - went there every day.

**But ever since I started school I never missed a day.**

It feels good that I managed that every day. It's like exercise for me. I go for a walk to my house and come back - go back and forth like you do exercise. Makes me feel good, walking back and forth. Some of the time I would catch a ride if it was too cold.

It was pretty hard for me to go to school. Yes I get distressed to myself. I get distressed when I get up in the morning - just like you get too angry and you don't want to go back to school. Or you feel really tired.

Once I did that and fell asleep in class. I said I just wanted to sleep for a few minutes. So I fell asleep for a few minutes and then I got up. It was in the afternoon. I like to sleep in the afternoon. It was okay - made me feel good.

My family wanted me to go back to school. I get paid. I get \$200 every two weeks - less than those girls. Those girls get \$224 or \$225. Some get \$300. The band pays for it. Once in a while I go back to housing. And babysitting. You don't get much money - almost nothing.

I baby-sit, but not too much anymore. I just wanted to give other people a chance to go to school - all these girls. I just wanted to get other people a chance. All these other girls are doing nothing but staying home. I talked to my friend and encouraged her to come back to school.

**I talked to my friend and encouraged her to come back to school.**

The good thing about the program is that it makes me feel like traveling and that. We travelled to Grande Prairie. This was my first time in Grande Prairie.

## Melissa's Story

When I first came here we took off to Grande Prairie. When we got to Grande Prairie was it ever beautiful! But when we got to Grande Prairie we drove around town and we got lost. Was it ever funny? We got lost - couldn't find our way, but we finally found our motel.

Everybody had to be in twos – we all had roommates. Me and the instructor stayed in one room that has two beds.

Going to school means I miss cleaning up my house. I just leave it like that and just take off to school. I don't have time to clean up like before.

**Going to school makes me feel good, great. ... like I learned lots.**

Going to school makes me feel good, great. It makes me feel like I learned lots. Learned lots about other things - like making bread and buns and that, and do some baking.

Fundraising to do more trips. Sometimes I bake at home. And I go to the youth centre - I bake and cook over there. Sometimes I make stew, bannock, chilli. We make stir fry, difficult things.

I volunteer there sometimes. I go there if there is nothing to do. I would just help those girls, baking. It makes you feel good. I like it.

**Some of these successes made me want to take another program ...**

My biggest success mostly is computers. And reading. Some of these successes made me want to take another program after I finish this program.

I tried several times to go back to school, but I can't go back to school. Cause I have to go back to that job again at housing. At first I was at home and someone asked me if I wanted to start cleaning, cause the person who was doing it was not really good cleaning up. So I said, "Yeah."

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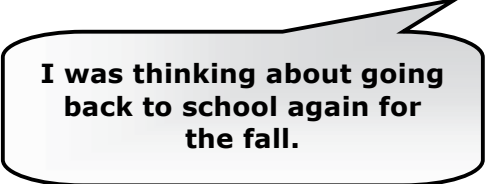
## Melissa's Story

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I started doing that for seven months. Cleaning for housing I make more an hour than babysitting. I made \$18.50 an hour. I only make two something an hour babysitting.

That program helped me to meet friends. In the program it was easy to make friends. I miss them now I'm not in that program. It was really fun in the program - cooking and baking with them. It was okay.

I was thinking about going back to school again for the fall. I like it. It's good.

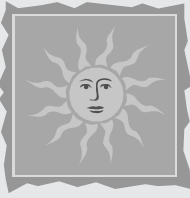


**I was thinking about going back to school again for the fall.**

If someone came to you and said I am thinking about going back to school I'd tell them, "It's worth it."

When you go to school it makes you feel good. You learn lots and you have more fun there and that. That's why I like it. And you get paid from it - like you make money from it. I really learn lots too.

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## Mona's Story

**Mona** is Dene. She has two children. Mona speaks English and her Aboriginal language. She completed grade 11 at school. She attended several programs: ALBE, Office Admin, Native Artisan, and Indigenous Wellness and Addictions Prevention.

I always wanted to be a wellness worker. I wanted to help people with problems - drinking and stuff like that. I heard about this program at the last minute. Registration for the program was closed, but still they accepted me into it. I was glad. It's a really nice program.

**I always wanted to be a wellness worker.**

It wasn't hard for me to come back to school this time because I'd been here before - I think for about two years. I wanted to go back to school. Then I found out about IWAPP (Indigenous Wellness and Addictions Prevention Program).

When I first came back it was hard. I had to leave the job that I had worked in for 10 years. It was hard to leave because I had to apply for SFA (Student Financial Assistance). In my home community I have my own home. But here I have to pay rent.

My whole family came over here with me when I first came back to school. This time I'm just here alone. My kids go back and forth from my community to visit me. It's hard on your own. Some nights are lonely.

**My whole family came over here with me when I first came back to school.**

I've got all this homework and I can't set my mind to it. I just want to be home. I have lots of relatives here, but it's different from your own family and kids.

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## Mona's Story

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When I first came here I was doing the Native Artisan program. That was good. We learned a lot of good things like tanning. I had never put things I had made into a show before, but when we came here we did that for a Christmas Fair for all the students.

People were looking at what we made and stuff like that. At that time we were just making small objects - and then we made mukluks and stuff like that. They had a sewing class there.

I couldn't believe that it was the first time I ever sewed with fur. I used to work in a fur shop a long time ago, but I just worked in the office. So I'd never really worked with furs before.

My main goal in that program was to learn how to tan a moose hide. We went out to the bush and used the tools. It was good. The program gave me more confidence.

**My main goal in that program was to learn how to tan a moose hide.**

I never used to sell my stuff unless I knew it was really perfect. I was kind of shy. But after that I learned to do whatever I wanted. Now I can sell a pair of shoes and be confident that I'll do well.

I went into TEP (Teacher Education Program). But I never really enjoyed it as much as the Native Artisan program, because it was too different.

When we did our practicum I had to go to an elementary school. The noise got to me. I couldn't stand it after a while. It's different from sitting down. I enjoy kids but I wouldn't have gone on further. I like adults. I guess I'm not a kid person.

I found out about the IWAPP program at our general assembly in May. They introduced some people who were telling people about it - so that's how I found out about it. There are two teachers. We also have some wellness workers who come in from Yellowknife.

## Mona's Story

I like learning. I like to do presentations, but I never really knew how to do them. I was shy. You get used to it. We have our own workshops. We don't ever give presentations in the community yet. I know for this job I might have to start to give presentations. But it will be okay because I'm used to it.

**My confidence has increased a little. I also think I've become more independent.**

My confidence has increased a little. I also think I've become more independent.

I never used to be so outgoing and I notice the difference. In my home community I would work and go home. But here I try to get out.

If someone asked me I'd tell them to go back to school. You learn so much. Even if you think you know it all, there's a lot to learn out there. You can feel more confident. You can say what you want. It's a good opportunity.

My classmates would say I'm more open now. I can speak out and stand up at the front and do presentations. I can answer their questions during presentations.

Sometimes you don't know it all - but I try my best to answer all the hard topics we have. We have to deal with these things because these are the sorts of things that happen in our communities. So it's really good.

**Sometimes you don't know it all - but I try my best to answer all the hard topics we have.**

I felt good in the Native Artisan program because I went there and sewed a seal skin - which I had never done before. It was really good. We did all kinds of projects. We even made chairs.

I felt proud when I finished that project. I gave mine to my friend. She said she's going to put it behind her house. So hopefully she still has it. I always wanted to try moose hide tanning. I never went out with my parents in the bush.


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## Mona's Story

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I was really proud because me and my friend were partners, and our moose hide turned out really good. It was nice and brown and the instructor said, "This is your first moose hide. The rest of your moose hides will turn out like that."

It was a nice moose hide, but it was full of holes because the skin was a bit thinner. I still have the pair of slippers that I made out of it. I made them for my daughter, but she told me to use them. So I took them back.

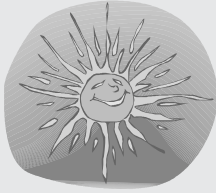


**I'm glad I did that program. ...It allows me to give back to the community ...**

I'm glad I did that program. I'm very glad about that. It allows me to give back to the community and work with people.

I'm concerned about that because there's so much booze around, and drugs. I have to show them someone cares about them. It's just what I've always wanted.

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## Nora's Story

**Nora** is Dene. She has two children. Nora speaks English. She completed grade 12 at school. Nora has attended several adult ed programs and now she's in a pre-employment training program. She's been in the program less than one year.

I came back to school because I took a pre-employment carpentry program for a couple of years, and that program didn't actually have the skills that you want to take in the program - like drywall, painting, all that. So I wanted to take it because of that.

**I wanted to come back to school because trades is something that I'm interested in doing.**

I wanted to come back to school because trades is something that I am interested in doing. I don't want to have a job where I have to be behind a desk. I would rather be out. So that's why I came back to school.

I like reading. I read a lot. Sometimes, just for the fun of it, I like to write little fiction - stories for my daughter. I write stories with her name in it. Like I just made a little short story about her when she had a little puppy.

I don't sew very much, but I know how to do beading work and stuff. When I was in school I know that I was good at a lot of things. Like, I love math. I am really good at that.

So in this program you have to be really, really good at math - to be able to understand the measurements and all that. I want to stick this program out until I find a job. It goes till next month.

That would mean doing an apprenticeship. I heard that a guy that's coming here and is building some more houses. So I am going to see if I could be one of the crew.



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## Nora's Story

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For me the biggest challenge coming back to school was family. But then I am lucky because I have my spouse there to support me. He stays home with my son, and my daughter is at school with me all day.

**For me the biggest challenge coming back to school was family.**

Getting here every day is a huge challenge for me. Because sometimes I need to look for a babysitter and sometimes it's hard. Just getting here every day - I guess is my biggest challenge.

Getting an education is the biggest benefit. I'm much more confident as a result of that. How do you say it? Bonding - just being able to be with my friends every day.

So that's pretty good because before I was going to school - maybe I wouldn't see them for a week or something. The benefits of being in school for me - it's just getting more experience and stuff like that.

This is definitely experience for me because I was taking pre-carpentry, and never got to learn how to do proper painting or drywall. And this one you do all of that.

**... I do feel more independent and responsible - it's a good thing.**

Of course I do feel more independent and responsible - it's a good thing. Getting here every day is important to me. I don't think that this program is not worth it or anything. I just don't show up because I don't have a babysitter, or my kids are sick.

A while back - a couple of weeks ago - I had to stay home two full days because my kids were sick. And my son is still under the weather because of his teeth. So yeah - at this point of time - it hasn't been easy to get to school every day.

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## Nora's Story

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But I've hung in there. I have finished all my programs that I've been taking. And this is the fifth program I've taken, I think. I've also taken office admin, and pre-trades, and pre-employment carpentry, and this.

What would I say to someone who was thinking about going back to school? "Don't say anything unless you've tried it." I would tell them, "Don't even think about it if you don't have confidence in yourself." But then I would tell them, "It's a good program."

The instructor is a good instructor - totally understanding. I would just tell them to give it a shot - just have confidence in themselves. And the instructor is always there to help people. It's a program for adults. People don't make fun of you if you don't understand anything.



**Coming to school every  
day is a big success.**

Coming to school every day is a big success. Getting all my projects done - all my shop projects, any homework she gives us, you know. I am never left behind or anything. So that's quite an achievement for a mom of two kids. So great - just being here and doing my work.

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## Paul's Story

**Paul** is Inuvialuit. He has no children. Paul completed grade 12 at school. He first came back to school part-time and worked at the same time. This didn't work out for him. Paul now attends an ALBE program full time.

I'm going to school because I have a set goal. It's a really long one – I'll probably hit it by the time I'm fifty.

I want to get a PhD in communications. And then I want to open a school for Aboriginal students. But not just Aboriginal students - anybody can go. Preference will be given to Aboriginal students - and it'll be a film studies school.

**I'm going to school  
because I have a set goal.**

We tell great stories naturally - it's our tradition. All films and movies have a great story behind them. That's something that I've always wanted to do.

It wasn't hard for me to come back to school. I did a lot of research first. I was originally going to go back to school in 2004. But I thought that I should probably work for a few years first and save up some money. And then research the financial difficulty of it.

So, on that aspect I'm well prepared. For a lot of people their kids are their motivation. I don't have kids. I don't have another half, so this is all personal for me.

I've done all the research, so I knew what I was getting into. I also know a few people who came back to school just for the sake of doing it. Personally, I think education should have a purpose. You shouldn't just do it for the sake of doing it.

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## Paul's Story

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My motivation helped me in coming back to school. I'm kind of nervous though - when I think about moving south. I don't know that I'll be able to handle it. I'm a northerner - the north is my home. I could probably go for a couple years. But I'll have a strong urge to come back.

**My motivation helped me in coming back to school. ... my determination keeps me going.**

And once I come back I don't know if I'll want to go back south to finish. That's going to be the only hard part - and it makes me nervous for the future. But my determination keeps me going.

There were no challenges for me going back to school. I live in Inuvik and I have my own place. I've always had it. It was either I want to do this, or I want to stay working. And to be honest I was kind of sick of working.

There are some negatives from going back to school. I've lost contact with a lot of my friends, and colleagues, and my family as a result of school - because it's a full-time thing.

You can't take a few days off to go have fun with your friends when you've got an essay due, or a test tomorrow, or a test in three days. You're always writing and reading and studying. And that takes a lot of focus and time.

And your friends start to ask, "Are you going to hang out with me or what?" Or your family says, "Well you're always too busy for me." You sort of become a hermit because of your education.

**... I'm trying to maintain a decent grade ... I want at least a 70.**

A lot of people see it as a really fun time - hanging out and meeting new friends and stuff. But for me it's been about losing friends. They're all out having a good time, living the college life - whereas I'm trying to maintain a decent

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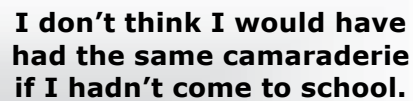
## Paul's Story

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grade, instead of just getting a 50. I don't want a 50. I want at least a 70. So that has been hard.

From the positive side - it's always great to meet new people. I'm a people person, so for me to meet other people is great.

If I was still working in the work force - I don't think I would have met my other classmates. I don't think I would have had the same camaraderie if I hadn't come to school.



**I don't think I would have had the same camaraderie if I hadn't come to school.**

I'm never shy of meeting people - but I've noticed a few people are shy to talk to strangers they don't know. I'm never like that. If I don't know you I'll just say, "Hi my name is Paul. What's yours?"

I get to know you on a professional or on a friendship level. I can't stand it when someone is staring at you and they don't know what to say. I want to say, "What are you staring at? Do you want to know my name?" That's the positive aspect - making new friends.

Where I worked I dealt with Elders. My old job required me to get to know Elders on a personal level - their life and their hardships. So I might have become friends with my classmate's aunts or uncles. I sat there and captured their lives all on camera and re-told them in story form for the public. So I got to know Elders on a personal level.

Before my job I always thought that this was my age group - that I couldn't be friends with people that are older. Then when I started that work I became friends with the Elders. It really changed me in this way. I couldn't see myself becoming friends with people my own age any longer.

They think they're going through such hard times - but that's nothing compared to what these Elders went through. So now I never complain about how hard it is for me. I always say that it's a good day.

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## Paul's Story

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Now I'm meeting people around my own age. That friendship is the positive aspect. It affects all adult students.

**That friendship is the positive aspect. It affects all adult students.**

One of my so-called best friends from work doesn't talk to me anymore because I'm no longer a television producer. I'm no longer the same status as him. Now I'm a student. That's exactly what he said! "You're just a student." And I thought, "Wow, we were friends for six years."

But with students you're friends the year after, and the year after that. Last year I was here for a couple of months. There were some students from last year who I talked to when I went back to work.

And then when I came back we just picked up where we left off. So in that respect student friendship is a lot stronger than work friendship.

I think too, because we're all Aboriginal, we all know that we have lives outside of the classroom. We can get along so well because we all have similar lifestyles.

**We can get along so well because we all have similar lifestyles.**

Our parents and our grandparents went through such hardship in residential schools and boarding schools. So we can relate on some level. We all know that life isn't easy for each one of us.

When someone is feeling down and out we don't say, "Oh well, that's not my problem." We ask them, "How's it going?" We actually want to know. We aren't saying it just for the sake of saying it. We mean it. There's a bond there.

I was nervous when I first came back. I admit I was scared shitless. I didn't think I could do it. Financially and family-wise - that didn't concern me.

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## Paul's Story

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I have a lot of money saved away for this purpose. My family understands that my education comes first. Growing up I sacrificed my own education so that my mom could get an education - so that she could support my brother and sister.

While she did that I was the provider for the house. I made sure everything was okay. Then when I went for my education I said, "You guys are on your own. I'm not part of the family right now. I'm doing things for myself."

They understand. The only reason I was scared shitless to come back was because I didn't know if I could actually succeed - because I'd never actually committed myself to anything before.

**... I didn't know if I could actually succeed.**

I went from job to job. And the only reason I made the commitment for my mom was because I didn't want my brother and sister to live the same way I did - wanting things that I could never get because my parents didn't have the money for them. I didn't want that for my brother and sister. So that was the only commitment I actually made.

Each job that I've had - when I got sick of it, I just quit. If I got tired of living in a certain place I would move.

Coming back to school was the first big commitment I've had to make. And so I'm scared because I don't know if I'll succeed or not. Maybe I'll get tired of it in a year or two and say, "I'm going back to work." I don't know.

**Coming back to school was the first big commitment I've had to**

That's what scares me. I think that's the only thing - coming back makes me feel kind of nervous.

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## Paul's Story

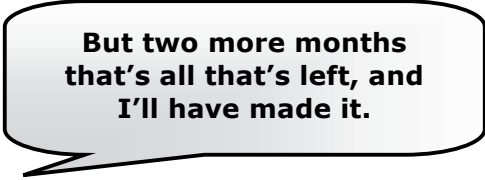
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I'm hoping that I actually stick through it. I've managed to stay committed this long - but with great difficulty. It was hard at one point because my home life got really sporadic - up and down, just chaotic.

I almost quit a few times for family reasons. I managed to hang in there by a thread. There's still some days that I wonder if I should continue. But then I look and think it's only a few months away (till I finish). I'm almost there. If I make it past this first year, then I can see.

Family was a huge thing for me. I almost quit a few times. One of my uncles committed suicide - that was almost a stopper there. And then my granny got diagnosed with cancer - and I almost stopped there.

There were just all these other things that kept building up and I thought, "This is a real uphill struggle." It seemed like the whole world was against me for staying in school. But two more months that's all that's left, and I'll have made it.



**But two more months  
that's all that's left, and  
I'll have made it.**



## Randy's Story



**Randy** is Metis. He has six children. Randy's first language is English. He completed grade 9 at school. Randy now attends an ALBE program.

I wanted to go back to school to get a higher education - so I can get into a college, take up another course. I was thinking of going into the natural resources program. But it's up in the air now.

**I wanted to go back to school to get a higher education ...**

Once I get higher education I might change what I want to do with my future. I was planning on going to (Fort) Smith. But because my kids are down south I would prefer to be nearer them. I was born in Yellowknife, but I was raised here.

I finished grade 9 and did a little bit of grade 10. Now I have three credits in biology. I came back to school because I've seen everybody else advance and I couldn't advance in the work - either as a labourer or real high paid labourer, because my education was not high enough. I couldn't advance any higher in companies.

I thought the funding would be hard but I guess it came across pretty easy. I wasn't sure how it would pay for my food and stuff. So I wasn't sure if I wanted to come back to school. If I couldn't afford to eat how could I go to school?

Getting to and from school was another challenge. I eventually picked up a car so that made it easier. I live in the old town. If you were to walk it would be an hour - hour and a half maybe. In the winter it is pretty hard - trying to go fast. Summer is not too bad. You can ride a bike.

## Randy's Story

My friends thought it was a good idea for me to come back to school, so they were quite supportive. Friends and family were really supportive.

**Friends and family were really supportive.**

It was kind of hard for my kids to understand, because they are still at that age. They had just finished school. I explained to them why I needed more schooling, so now they are all for it.

I was shy at first. Got over that real quick. I've spoken in big groups before - not hundreds of people but 30 to 50 people. And that was a challenge too. Just to get up there.

Other than that I liked coming back to school. I find that I am learning easier - easier than when I was at school. ALBE is not so authoritative.

I found when I was a kid that I didn't like the authority of the teachers - and there was a lot of strictness. I had a problem with authority when I was a kid - so my attention span was short. I've been hit in the head with erasers, chalk, and things like that.

**I've learned a lot since I've been back ... compared to when I used to go to school.**

Another of the benefits is learning. I've learned a lot since I've been back in the short period of time compared to when I used to go to school. Like I said, I had a short attention span before. Now I am not so worried about things - it's just easier.

I was doing crosswords and stuff, and I was learning from that and reading. Coming back to school and doing the math and English was a little bit of a challenge - but it's a learning challenge.

Every day I learn something new. There's a change in my attitude to learning. I look forward to finishing.

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## Randy's Story

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Well right now I am doing my grade 11 English. The math was behind a little bit. It will take about a year and a half for that. And if I pass my exam on my English this year I will be in grade 12 next year.



**The teacher's teaching has really motivated me.**

The teacher's teaching has really motivated me. I liked it when I came back. I've actually learned quite a bit. I achieved a lot in that sense. A lot more than I knew before I came back.

I would tell someone who was thinking of coming back to school that it was worth it. I'd definitely try to encourage them to come back or go back. The benefit from it would be greater than not going at all. Or at least they should try it.

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## Ramona's Story

**Ramona** is Metis. She has two children. Ramona's first language is English. She completed grade 10 at school. Ramona was in an ALBE program and now she works full-time.

I left school at grade 10 and then - it's a long story. I had a kid when I was very young still - before I was in grade 10. I was pregnant at 15 and then I went back to school to grade 10. Then I quit.

I was doing a bunch of crazy things. I used to work at the restaurant or at a convenience store or whatever. Then when I was 21 I got pregnant with my daughter. I decided I needed to do something with my life - so I decided to go back to school.

**... I needed to do something with my life - so I decided to go back to school.**

I did one year of upgrading here at Aurora College. Then I got a job at public works for a one-year term - so I quit school again. Then I realized I shouldn't have gone to work. I should have just got my schooling over and done with.

So I came back last fall and did one year. And this is my second year - three years altogether. That's how I started - with my second child. Realizing that I need to get an education so I can provide for her, because I'm a single parent, so it's up to me.

**... I need to get an education so I can provide for her (my second child)**

Plus I work after school now. When my daughter is finished school she goes to my mother's. And then I go from here to work to pick her up and then go home.

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## Ramona's Story

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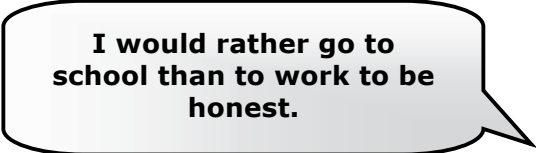
I don't know exactly what I want to do when I'm finished. I did want to go to college in Edmonton or Slave Lake. I'm planning on going next fall hopefully. I would like to take Business Management. But I'll see what happens - how far I get here.

It is challenging being a single mom with two kids - and working after school. I have to go home and cook supper. And have time to do homework and help my daughter with her homework. And still get her to bed at a reasonable time.

Sometimes it's just impossible. Sometimes I just want to quit work. But I need the extra money because I have to pay for everything. I have to pay for my rent, all my bills - plus I have a truck payment.

I just recently was separated from my husband, so it's been challenging. It's a lot different when you have somebody else's income to help you out - and then suddenly you don't.

I would rather go to school than to work to be honest. I like school. If I could just come to school and not go to work, I'd be happy. Because I come to school at ten to nine I don't have to be up till 8:00 or 8:30. And I get off at 3:30. So that's why I would rather go to school than to work.



**I would rather go to school than to work to be honest.**

I'm very fortunate because my mom stays at home - so she can watch my little girl. So there's no problem there. I always have her, even when they have no school and we still have school.

We don't get the same days off. I know that my neighbour, who goes to school here too, has a hard time to find a babysitter when they have no school and we have school. I don't have any problem with finding a sitter.

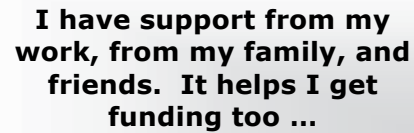
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## Ramona's Story

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Support from my family and from my work helps me. At work they said, "Oh, we'll have you here after school till 5:00." They understand that I need my education. I worked for them in May as a summer student. They didn't have anybody in their administration position so they said I could stay on after school - from 3:30.

So I have support from my work, from my family, and friends I guess. It helps that I get funding too - so I have money coming in.



**I have support from my work, from my family, and friends. It helps I get funding too ...**

One girl was going to school here. She had no Aboriginal status so she couldn't get funding. Social assistance wouldn't help her pay for her books. She had to put her payment of her books on her Visa. Then she didn't have a ride to school. I think she was spending \$500 on cabs to come here every day. She had to quit because she had no support.

I get my funding through the Metis. And these other girls get them through rez (reservation). They never have their cheques on time - their cheques have bounced but mine are fine. I just direct deposit them first of every month so I don't have to worry about that.

My daughter was excited when I told her I was going back to school. When I first started doing homework with her she just laughed, "Ha ha mommy, you've got homework."

But it is nice to come back to school so I am able to help her with her homework. If I hadn't come back to school I probably wouldn't have been able to. I don't even know what grade I started at - it was low.

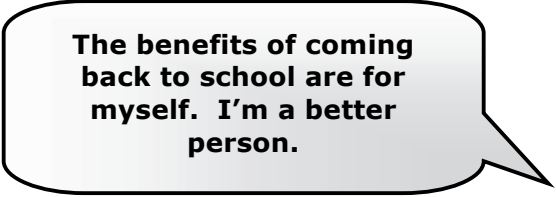
As my daughter gets older I guess it's going to be harder for me to help her with her homework. But now that I'm in school I'll be able to do all this stuff. I didn't even know how to do fractions when I came back. It's amazing - now I know how to do them.

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## Ramona's Story

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The benefits of coming back to school are for myself. I'm a better person. I know how to do things, like writing and stuff. I'm more responsible.

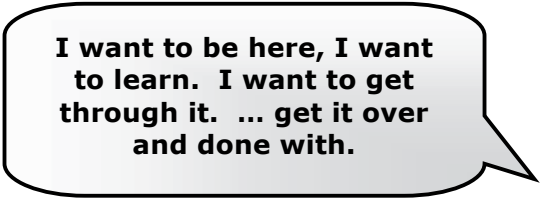


**The benefits of coming back to school are for myself. I'm a better person.**

You have to get up every day to come to school. It is like work. But you know - it's my choice to be here. I choose to come here every day.

To come to school you have to be a dedicated person. You have to want to be here. When we start at the beginning of a semester our class is full. And now we have four students.

I said at the beginning - I was pretty honest. If you know you don't want to be here, don't waste my time - because you're taking away from me. The instructor is spending all that time with those extra students, and then they eventually just drop out.



**I want to be here, I want to learn. I want to get through it. ... get it over and done with.**

It bothers me because it takes away from me. I want to be here, I want to learn. I want to get through it. I want to get it over and done with.

In high school I was skipping all the time - having fun with friends. I don't know what it was. My mom and dad kept telling me, "Go to school, go to school." Nope. I should have listened to them. I don't know what the difference is now - maturity I guess.

I could choose to sit at home and collect welfare though - you know what I mean. Some people are fine with doing that.

I guess I get this from my parents - and then I want to give back to my children the way they gave to me. I want to make sure I can provide for my kids. So I guess that's why I am motivated to come to school. Right?

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## Ramona's Story

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We sit down every night and do our homework together. So that is one of the things I didn't do when I wasn't going to school. I just told her, "Okay do your homework." And then if she needed help I would help her.

But now we sit down at the table and do it together. My daughter enjoys it. I guess it motivates her. If I'm doing it then she'll do it too.

If I just told her to sit down and do her homework, she would probably fight with me a little bit. But when I am doing it with her, she feels good about herself. I'm doing something with her.

**... when I am doing it (homework) with her, she (my daughter) feels good about herself.**

I hope she sees me as a role model. I don't know if I would see myself as a role model, but I think she does - except when she gets mad at me.

I'd definitely tell other people to go back to school. There is nothing wrong with it - doesn't matter how old you are. You can always go back to school and learn new things. It's not a waste of my time anyway.

The most important thing that has happened to me as a result of going back to school would be just basically getting my education. So I am able to teach my daughter, to prove to her that you need education. This is what you have to do to be somebody in your life.

**... I am able to teach my daughter, to prove to her you need education.**

I hope she realizes that. I hope she sees me struggling through all of my school, and going to work, and trying to benefit her.

I hope she continues to go on to grade 12, graduate, and realize that, "I could finish school now instead of doing what my mom does."



## Rob's Story



**Rob** is Dene. He has no children. Rob speaks English. He completed grade 11 at school. Rob was in a Trades Access training program for less than one year.

This is the first program I came back to. I didn't have a job so I decided to come back to school - because I wanted to try to get into a trade or something. I was trying to get into mechanics.

**... I wanted to try to get into a trade or something.**

I had some experience in a shop - opening up the shop, working as a mechanic, doing all kinds of trades help - electrician's helpers, other skills like that. I was interested in trying to start on actually learning a trade.

The biggest challenge for me was that you have to be here all the time. But I've managed it. I was looking forward to the program so that helped me. And it turned out it was lots of fun.

I was in the Trades Access program in 2005 - or something like that. Just basically they were teaching us about the trades entrance exam.

Teaching about different trades and stuff, and learning about different trades. We didn't actually do any hands-on stuff - just straight books. For me one of the benefits was getting a better job and higher education. When you try to start a trade you try and get an apprentice or something.

**Taking a course increases your confidence for learning.**

My confidence about schooling increased. Taking a course increases your confidence for learning. I found out I could do things that I thought I couldn't do before - like higher math level and stuff. I didn't really think I was able to

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## Rob's Story

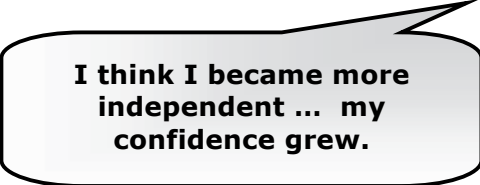
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do that but I was able to do it. I learned new stuff that I didn't really learn about in high school. My math and science and everything, learned a lot more about it.

I liked everything about the program. Like the teacher was good - and the work and everything was good. It was interesting, something new. I learned a lot of new things and different jobs and stuff like that. I think I wanted to do more things than I was able to do. Like I wanted to go to work right away and stuff.

I was supposed to go back to school and start a SNAP program. But I wasn't able to do that. It didn't really work out. Still trying to get into one of the trades programs in (Fort) Smith but it's not being offered - so have to look somewhere else.

I think I became a bit more independent as a result of going into that program. I was able to do more things on my own, more than when I was in school. I was doing homework and that all the time - making sure my work was done. Taking my own responsibility.



**I think I became more independent ... my confidence grew.**

I think my confidence also grew. I had to stand in front of the class and do speeches and stuff. At first I was kind of shy and after that I got used to it and to speaking to a crowd.

My family was happy with me - that I was actually going back to school and stuff. I wasn't staying home or anything. I was going back to school.

I volunteer with the kids at hockey, soccer, stuff like that - sports and stuff, volunteer coaching and that. I coached the super soccer and stuff like that. I went to Yellowknife with the soccer. There was lots of kids in town for super soccer.

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## Rob's Story

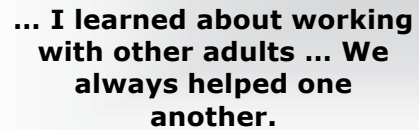
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My greatest success was passing the course, and passing the trade entrance exam - because the trade exams are not easy. But heavy-duty mechanics weren't offered this year and last year. There weren't enough participants - so they weren't offered.

I want to become a journeyman mechanic. There are lots of opportunities for heavy-duty mechanics here - especially in the mines. I want to try to get up there.

I would tell someone who was thinking about going back to school to go back to school. Get a better education and they'll move on further in life, I guess.

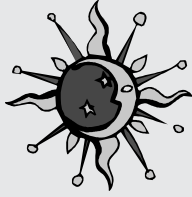
One thing I learned was about working with other adults and stuff. Yeah working with other adults. We worked together to pass and stuff. We always helped one another.



**... I learned about working with other adults ... We always helped one another.**

When I was finished it felt good. Passed everything. I was happy that I passed the course and trade entrance exam. Now I am waiting for opportunities to follow my trade.

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## Robert's Story

**Robert** is Dene. He has one child. Robert's first language is English. He completed grade 12 at school. Robert and his partner have attended an ALBE program for one year.

When I first came to the learning centre it was just to better my education. That was my initial plan. Because I felt that I wasn't as educated as I would like to be. I had to take upgrading, and I enjoyed it - just getting back into the learning process. New courses and different teachers, even the atmosphere - it was all good.

**... I felt that I wasn't as educated as I would like to be.**

I went to grade school with one of my instructors. It was a lot of fun. His parents taught me some courses in high school.

Just to make ends meet was a challenge. I was working at the time and going to school. That was more of a challenge than anything else.

You wanted to succeed even more. It felt comfortable going back to school.

She (my partner) helped me a lot with the math. I was very happy about that. And I helped her with English. There were trade-offs. There were times when we'd argue - argue over who got the right answer, who got the highest mark. I think that's when I realized how much I liked the challenge too.

There's more competitiveness here than in high school. But then for some reason I didn't really care. I was just eager to get out of high school. And then once I was done I thought, "Oh man, I could have done better." I wish I did.

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## Robert's Story

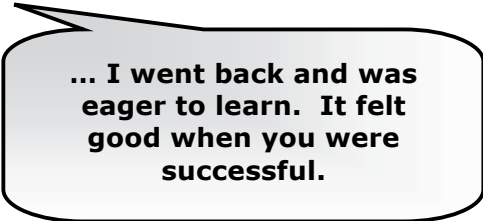
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When I came back to school this time I was determined to improve my grades. I wanted to do better in any course that I was taking.

Yeah. We have a better quality of knowledge. We're also a little more confident. We speak up a little more and are more involved in the class. Before, I was quiet. I would just sit back and listen, try to learn, listening. Now I know I can say something - so I do. Confidence is a big thing. It helps with the learning process.

In high school I just wanted to finish and get out. Then once I was out I thought, "I wish I could go back to school." It took nine years before I actually came back. For nine years I swore I wanted to go back to school, but I just never got around to it.

My little girl opened my eyes - so I went back and was eager to learn. It felt good when you were successful.

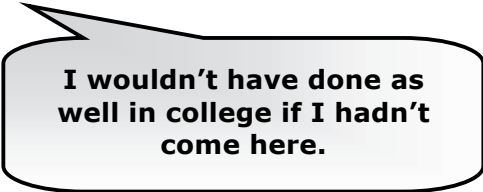


**... I went back and was eager to learn. It felt good when you were successful.**

It really helped when I enrolled in the course at Yukon College. I was confident that I would do good. I really wanted to do good, coming from a small community.

The education that I got from high school helped. It really helped when I finished here at the Learning Centre. I did really good in the college. I was top student in the course.

I wouldn't have done as well in college if I hadn't come here. I don't think I would have got in at all.



**I wouldn't have done as well in college if I hadn't come here.**

It's made a difference in our family too.

Our little girl is constantly asking questions. We'll explain a little better the answers to the questions she asks.

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## Rose's Story



**Rose** is Dene. She has two children. Rose's first language is English. She completed grade 10 at school. Rose works part time. She attends an ALBE program.

I left school at grade 10. I worked here and there. I was 16. I lived in Edmonton for a couple of years. I worked at Safeway, at Joey's Only, Red Lobster - the places where teenagers work. Then I came back here and got married when I was 23. I stayed home for 10 years being a stay-at-home mom. I did part-time waitressing work because my husband at that time became an electrician. So I didn't have to work.

**... that is why I am here - to learn.**

We separated a year and a half ago. I'm going through a divorce, so that is why I am here - to learn. I didn't have to work when I was married. I don't want to have to work at the Northern for the rest of my life. I have lots of secretarial experience and things like that. But really it's not easy.

You have to have some kind of certificate. There are so many people applying for the same jobs. You can't get a job now without qualifications. Not any more. Ten years ago I could get a job by word of mouth, or by who I knew. But now you can't. You have to have some qualifications.

**I want to improve my education. I want to take the nursing program.**

I want to improve my education. I want to take the nursing program. I have lots of friends who are nurses and now that I don't have a husband - I have two great kids - I want to do something. I am young still and I just don't want to do the same thing for the next 20 years. I have one more year because I have to do the grade 12 math and biology.

And then my goal is to go to Slave Lake and do that two-year nursing program. It's through Northern Lights College. It's a compacted two-year nursing program. It's an LPN so it's not for registered nursing. It's a beginning. So that's what I'm going to do.

For me, the challenges are a little bit extreme because - like I said - I stayed at home for ten years. Every day when I got up - if I was ill, I could just go back to sleep. Or if the kids were sick I could stay home and look after them.

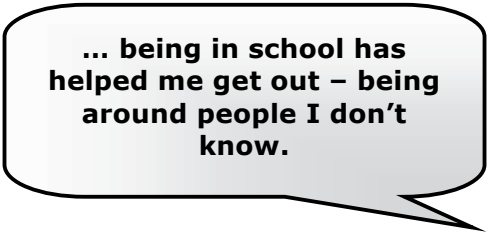
My biggest challenge this year has been that my little girl was sick and my grandma was ill. We thought she had cancer so I spent a week with her. I probably missed two weeks of school. They have limits here of eight days. But because of the situation it was out of my control. They were good with that.

But in wintertime, when you have two kids - at one point or another there's always somebody that has a cold or something. So because I don't have any family to look after them I'm completely alone for that. You can't send them to daycare when they are sick. So that's the biggest challenge and they've been good with it. But it's been kind of frustrating.

I think being in school has helped me get out - being around people I don't know.

It was really difficult at first but we've become really good friends. Also just being out has helped me. When you're a stay-at-home mother for ten years you just see four walls. Your whole life revolves around that. So being out and being around people has made me comfortable. It made me see that there is a whole other world out there.

You know my brain was dead to learning. But the teachers we had - they're so good. Like the current one went to Princeton for four years so his mind is really good to inspire you to want to do something.



**... being in school has helped me get out - being around people I don't know.**

I found learning really opened up my head. I'm excited now. I want to do something. They do a really good job here of helping motivate you. They are really great motivators. So that's been really good.

**I found learning really opened up my head. I'm excited now. I want to do something.**

But I think the challenge for a lot of people is keeping your life clean – your social life - especially in small communities. There are so many parties and there are so many things that can distract you from school.

I make sure that I don't have anything to do with my friends Monday to Friday. It's that easy. So that's a key right there - making sure you keep your social life clean. A lot of people here work in the mines, so they don't have a Monday to Friday schedule.

One of my best friends lives right next door and comes here to the centre. So we're both learning at night or having time to study. My kids like that I've gone back to school. It has helped me try to encourage them. I see the benefits of education now.

What you're learning is it teaches your mind - stretches your mind. That's the whole point. So every time they say, "I don't like this" or "This is hard" - I see now the whole point of it is not to actually learn that, but to keep your mind going. That's important. We're learning to learn.

You're getting your mind working. Being here opens up a door to a whole different way of life. I just don't want to do the same - stay at home and have babies and serve a guy anymore. I want to do something else.

**Being here opens up a door to a whole different way of life.**

So this is giving me the opportunity for that. And of course TKFN (local Dene Band) is paying me to do this. If that wasn't the way I wouldn't be here.



I would have to work. I couldn't just live off child support and that. So really that's a huge thing. If it wasn't for them funding us none of us would be here.

It's good here if you're in local housing. We live in a really big two-bedroom duplex. It's beautiful - with a big back yard, fenced, with trees. It's clean, no pets allowed - so there's no stuff everywhere.

But when you go to school your rent is \$32 a month. You could work on the side. But if you get funding it's easier.

Really, they've handed you a silver platter and said do something with this. So really there is no excuse. The only excuse there would be is if you just don't want to go.

My kids like that I'm back at school. They like to look through my stuff. In English you are asked to write journals a lot. We were asked to write a page about who we are and what our ambitions or goals or interests are.

**My kids like that I'm back at school. They like to look through my stuff.**

I wrote it out and typed it out on the computer. My daughter was sitting with me on the bed and she read it and said, "Right on, mom". She's so cute. So they like it. I think it helps motivate them.

At night time I put music on and have tea. I am doing my work. They've got their things out and it's good training. Just having something to think about every day - something to do - has helped me to get on my feet. It's not boring to me because my mind is on it. So it's actually getting me in a happy mental state.


**... coming back to school is helping me get healthy - that's a huge thing.**

After being married for 10 years my husband walked out. I was sick mentally and emotionally. But coming back to school is helping to get me healthy - that's a huge thing. It helped me and my kids to get back on track.

It's not just about learning. I only started in February and I'm not ready to go to the nursing program yet. I have another year. I need another year just to make sure that I can handle school - that I want to go to college. Another year is going to make me strong and make sure that I can keep on track and can handle it. Then I'll go, and it will be good.

My kids would say that I'm more ambitious. We have a routine. We have to stay healthy in every way so we push obstacles out of the way. They probably see me as more ambitious, more positive, and more healthy I think.

Sometimes you get tired - especially when you're a mother, you get really tired. But I have learned how to keep myself replenished. Monday to Friday is nothing but school, eat, sleep, and do what I need to do. The house becomes messy, but I leave it. And on Saturdays we clean. You have to get to know your limitations and make sure first things come first. But that takes time. It takes a couple of months, three months.



**You have to know your limitations and make sure first things come first.**

I would highly recommend someone else to go to school. My neighbour - her little girl is four and her other little girl is nine - has been home for the last 10 years. She's gotten herself in an emotional and physical rut. She's not healthy. I tell her when your little girl gets to school age, go back to school. You'll see a huge difference in yourself - mentally, emotionally, physically.

But a lot of people don't go back - they have no idea what it is going to do for them until they try. They think it's going to do nothing.

I probably wouldn't have really thought of it. I didn't think of it. I applied to the office administration program, but circumstances stopped me from coming. Then my neighbour was doing upgrading and she said, "You should do this."

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## Rose's Story

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I probably wouldn't have if she hadn't recommended it. I had no idea that it would actually open a door to thinking about nursing. So it's opened my mind up, just little steps.

**... people should be told the positive things about going back to school ...**

I think people should be told the positive things about going back to school - the possibilities and what it can actually do for them. It could change their lives.

There might be seven people that quit that really don't do anything with it. But even if there is one person that did something with it, it's worth it. If you inspire somebody to do something with their life - that's worth it.

**I'm going to do something with this opportunity I have.**

We started out with 12 students and we have four left. I'm going to do something with this opportunity I have. I don't know what the rest of them are going to do, but you can't save everybody.

It's the same thing - it's their social life and all the stuff they have to deal with. They're letting it beat them. But maybe next year it won't. Or maybe the year after it won't. Most of it is because of young children and responsibilities like that.

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## Roy's Story



**Roy** is Dene. He has no children. Roy speaks English. He completed grade 10 at school. Roy works as a maintenance worker. He has attended an ALBE program for less than one year.

I went back to school because I wanted to do something with my life. I completed grade 10 in school. And then I quit. After a year I went to ALBE.

**... I wanted to do something with my life.**

My parents told me to go back. I was good at things like math and science. I was also good at some traditional skills like fishing, camping, making nets. People helped me.

Just getting up in the morning to go to school was a huge challenge for me. But I managed it. My attendance was good. My confidence went up as a result of being in the ALBE program. I also became more independent I think. I like learning. I'm not done learning.

I still want to learn more. I just want to learn more. I wasn't nervous or scared when I came back to school. I was pretty confident in myself. But my confidence increased. I was most successful at math.

**I had a goal to finish the program and get a good job.**

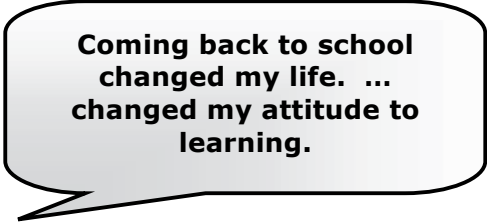
I had a goal to finish the program and get a good job. Just to finish something I started. Getting up every morning to go - that was quite an accomplishment. If someone said to me, "I'm thinking about going back to school." I would say, "Yes, go do it."

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## Roy's Story

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I'm an associate apprentice. But I wouldn't be an apprentice if I hadn't gone back to school. The exams are really difficult. When I finished the course I felt pretty good – actually, really good.



**Coming back to school changed my life. ... changed my attitude to learning.**

Coming back to school changed my life. It changed my attitude to learning. I also learned about teamwork. That's important for my job now. All the learners in this learning centre want to learn.

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## Russell's Story

**Russell** is Dene. He has six children. Russell speaks English and Gwich'in. He completed grade 9 at school. Russell has attended an ALBE program for less than one year.

My goal is to acquire a grade 12 certificate so I can be more productive. I'm pretty productive now - but I can't really apply for any jobs because most jobs require at least grade 12.

**My goal is to acquire a grade 12 certificate so I can be more productive.**

That's one of the reasons I came back to school. Not only that - my kids were starting to say, "I don't like school" and all that. I started thinking, "Geez, I never even finished school and they're starting to not like it. That might have a negative impact on them."

I figured maybe if I got back to school that might show them that education is important, and that you need it to succeed in this world - in this day and age anyway. Fifty years ago you didn't need it. But now you do. I tried to get that into them. They see that now and I can actually help them with their homework.

I want to be a role model not only for my kids, but for other people my age who have dropped out of school. We call ourselves Generation X because all our parents went to residential schools and they were all abused.

**I want to be a role model ... for other people my age who have dropped out of school.**

The effects of residential school not only affected them - it affected their children - us - in a negative way. There was nothing pretty about it when I was growing up. It has the potential to go on for a long time. But this is a bit of a break in the circle, I guess.

## Russell's Story

It wasn't hard for me at all to come back to school. I was a little scared but there was more excitement than there was skittishness.

**It wasn't hard for me at all to come back to school.**

Another reason why I came to school was because my wife moved here. So I could either stay in the house or leave my wife and not see my family. That wasn't going to work. So we sold our things in our home community and moved here.

It was more beneficial for us to be in a bigger environment and bigger community for our kids. Our community is so small it had nothing to offer our kids for recreation or education. Nothing.

Before I went to school I wasn't good in a lot of subjects. But now that I'm in these subjects it opens up my eyes to a lot of things that are going on around me. That's what it's done for me.

For me it's exciting now. Not like it used to be when I was in high school. There it was boring – you didn't want to be there. Now it's a challenge that keeps me coming back until I'm done.

One of the challenges for me in coming back to school was that I had to move my whole family. I had to move all my stuff. I had to sell off my house. It was a big, big change. We basically sold everything and started over. There were a lot of challenges.

**One of the challenges for me ... was that I had to move my whole family.**

And then there are the challenges of when you're actually in school - of daycares and childcare providers. It's just horrible in this community. Even though it's a bigger place it's still hard to find a reliable babysitter.

I was sick of working. I got tired of working for other people - tired of getting my money from somewhere else. So last year I decided, "Well, I'm not going to work for anybody this year. This summer I'm going to go fishing." And I did - and I did pretty good.

## Russell's Story

So that's what I'm going to do this year. But I'm taking all my kids with me so that I can teach them some traditional skills.

A lot of positive things have happened to me as a result of coming back to school. There's been some negative stuff too. But the positives really outweigh the negatives by a long shot.

**A lot of positive things have happened to me as a result of coming back to school.**

My family has gotten tighter. Before it was a little bit sporadic. Relationships were getting strained. Me and my wife's relationship is a lot tighter too. I've never really had a lot of friends, but it doesn't really matter. I've got my family. That's all that counts to me. As long as they're happy I'm happy. And if I'm mad, they're mad.

I find coming back to school very, very good. Meeting people around your own age is very beneficial because you can actually form a new support group - if you didn't have one before.

I had no support group. I had nobody to talk to. But now coming here the instructors will listen. And you make friends with other people who'll listen in the classroom. That's very beneficial. I think they are more lasting friendships too. There's a bond there.

**Before I came back to school I was pretty successful.**

Before I came back to school I was pretty successful. I was a fire chief, I was a boat captain - I did a number of things. But I never committed myself to anything.

After I decided not to work last year, or the year before, I was in my house and I thought, "Why am I here all day, doing this, back and forth, same old routine? Nothing new, nothing exciting ever happens."

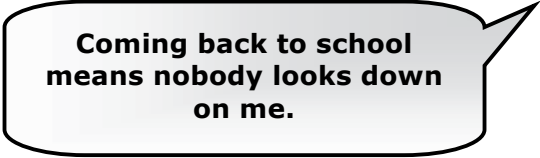
It was boring and I was tired of working for other people. So I went to work for myself. This is one way of doing it. Another way is during the summer months.



There are negative effects too. Some of the people I used to know looked down on me. I don't know if it was because of my education or if it was because of the choices I was making. But I didn't make money like everyone else did. I went a different route to make my money - through harvesting or through something traditional.

Now, people tend to look down on you if you're not the same status as them. I go back to my hometown. Some people there can't see outside the box. They can't feel compassion for the person that's down and out. I get tired of getting looked down on.

Coming back to school means nobody looks down on me. I don't feel degraded. I just say, "Wear my boots one day and see what it's like." A lot of people - especially men - look down on me because I do the 'woman' thing - because I stay home with my kids while my wife works.



**Coming back to school means nobody looks down on me.**

She's an office manager. To me it's more beneficial than working and being away from my kids - because my kids are all just nuts for me.

The deal I made with my wife when she was just starting out in her career was, "Okay. I'll stop what I'm doing. I'll stay home. I'll raise the kids. I'll look after the house. You get your education."

So she went for two and half, three, four years. She went out of the community five or six times a year to do different programs and get her certification.

## Russell's Story

Now it's my turn. Since she's committed to a job now, she can't just stay home. So we got her sister to come in and take care of the kids to support me, and what I'm doing. That's the only way the ship will sail.

**Coming back to school makes me feel more positive.**

Coming back to school makes me feel more positive. I don't feel the way I did last year. I don't even look at the world the same as I did last year - totally different.

I'm anti-oil (resource development). I don't want them coming in here and putting in some pipeline - because that's my land. I grew up out there.

I've been in this program since September. I've managed to stay committed this long, but with great difficulty. Day care was a big challenge. I was always worried about getting the boot if I stayed home with the kids.

It wasn't about lack of attendance - it was about a lack of being ... It is a lack of attendance but it wasn't intentional. It was because of all the responsibilities I have. I was worried. "Help. The days are all getting marked up and I'm over my contract now. What am I going to do when I come in and I've got to tell the college what's going on?"

**But with my instructor's support I was able to catch up a little bit and then stay on track.**

They're pretty understanding as long as I keep up with the work. In English for example, I was so far behind I couldn't believe it. But with my instructor's support I was able to catch up a little bit and then stay on track.

Not like when I dropped out of school - probably in grade eight or nine or somewhere in there. I didn't have much education in English.

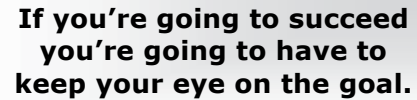
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## Russell's Story

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When I came into school here they put me right into grade 12. I said, "Holy smokes, what do I do?" But it's not that hard. I'm managing to keep up. I've almost made it – I'm over the hill.

I see it as a test for your integrity, of your will power. If you're going to succeed you're going to have to keep your eye on the goal. Don't deviate from it. I've let my eyes go sometimes.



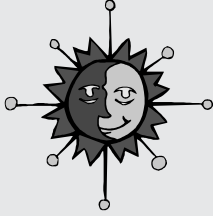
**If you're going to succeed  
you're going to have to  
keep your eye on the goal.**

I keep thinking there's a plan for everyone and there's temptation for everyone and there's trials. So if you can keep your eyes straight on the goal, everything else will just pass by.

Even if it comes swinging across your face and puts a big blockade in front of you. Jump up and look over it - because the goal is over there. There's always a way around everything - no matter how tough it is, I think.

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## Sally's Story



**Sally** is Dene. She has no children. Sally's first language is English and she speaks Slavey. She completed grade 10 at school. Sally has been in an ALBE program for less than one year.

I have some work experience. But I also wanted to experience coming to Aurora College. This is my first time coming here. So far I like it - it's really good. I'm really enjoying the program, even though I've only been here three months. It seems like I've been here for a whole year.

**... I also wanted to experience coming to Aurora College.**

There's a Night in the Midnight Sun program. They had a youth program last week. I went to it and it was pretty good. There's that program and also there's a Northern Youth Abroad program that I'm going to next year. I'm going to Botswana.

I like Aboriginal studies, English, science, gym class. I like doing traditional things - like camping, drying fish or drying meat, and all those things. I just learned this weekend. My mom taught me.

My grandpa shot a moose and gave us a big moose leg. And my mom was making dry meat out of it. It was pretty good. I enjoy doing these traditional things. It takes patience and hard work, but it pays off. I'm patient.

Everything is just the same as regular old school, except you're with adults. You're not with kids that like to talk in class. Everyone respects each other. Everybody knows their ground. Nobody is nagging you - no one's telling you that you're not good at anything. I like it. It's more encouraging and I'm more confident.

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## Sally's Story

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I always respected people but sometimes other people are rude. Now I'm at the college and everybody respects each other. They know you and you know me. This is my stuff - don't go near it. Ask to borrow something. I like it. It gives me more respect for other people too - because if they respect me, I'll respect them.

**... coming back to school has changed my attitude towards learning.**

I think coming back to school has changed my attitude towards learning. It's like it's opened the door to happiness. It's nice to be around people.

Before I came here I slacked off for a whole year. I went to work for a while - did some odd things here and there.

I'm more confident now than I was before. It helped me grow up. I'm away from my parents so I know I'm growing up. And they're happy for me.

**I'm more confident now than I was before. It helped me grow up.**

It's really overwhelming. I'm trying to start my own life. It's very interesting.

I'm more confident in my stories and in my work. Sometimes I just get really caught up in work and in writing stories - get carried away. I'm all in my own little world and everybody else is blocked out - except me working away.

I'm getting pretty good in math. I just hated math, but they helped me out. I like it. Math still bugs me a bit - but I'm starting to get the hang of it.

I go to some of those meetings that they have in town sometimes. I stop by and see what's happening. I've done that a couple times. I don't stay long - just listen to a couple of words and then go and do something else.

I like to go through my papers - skim through them - maybe get some extra answers on them. Or maybe just spell-check them - make sure I

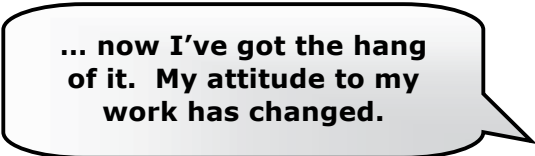
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## Sally's Story

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have the right answers on the right questions. Sometimes I mix things up. I wouldn't have gone over my work before. I would just sit there and wait for the next morning.

I did that a bit last year. I shouldn't have. I nearly fell behind, but now I've got the hang of it. My attitude to my work has changed.



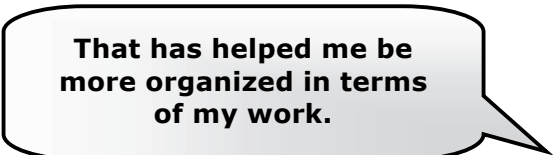
**... now I've got the hang of it. My attitude to my work has changed.**

Quite a few people asked me to go back to school. Finally I got up one day and filled out an application at Aurora College. I didn't think I'd get in. I didn't get in at first - until some of them went on a hunting trip and didn't make it. So they picked me.

I thought, "Cool! I made it!" And my parents were all happy for me. They gave me 50 bucks for that. Just this weekend my dad took me out to the coffee shop for supper - just for coming back to school.

My dad already took this program. He did quite well. He finished his school here. He's really proud of me. I think this weekend he's going to go hunting - on a buffalo hunt. You don't see buffalo in the daytime. They hide in the bush.

Everyone in town knows this program. Some people ask, "What are you doing over at Aurora College? Why do you do that?" And I explain that it's ordinary work - upgrading like math and science, and Slavey.



**That has helped me be more organized in terms of my work.**

The atmosphere is more respectful, more organized. I like it. That has helped me be more organized in terms of my work - and also my clothes.

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## Sally's Story

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I usually just throw layers of clothes on – like a sweater over another sweater, and then pants over another pair of pants, and then sweats, and two pairs of socks, and shoes. Walking around in skater shoes - not good for summer. Now I'm wearing just an ordinary little shirt and a sweater.




**I also help people more.  
... I wouldn't have done  
that before.**

I also help people more. I do favours for friends. I'll take their kids for walks or take their kids off their hands for a couple hours. I wouldn't have done that before. I didn't do that before because I thought everyone was out there for themselves.

You've got to be strong. You've got to stand up for yourself. But I help now because we know each other. We've got to have a friendly relationship between the family and the kids. I actually stick with one family - help out that one family more than the others and then look out for my own family.

I also talk lots now. I think because I feel more comfortable talking to adults. I feel more comfortable talking about things now.



**I feel more comfortable  
talking about things now.  
I try to read out more**

I try to read out more - because sometimes I get nervous reading to people. I get really overwhelmed under pressure and the next thing you know I'm stumbling on the words. I know it - but I just can't say it sometimes. I still get nervous but not as much as I used to. I also sometimes speak out at meetings - more than before.

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## Sandy's Story

**Sandy** is Dene. She has no children. Sandy's first language is English. She completed grade 10 at school. Sandy has been in an ALBE program for less than one year.

I'm good at sports, especially soccer and volleyball. I went to the Arctic Winter Games as a volunteer. It was very good.

**I wouldn't have volunteered for the Arctic Winter Games if I hadn't been in this program.**

I wouldn't have volunteered for the Arctic Winter Games if I hadn't been in this program. I wouldn't have known about it. I was a cultural guide at these art shows at the Games.

I'm not very good at math and Slavey. They're a challenge for me. Other people help me with Slavey.

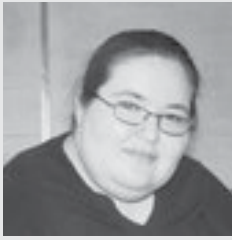
I'm not as nervous as I was before. I speak to people - not as shy. I wouldn't have been able to do that if I hadn't been a part of this program. Not as shy...

I volunteer here in the community. When I first came into the program I was nervous. I'm less nervous now. When I had to read out of a book I was a little bit nervous.

**I'm less nervous now. ... I liked school and I like learning here as well.**

I knew a bit about computers when I came here. I learned it at school. I have a computer at home, but I don't use it a lot. I liked school and I like learning here as well.





## Sara's Story

**Sara** is Inuvialuit. She has no children. She looks after her legally blind mother. Sara's first language is English. She completed grade 12 at school. Sara took some courses at ALBE. She's now in UCAP (University College Access Program) and also works.

I have my grade 12 diploma - but I needed some courses to get into a biology program at NAIT (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology) in the fall. I needed my biology and chemistry courses, so that's what I'm taking. That's pretty much the main reason I decided to come back to school after a few years.

**... I needed some courses to get into a biology program at NAIT ....**

I'm going to do a Bachelor of Science in biology. It takes two years at NAIT - but then that's transferable to any university in Alberta.

The first year is mainly biology and then the second year is earth science. You can take two other courses as your second year. But I think I'm going to do earth science - and then go back to school and get my Bachelors in biology.

That's another four-year program. I've a got a lot of school ahead of me, but it's going to be worth it in the end.

I'm really good in math and science. My math marks were really high when I graduated from high school. But my English and my social studies were really low.

If you pass your departmental (exams) and get the credits, no one looks at whether or not you got a low mark in your classes. Coming back here (to college) has actually helped a lot.

I find that when you are here working with people who are around your age or a little bit older, you have more in common with these people. At school if you fail a course, you're stuck in a class with students who are a lot younger than you. Half the time they don't do their work.

**I wouldn't say coming back to school was a challenge for me ...**

I wouldn't say coming back to school was a challenge for me, because I don't have any children - unlike a lot of the students here. But I take care of my mother and her house.

Recently there have been a few deaths in the family, but I was able to work through that. I took two weeks off school because of the deaths, before we got off for break. Then I had to catch up in all my courses. We've only been back in classes for just over a week now, and I've caught up with everything - my English class, my socials, my math, my bio.

That was really amazing considering I missed two weeks of that course. My instructor said he knew I could catch up, but he wasn't sure if I could do it right away. I actually caught up and took my test - because I missed the test while I was gone. Those personal challenges make you stronger as a person.

**Those personal challenges make you stronger as a person.**

If you have the support of your family when you have the challenge of going back to school as an adult - if they're willing to help you out in any way, it seems like it makes you want to pursue your dreams a little bit more.

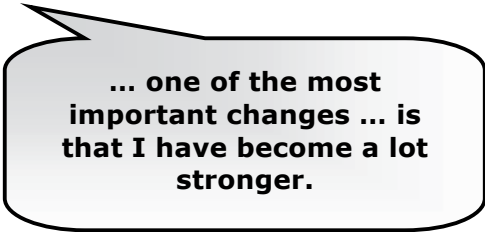
I'd say I get along with the instructors here really well. If I'm having an off day and they notice it, they'll ask me if I'm okay. Or they'll ask if I need help. They're willing to let you stay behind after class and they give you all the help you need with your courses.

My mother was one of the main reasons I decided to go back to school. She told me to. I look at my youngest brother - he didn't finish high

school. Then I look at my older brother who finished high school but didn't go to college. He has a good job. But not having a college degree means it's going to get hard for him in the long run. I look at that and I say, "Well, okay, I'm not gonna be like that."

My mom went back to school when she was 42. Seeing her do that made me realize that having only a high school diploma is not going to get you to the places that you really want to go in life. She was a good role model. Your siblings really help you out too, if they're willing to be there for you. I want to be a good role model for my brother.

For me one of the most important changes as a result of coming back to school is that I have become a lot stronger. I was able to push myself through a lot of the problems that I've dealt with throughout the year. I think I've become a little bit more self-confident.



**... one of the most important changes ... is that I have become a lot stronger.**

I'm going to be 24 this year and I'm still going to school. I gave up a few years ago and said that I'm not going to go back - I'm not going to take the challenge again. But here I am.

It feels really good to get back to school - finishing off what I started. I think it has made me a lot stronger. I've noticed that since I've come to school this year I've actually broken out of my shell a bit. I'm not as shy as I was in the beginning.

Normally I'm a really shy person and I don't like doing things like this interview. Normally I wouldn't do this. It's a bit different for me.

In high school I totally despised English and social studies. I just totally despised them. I don't know what it was about these courses. I think it was the fact that I am so good at working with numbers.

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## Sara's Story

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I can do math in my head and don't need to pull out a calculator. But when it comes to writing things it's like, "What? You want me to do what?" But with this instructor's class I found that I'm actually enjoying the course a lot more. I'm getting into it a lot more.

**I've been finding out what I'm interested in ... my strengths and weaknesses.**

I've been finding out what I'm interested in - finding out my strengths and weaknesses. I knew that I was strong in math and science.

In high school I did take a biology course but I dropped it because I didn't like the fact that we had to dissect animals. It really bugged me. I don't know what it was.

I was born and raised around here – I've cut up fish and stuff before. Doing it for a science project though wasn't my idea of fun. They shouldn't have to go through that. That's what was going through my mind during my Bio 20 course. So I dropped the course and said to myself, "I'm not taking it again."

Then I came here and realized I needed my biology course. I didn't think that I'd be interested in it or that I'd be able to get 90s in my course all semester, all year. I got my instructor to do my midterm mark because I needed it for NAIT. And I had a 92. And I said, "What? I hated this course?"

**Your family will be really proud of you when you ... decide to put yourself up to the challenge and go back to school.**

I would say to anyone thinking of going back to school, "Your family will be really proud of you when you make the jump and decide to put yourself up to the challenge and go back to school."

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## Sara's Story


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Before my grandmother passed away this year, she wanted me to make her one promise – that I was going to go back to school. She didn't know that I'd applied for school and that I'd been accepted. Nobody knew.

When I told her she said that she doesn't want me to give up again. Because when I gave up she was really mad at me. She was really mad. An 85-year-old woman being really mad is not a pretty sight – it's a very scary sight. But that was the one promise I made her - that I was going to pursue my dreams, complete my education, and get where I'm going.

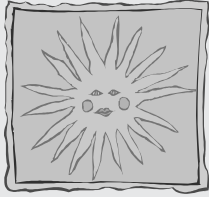
She'd be really proud of me right now - that I'm still going to school and that I'm planning on going further with it. Your family becomes really proud of you when you actually accomplish what you started and you don't give up. When you get your education doors open like crazy for you.

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**When you get your  
education doors open like  
crazy for you.**

## Sherry's Story



**Sherry** is Inuvialuit. She has two children. Sherry's first language is English. She completed grade 10 at school. Sherry is attending ALBE for the second time. She's been in the current program for less than one year.

I came back to school because everyone needs an education today - especially when you have kids. As soon as I finish my Grade 12 I'm thinking of going to Whitehorse. I want to try and become a computer technician.

**I came back to school because everyone needs an education today ...**

It wasn't easy for me to come back to school because once in a while I don't have a babysitter. My family gives me some support.

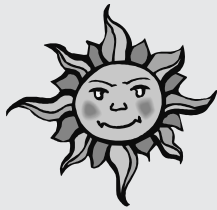
I'm learning new things - new subjects. I was good at some of them at school. It's not easy, but it's not too hard. I like English and socials best. Homework is really hard for me to do.

I think I have more confidence as a result of coming back to school. I take my kids to the library and stuff, not that often though. I take them to the park.

**I think I have more confidence as a result of coming back to school.**

If someone asked me about going back to school I'd tell them to go - make yourself feel better. It's better than sitting at home doing nothing. And it will help you in the future.

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## Shirley's Story

**Shirley** is Dene. She has two children. Shirley's first language is English and she speaks some Slavey. She completed grade 8 at school. This is Shirley's second time in an ALBE program. She's been in the current program for less than one year.

For me as the years were going by, there were many changes. Today you need to have more writing skills and more math skills in order for you to get that job. So that's why I decided to come back to school – to learn more so I can go to college.

**... I decided to come back to school - to learn more so I can go to college.**

I want to do Management Studies, so I'm trying to get my English 150. If I do that I can get into Management Studies.

I went to school till grade eight. Since then I've been going off and on to school - to the community college and now Aurora College. Until I finally figured out what I wanted to do – which is to go into Management Studies.

Everyone was taking Office Admin. But there are no jobs here for Office Admin. In Management Studies there are lots of opportunities coming up for managers. So I decided that's what I wanted to do.

I was good at being organized - at preparing ahead of time. Before I went to school I always had a habit of cleaning up and making sure everything was organized.

**... I need a change. I need to go back to school and get out of staying at home**

Then I just got tired of it and I said I need a change. I need to go back to school and get out of staying at home all the time. So that's what I did. I just had to get out and have a change.

## Shirley's Story

I'm good at fixing stuff - anything that breaks down, like a chair or a table. And I like to build things. I do lots with my hands. I don't know what you'd call it but I like to fix things. I don't know why.

I took Women in Trades one time and I went from electrician, to plumbing, to carpentry, to mechanics. It was a three-week course in each one. I was kind of surprised that I could actually do all those things.

It was kind of difficult in the start. But then I got to the second week and it was like, "Holy smoke, I can actually do this!"

**Holy smoke, I can actually do this!**

And then I took welding too - and I was kind of surprised by myself there too. I stepped up and learned something from it. I also like to go out on the land.

I didn't know I could do these things. It's just natural I guess that I could actually do it. It was in my blood - but I didn't know until I took them. I was like, "Holy smoke, I could actually do something with my life - make a change."

I need a change you know. Staying home - I wasn't doing anything. So I decided to come back to school and make a change for me and my kids.

**I've changed my attitude.  
... I've changed to being more confident.**

I changed my attitude. I never used to have confidence, but now I do. I've changed to being more confident. Learning is another experience for me.

I took classes before, so learning's not new, but old - because I did it before. It's like a refresher - to check to see if I still have my math and English and stuff like that. I am still forgetting things. But this is refreshing me.

Going to school also changed my kids. My kids were happy that mom's going to school. Now they look and it's making them more confident in



## Shirley's Story

themselves that they can be like me. In a way I'm kind of a role model for them.

For example, they don't miss school. They see me go to school every, every day. So it makes them come to school. I was kind of surprised because my son is going to senior high after spring break. And I thought, "Wow! It's like he's trying to pass."

**... we get to talk about what we want in life and what we need to change.**

And too - we get to talk about what we want in life and what we need to change. It's like they're thinking, "We're going to have to do something more than mom."

Instructors and the students also support you. You know them and they know you - so you're comfortable with it. At first you don't really know some of them. So you just stay away from them at first.

But after you go to school for a couple of weeks you get closer and closer to them, and you get to know them. And you feel more comfortable with them, which is good.

We work all together. We help one another. We go to public meetings and things like that. They say you're never too old to learn.

I like all my classes at school - everything - especially the novel studies that we're doing. We just finished *Far North* and now we're on *Two Old Women*. I never read that one before.

I can actually help people out in the community because now I know how to. I never used to be like that, because my

confidence was low. Now my attitude has changed. Now I want to help people. So that's one kind of change I noticed.

**Now I want to help people. So that's one kind of change I noticed.**

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## Shirley's Story

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I read to my niece. She reads the same book over and over. "Don't you want to change it?" I ask her. "No!" she says. Then she reads it to herself - makes up her own words, and she looks at the pictures.

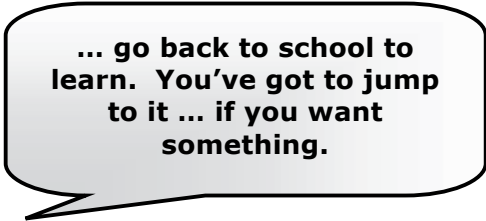
I learn Slavey in class. It's really helped me. I'm still learning it so it's kind of new to me. I don't speak it lots - only when I go to visit my parents.

I speak in Slavey and English to my son. I say the words in Slavey, then in English. I wouldn't have done that before.  
In a way it's good to speak it more.

If someone asked me about going back to school I'd tell them it'd be a good thing for them to do - go back to school to learn.

You've got to jump to it - got to jump if you want something.

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**... go back to school to learn. You've got to jump to it ... if you want something.**



## Susie's Story

**Susie** is Dene. She has two children. Susie's first language is English and she speaks some Gwich'in. She completed grade 10 at school. Susie has attended ALBE, Early Childhood, and Teacher Education Access. She's now in Office Admin.

I dropped out of school when I was in grade 10 in 1977. It was 1984 or 1985 when I took the Early Childhood Education Program. I completed that.

**... I took the Early Childhood Education program. I completed that.**

For the last six or seven years I worked in the day care, teaching the smaller kids. Plus I worked at the school as a tutor, or supervisor.

Then I moved to Inuvik and worked in the day care as a language instructor. When I finished my term in April I went home and did some substitute teaching at the elementary school.

I really got a lot of encouragement from the principals there. They told me, "Why don't you get into TEP (Teacher Education Program)?" That's where I am now. I'm in the access program and I'm really enjoying myself.

I know that even when I went back to school, and we did our entrance tests to go back to college - I was at a grade nine level.

**Last year and this year I really learned a lot ...**

Last year and this year I really learned a lot - especially computers. I'm also making lots of friends. It's good. I'm really enjoying that.

But I really miss teaching. I want to get into the Teacher Education Program. You have to go to (Fort) Smith or Whitehorse.

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## Susie's Story

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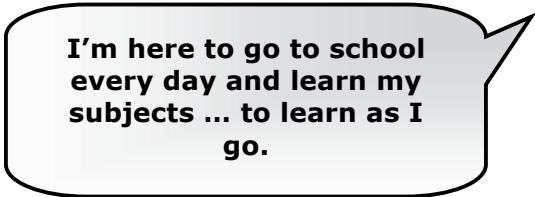
I think I'm fine now, because my oldest daughter is 21 and my youngest son is 16. They're independent. They can do things on their own and I don't have to worry. I can focus more on my education now.

Sometimes in college we fall back and we need tutoring. The college really assists us with tutors, who help us and guide us through the program.

At the beginning of the year we were behind a bit. Now we're ahead! We're ahead in our subjects and we're waiting on other students. It's really exciting, because we didn't know anything about trigonometry and now we're learning that.

Before, I used to hate doing anything with math - with numbers. But now my friend and I are really enjoying it. We help one another. Every day at nine o'clock we just hurry to go to math class. We never miss.

When I came back to school at first it was hard - especially being in class with teenagers. But I just focus mostly on myself. I'm here to do this for myself.



**I'm here to go to school every day and learn my subjects ... to learn as I go.**


Sometimes they need a little guidance or they ask us for advice - because we're a little older than they are. I'm here to go to school every day and learn my subjects, and do what's best for me - and to learn as I go.

When I left my position as a language instructor at the day care they had a hard time to fill that position. They lost funding and everything. Every so often my boss phones and I go over there and help them with the cultural activities - whenever I have free time.

In September I was doing casual work for the Head Start program. Whenever they're short of workers I go over and help them out. But I found it was interfering too much with my homework. I was falling

behind, so I decided to quit working altogether and just focus on my homework.

I'm more independent now than I was - doing my own thing, whatever I enjoy doing. My family just lets me be. They know I'm doing whatever I want to do so they don't bother me.



**I'm more independent now than I was - doing my own thing ...**

I found that before I started school here - when I went to school or staff meetings I'd sit in the back and I'd just listen to everybody. Now, I'm finding I'm more outspoken and I'm learning how to speak out - especially in the classroom.

When they have suggestions or something, I'm right in there. I'm not sitting back and waiting for other people. I'm the first one. I can talk for hours too.

It's fun to come back to school. When we were in high school we had some things that were hard to learn. They never had tutors to help or teach us. Teachers never said, "Maybe you should go see a student counsellor." They never put us in the right direction.

If we had had some assistance - then maybe we could have finished our grade 12. Nowadays they have that in the school. I'm curious about everything. I always ask more questions.

When I go home on holidays I encourage a lot of my friends to go back to school. "Get your education. You can do this!"



**There are lots of opportunities out there.**

There are lots of opportunities out there. You can sit at home and do nothing. Or you can go to adult ed or college and get your education.

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## Terry's Story

**Terry** is Dene. He has no children. Terry's first language is English. He completed grade 12 at school. He has seasonal work at a territorial park. Terry attended an ALBE program for less than one year.

I came back to school to get more educated so I could get maybe a job related to the program. It kind of helped me to learn some stuff I learned before - but I forgot it. And it helped me to recognize what I forgot and learn how to do it better. And that was about it I guess.

**I came back to school to get more educated so I could maybe get a job related to the program.**

I'm pretty good at math, science. English – that's my least I guess. Outside of school I like camping and going on the land.

In school I was getting pretty good. I got through junior high. Going on to senior high I did pretty good. I finished high school.

In 1998 I took pre-employment welding. I did my first year but I didn't quite pass. The passing point is 70% and I got 65. So I was going to try and challenge that course again maybe - just rewrite it instead of doing that whole course again.

I was trying to arrange that - maybe challenge that test again, so I wouldn't have to do the course. Maybe after I pass - maybe do my first year apprentice for pre-welding. The first time I took the course it was pretty interesting and I liked it.

**One of the big challenges for me ... was having to be a little more responsible.**

One of the big challenges for me about going back to school was having to be a little more responsible. Like being on time in showing up for school, getting the work done. I had to work out a schedule or a time frame for doing certain stuff during the day.

## Terry's Story

It was pretty important to prove to myself that I could do it. It makes me a more responsible person. Other people knew that I could get the job done.

I like to learn. And help maybe some classmates if they need help. Like they see what programs the school has to offer and are maybe interested.

It could be good for numbers and stuff. It's like if you are going on a job and they say you have this certain ticket or something. If you were taking a program for safety and stuff like that, and then you tell them you have all of this stuff that you need - all that they require of you. It's pretty good to get programs that might help you get a calling through your life.

Being in the program boosted my confidence I guess. Going to school showed me what I could do. And maybe I could do that on the workforce. Help me to prove it and to see what other people go through when they go through programs and they get a good learning.

**Being in the program boosted my confidence... I think I became more independent.**

I think I became more independent. It shows you how to live by yourself and to show people that maybe you can do the job.

I was kind of a shy person when I was going through school. I think I'm less shy now. It makes you come out more - come out of yourself. It took me a while to do that. The instructor taught us that.

**Going to school - being around people has maybe helped me with my confidence.**

She told me that. I finally came out of my shell because I was a shy person going to school. I was quite shy. Going to school - being around people has maybe helped me with my confidence.

## Terry's Story

My biggest success was maybe getting my grade 12 diploma. I was in and out of school for a while. It took me a while because I was working part time and going back to school. I did it through the school.

**My biggest success was maybe getting my grade 12 diploma.**

My parents went through school, but they didn't complete it. It makes them proud, I guess, that I did. I have four sisters. I am the second youngest - three older than me and one younger than me. Three out of four finished school.

There is one that is still going to school here - my sister. She is in the program this afternoon - the carpentry program. I might have helped her once in a while with her math and whatever she needs.

My sister is getting more interested in carpentry as a result of going back to school. She finds that pretty fascinating, I guess. I hope she does pretty good. She said she is getting pretty good.

They said they are okay with her attendance and some other girls are not doing too good. They are giving them notice for being late, for being absent - warnings.

My job is to just check people into their camping. It's on Louise Falls about 10 kilometres out of Hay River. I just check people in and help to guide them on their trails. I actually don't guide them but they walk the trails and that. It pays pretty good too. It's a government contracting job.

**... it's worthwhile to go back to school. ... most jobs require a higher education.**

I would tell people it's worthwhile to go back to school. It helps you on your education to bring it up more, and most jobs require a higher education. Maybe college level course. Grade 12 is okay too for some trades, for some jobs.





## Tracy's Story

**Tracy** is Dene. She has no children. Tracy's first language is English. She completed grade 11 at school. Tracy attends a women's pre-employment training program. She's been in the program for less than one year.

I never took pre-trades before. I would still like to get back to school for a while for upgrading. I know that pre-trades has to do with math and science.

**I would still like to get back to school ... for upgrading.**

There's lots of measurements. The math is challenging - and using the machines too.

The big machines! Sometimes I think, "Oh I don't want to." Sometimes that's my attitude.

I thought I was interested in administration, but I think I'm more interested in carpentry. Yeah. I haven't taken pre-trades. I just thought I'd try something that I liked. I'm not really sure what I'm doing. I don't know what I really want.

One thing I want to do is take the oil and gas program. So pre-trades helps me deal with math. Once you start going into a trade, some of those entrance exams are pretty hard. So math will help me through there. So after this course I'm going right into that one (the oil and gas program).

Yes, I heard they're having a ladies' program or something in Yellowknife. They're doing that project for Women in Oil and Gas. That's what I always wanted

**That's what I always wanted to do - inspection of oil and gas.**

to do - inspection of oil and gas. Because I took the other courses - one was environmental. So I might go into that. It talks about oil and gas.

## Tracy's Story

I just took a course as a guide. So I was learning about the land, so that I can be a guide on the land. It was good. And one thing we had to do was we had to drive a kicker too - a boat. It was just me and one other girl amongst all the boys and the instructors.

To pass the course you've got to drive the boat. And I was like, "What?" One of the guys was showing us how to start the engine. Then we tried it and thought, "This is easy."

I like helping people. Me - I go over to my grandma's house, clean for her, go to the store or something. Help her out.

I wanted to be a top student - me and my friend. I've missed three days - three and a half.

**I wanted to be a top student - me and my friend.**

When you have to know the tools is hard for me. What are they and what are they used for. I want to be a top student, but I want to go further. Just to graduate grade 12 and get into that oil and gas program. I always wanted to go into that.

I took computers, so now I know more computers. I don't know much stuff about it. I don't want to have a computer now. Computers was frustrating for me at first.

I was shy before, but I'm not shy now. Well yeah, I was never like that before. When you go to school, you have to go stand up in front of everybody reading and things. I was shy.

I do courses. You have to do a description of your stuff. I was nervous. But I was okay while I was talking.

Here we work like a team. Ask everybody, stick to the course, come to school, don't miss. We help each other

**Here we work like a team. ... We help each other out too.**

## Tracy's Story

out too. Tell them go to school after one week. Do whatever you do and come to school on Wednesday, because we're going to be doing another project on Wednesday.

We've got the whole shop to ourselves next week. We're making utility sheds. Wouldn't mind doing the work outside - where we show other people who are going. But we do it inside. Then we'll have to un-build it and take it apart.

It's different when I'm out of town going to school. I'll be the quietest one. Yeah. Even though I'm quiet and stuff, I wouldn't talk to guys in the program. I know. I was so quiet. I never talked.

And this one boy - because I thought he was the top student, but he was the athlete. I asked who was the top student and he said I was. And I said, "What?" Well, I thought he was, "How can she be? She doesn't talk."

**When I went back to school my mom was happy because I was doing something with my life.**

When I went back to school my mom was happy because I was doing something with my life. I didn't want to work. I wanted to go back to school. I guess high school I had to go to work. It was back and forth.

She said, "If you're not going to do anything, you might as well go to school." They would support me by getting me up. My dad brings me to school every day. It's a long ways to walk, so he brings me to school.

**I always volunteered for stuff when events are going on**

I always volunteered for stuff when events are going on or something - need help at the dance or whatever. Helped out at carnivals.

And took part in First Night. They were having like a First Night - they were having a dance for New Year's dance.

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## Tracy's Story

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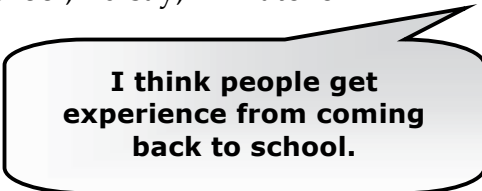
They gather all the families and have a feast, talent show, dance, whatever - all that night. People drive around, do fireworks, go for a ride around 12:00 or so. I can't remember.

Then they go back to the dance hall - stay around there for a while. People hang around just with their families.

Last job I tried was a camp clerk - a campground caretaker. It was in Hay River, by Enterprise - Louise Falls. After me, my brother took over. It was good.

You got to meet all kinds of people - tourists and whatever. It was good talking to other people too.

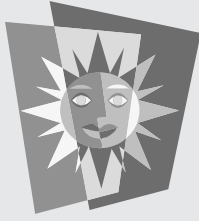
If someone asked me about going back to school, I'd say, "Whatever you want, you have to go back to school to get it. Because it won't come to you."



**I think people get  
experience from coming  
back to school.**

The hardest thing is just getting up and going to school every day. I think people get experience from coming back to school.

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## Trudy's Story

**Trudy** is Dene. She has four children. Trudy speaks English and some Slavey. She completed grade 8 at school. Trudy has been in an ALBE program for less than one year.

I wanted to come back to school because I wanted to learn more about reading and math, so I could help my kids out - help them read.

**... I wanted to learn more about reading and math, so I could help my kids out**

I don't really read lots, but we just started a new book in class - *Two Old Women*. I found *Far North* more interesting than this one. I didn't want that book to end. *Far North* was quite difficult, but I was the first one to finish my novel.

I've always helped my son to do some of his homework - reading to him. He likes talking to me in Slavey. He talks to his grandfather in Slavey. Learning Slavey in class is not hard.

I've learned how to use the computer, but I need someone to help me type. I can do math better than before. It's not that easy to learn. Learning math - like rounding to the nearest thousandth - is a bit hard. We have groups, so my friend helps me.

We do family literacy programs for kids and families in the community. They get to take a book when they come in and when they leave they get to take another book. I like doing that.

**I feel like I'm contributing to my community.**

Sometimes I just make them laugh - with bingos and other games. I tell them there are consolation prizes for one million dollars. Sometimes I just sit there and laugh. I feel like I'm contributing to my community.

## Trudy's Story

I didn't go on the trip to (Fort) Smith because I had to go to Edmonton and see my mom for a medical. But I'm going on the one to Edmonton next week. We're going to Georgie Jones' concert. There are nine people going plus the instructor.

The program has given me opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I've been able to take advantage of them.

**The program has given me opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise.**

I'm a bit more confident about doing things, like reading. I read to my kids. I help out in the community - like literacy nights. Whenever there's something going on people will phone me at home and ask, "Do you want to help?" I say, "Sure, what time and day? And I'll be there."

It's been good for me to be in the program. I want to learn more. I'm ready to work more. I want to be more prepared so that I'll know more. And if I ever am to work at the diamond mines, I'll be prepared.

I'd like to maybe try to work at one of those places. It's like taking a risk. I'm more able to take a risk than I was before. The program has helped me learn more. I want to know a lot of things.

**The program has helped me learn more. I want to know a lot of things.**

If someone asked me about going to a literacy program, I'd encourage them to go. Because there are some benefits.

I see most of my friends just walking around, not doing anything. And they'll say, "How come she's in that program? How come I didn't know anything about it?"

## Trudy's Story

boards at the stores. It's hard to ask for help - or they're just too embarrassed to ask someone to read it for them.

There's also the radio station. They can listen to announcements. Or they can go to the District Education Authority office to see if there are any school programs they might want to get into. But they're just too embarrassed.



**It's hard to ask for help...**

## Verna's Story



**Verna** is Inuvialuit. She has no children. Verna speaks English and Inuvialuktun. She completed grade 11 at school. Verna works as a cook and she volunteers in the community. She has attended an ALBE program for one year.

I came back to school because I wanted my 160 (ALBE level). I want to challenge my Red Seal in cooking. Right now we're just trying to add up all my hours so I can do that.

**I came back to school because I wanted my 160 (ALBE level).**

I didn't know there was so much support in all areas - like in apprenticeship, with the government - and a lot of family around. It's good. Many doors opened for me. I look forward to really trying to accomplish this. I don't mind being here. This community is home sort of, because I have so many family here.

I miss home, but there are no trades there. My sister and I are so close at home. I have twin nieces who are closer to me than my sisters are. But my nephews are here. Without them being around me and watching me, and making sure I'm okay, I'd be somewhere else.

I worked for my brother-in-law in my home community. It's good. Every now and then we get to do volunteer cooking in the community in the summer time.

**Every now and then we get to do volunteer cooking in the community**

I've always been a cook. I worked in the office for a long time - only I got tired of it, of cleaning up after others, of doing others' mess. I got tired of working like that. So I worked under my friend for three years.



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## Verna's Story

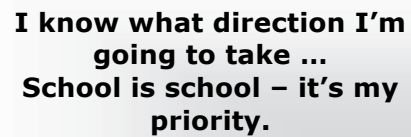
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Then I worked for the barge company for four years. Then I stopped. I went back to work in an office for my cousin's husband for about 11 years - doing all the paperwork and stuff, and ordering, marketing business. I would work a month straight and then get a week off. On that week off I'd cook. Then he said to me that I can work whenever I want to work. And he'll always have someone covering me.

I've been cooking in the camp off and on. And then on the boats, which is good. That's what I look forward to. I like meeting a lot of people.

My nephew is here at school too. Everybody is his age - my nieces and nephews. So I help them out and they help me out. It's good. It wasn't hard for me to come back to school. It's like I'm teaching them and they're teaching me more. It's good that way.

I could have gone here or to Whitehorse. I'm glad I came here. My nephew and I go out for lunch. I enjoy that. I know what direction I'm going to take, and I put my foot down when it comes to other activities that make a lot of us stray. I'm really strict that way. School is school - it's my priority. I walk away.



**I know what direction I'm going to take ...  
School is school - it's my priority.**

I try to always stay ahead. I push myself. If I don't push myself nobody is going to do it for me. So I push myself, a little too much sometimes. Other demands can wait. I usually just move on to another assignment and then we help each other out. If you need help I'm always here. That's what I do.

A lot of my nieces are working in government. It's good to see them there. They say, "Auntie, you're still in school!" Then I ask them my question and they say, "Oh, you can look it up on this page." It's really good. They helped me out.

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## Verna's Story

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I find it relaxing when I'm able to do my work. Now everything is just right there, on the computer. One of the benefits of coming back to school is meeting new people. I'm also running into old friends from 22 years ago. That's a long time.

**One of the benefits of coming back to school is meeting new people.**

I'm so independent - too much I think, sometimes. Somebody will tell me something and it'll just blow over me. I guess working in an office - having to hire people and doing all the work, and stuff like that, made me like that.

Every season we had to get new people. I'd always think, "If you don't work, go home. If you don't want to learn, what are you doing here? But if you're going to stay, then do your work." That's number one. If I had my way I'd have fired everybody all the time. You end up doing the same thing over and over and over again. That's why I want my Red Seal.

A lot of Aboriginal people have their cooking courses. But they don't have anyone they can train under. There's no one with a Red Seal in the NWT. If I was going to go to do my Red Seal, I'd have to go to Alberta. I don't want an Alberta Seal - I want an NWT Red Seal. With that I could train lots of cooks out there.

**- I want an NWT Red Seal. With that I could train lots of cooks out there.**

I think I'm pushing the teachers. The teachers are pushing the students - and I'm pushing the teachers. I've done this. And I had an instructor. We were doing the - what do you call it - the GED. I was trying to get it in my community during September, October, November, and December.

I finished the English book - the Canadian GED. And then I started on the American GED. Then we were going back into the Canadian GED. And then December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005 in the morning - my instructor came and told me that the government is pulling all the GEDs back. He showed me the letter from Yellowknife.

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## Verna's Story

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He was so mad, and so was I - because I worked so hard on it. In the evenings we worked from seven until around ten. I just started crying and he was holding me, and I just couldn't stop crying. Then I called my sister and I told her all this. I was so disappointed. My instructor wrote a letter to them.

**In the evenings we worked from seven until around ten.**

My brother called me and said, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "I don't know. I'm going to come home." He said, "You call your boss. He's looking for a worker."

So I called him and he said, "Do you want to go to work today?" And I said, "Today at what time? What time are you going to pick me up?" He told me and I looked at my instructor and I said, "I'm going to work."

My supervisor phoned me and said he was going to pick me up at 1:30. So I went home and packed, and everyone came over for lunch. I went to work from December right till May 2006, and it was good.

If a young person asked me about going back to school I'd tell them to go for it. "You're young yet, you have lots to learn. Yes, definitely go back to school and you'll learn about you - about how much you can push yourself."

**When you're doing things, things open up for you and you'll really feel confident.**

When you're doing things, things open up for you and you'll really feel confident.

There are lots of opportunities. Now they know what is out there. I'm so happy - and it's good for them.

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## Walter's Story

**Walter** is Dene. He has two children. Walter speaks English. He completed grade 10 at school. Walter has a full-time job as a carpenter. He was in a pre-employment training program for less than one year.

I was in the pre-employment program two years ago. I've worked before – summer jobs, student summer jobs - when I was in high school.

**I was in the pre-employment program two years ago.**

One of them was in carpentry. I liked it the first time and then I took the pre-employment training program. I liked that. I decided I should try to go for my ticket, like my friend.

He has his ticket in environmental monitoring. He's working at X point, where they wanted to clean up the old military base. The military walked out and left all the stuff - left all their equipment there. It was underground.

When I came back to school I had lots of experience working with other people, being a people person. In high school shyness is tough. But you get over that as you get older as an adult - communicating, knowledge, and that stuff. I learned to communicate with people. And it helped, you know.

I don't think there were any challenges actually. The challenge was to challenge myself I guess. See if I can do it – more of a personal challenge.

It's easy to forget. You always have to be doing things to remember. Practice you know. It was good - the mental and the physical, doing the actual work.

## Walter's Story

After you did all the paper stuff and knew the theory, then you had to actually use the tools. We had to learn about all the tools. You had to name all the tools first, and safety and all that stuff in there. Work site safety was part theory. Just about every trade has got to do that.

I liked school. The program was all right. It wasn't 'fun', like you know having fun. It was good. I mean, I'm working in carpentry. And if I hadn't taken that course I wouldn't have known in the first place what I needed to do, to do it later on. So yeah, I guess it was fun.

**... if I hadn't taken that course I wouldn't have known ... what I needed to do ...**

It definitely helped build up my confidence - for sure. You know what you're going to be doing. And sure I think learning that. Some guys get nervous, you know. They know they're going to screw up. They're not confident in themselves.

Actually coming back to school was something that I did that I didn't know I could do. Getting a routine again, getting up early, showing up, and being here. I'm most proud of getting through the program I guess. Completing it.

I had to go to (Fort) Smith too, for four months. I had to sit an exam in the trades. You had to have a trades entrance exam. I passed that, and then I went to (Fort) Smith to do the pre-employment. This can be the start of a career for people.

**One of the benefits ... is that I got a job in the field that I went to school for.**

One of the benefits of going back to school is that I got a job in the field that I went to school for. The other benefit is that my partner is now taking the program. When she comes home with homework and stuff, and was having trouble in some math questions or whatever - all the formulas and stuff - so I can help her. Give her a hand.

She was a stay-at-home mother for about two years. She graduated from high school. And after that she took a nursing program in Yellowknife.

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## Walter's Story

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She did that, came home, and she hasn't done anything. But we have another child and she stayed home.

Then she went to - you know, go out and help out, get a job, go back to school. During that time when she was off. And so it's working out. Now, actually I've got my hours for my trades apprenticeship right here in town.



**... it's working out. ... I've got my hours for my trades apprenticeship right here in town.**

I don't know. Some guys don't do anything. I guess they have to search for themselves. I don't know. It's just right there - you have to do it. You know, just be part of it. Put your foot down and get something started for themselves.

This is kind of a boom time here, I think - the next few months. So there's lots of opportunity at the moment. You need to be ready for it.

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## Warren's Story



**Warren** is Dene. He has three children. Warren speaks English and his Aboriginal language. He completed grade 12 at school. Warren has been in an ALBE program and is now in a college diploma program.

I decided that I still had a chance to go to school. I'm Aboriginal, so my education's paid for. I thought if I lose the opportunity of the government paying for all of my education, then I lose a good part of the opportunities that are available to me through my education.

**I decided that I still had a chance to go to school.**

I finished Grade 12 in 1977 at Akaitcho Hall, in Yellowknife. At that time we had the biggest class that ever graduated - 98 of us from all over the territories.

I went on to take another course back in 1990. I was in Yellowknife, going to school. I took the first year of the Aboriginal Management Study Program. I was supposed to go back for my second year. But there were too many problems living there, so I came back home after a year.

I went to work for the Band. In 1995 I was elected Chief of my community, until 1999. In 1999 I ran in the election, but I lost. Then I became the Mayor and spent about two years doing that. Then I decided I might as well go back to school for a while. So I took the Teacher Education Program. I spent a year doing that.

It's been very difficult for me because I couldn't get funding for a while. I applied too late, things weren't working out. I had problems with my kids again. We decided by Christmas that I would just go home, and stay home.

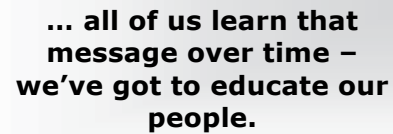
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## Warren's Story

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When I went back home I worked for the Band again, for a long time. In the last couple of years my wife wanted to go to school, to take a cooking course. At the same time I thought that I'd better go to school too.

I was 49 at that time. But you know, opportunities are still there for me. The money is still available through the government. Why not take advantage of it when it's available? You know, all of us learn that message over time - we've got to educate our people. The government pays for it, so why do we want to abuse it or avoid it, or go past that stage?



**... all of us learn that message over time – we've got to educate our people.**

I decided to take the Social Work Program so I came here. And the first year we did the Access Program. Then this year was IWAC.

It became a healing kind of a process for our school and the students. A lot of students didn't agree with that. They wanted to go into social work. But I hung on and I hung on.

Those kinds of courses can help me – I can get educated through them. As a Chief I thought I knew a lot about my own people. I didn't realize residential school had so much of an impact on our people - like all the social problems, the alcohol and drugs, community violence, family violence, break ups, and everything like that.



**I kept going to school and I learned a lot.**

I thought it was normal for everybody to do those. I kept going to school and I learned a lot. We really learned lots about residential schools – traumas, the effects, the losses and abuse, everything like that.

It was really helpful for me to start learning about that - and then to go back to the community, and look at all my friends and my people.



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## Warren's Story


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Young people out there are still into things like that. I thought to myself, "There is a lot more than alcohol and drugs affecting your life. There are other things that impact what you're doing now."

So I just kept going to school. And here I am today almost finishing. Another week to go and then they'll give me my practicum.

I'm free for the summer. I'm not too sure about coming back next year. But hopefully I'll get back to complete my diploma program. I can get the certificate this year. That'll be done.

One of the challenges for me is that I have a lot of responsibilities. I have three kids that are in the community. They're all single, but they all have children of their own.



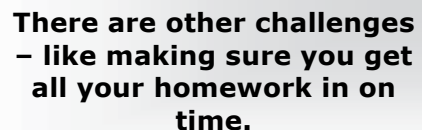
**One of the challenges for me is that I have a lot of responsibilities.**

One girl is living with us. She's got an old man, but he only comes and goes. My son is on his own all the time. I worry about them all the time. Those are the sorts of challenges I have to face.

I have a little girl here. I worry about her every day going to school. I have to make sure there's lots of grub, make sure we have money every day to carry us through for the whole month. The challenge is that when you go to school, you only get like \$11,100. So it's hard to survive on that up here.

Fortunately we got some money from the residential school package. I've bought lots of stuff with that. But I've been holding on to some, for security reasons. It's been going good so far.

There are other challenges - like making sure you get all your homework in on time. You're working 24/7 almost, you know. We work quite hard to get through these courses. We're doing full



**There are other challenges - like making sure you get all your homework in on time.**

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## Warren's Story

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courses right now, so imagine the amount of homework we're doing every day.

I get off school at 3:00. I go home and rest for a little while. Then go to my computer and start working again. Sometimes until late at night, when there are no distractions, when nobody's bothering me.

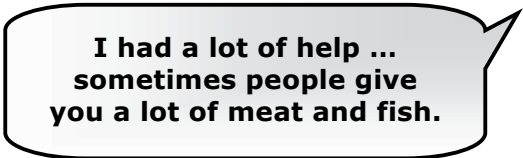
I go home every weekend to look after my other kids. That's a struggle because you know they're young and not as intelligent as I was when I was young. They have a hard time on their own, so I've got to go there and help them all the time.

I make sure they're okay - make sure they have lots of food and everything like that. They're unemployed, so I have to try to pay for everything. So that's what I'm doing. Those are the challenges I face.

Good thing I've got a vehicle. If I didn't have a vehicle it'd be even harder. They won't be able to see me and I won't be able to see them. But I've been fortunate enough to see them every weekend for a while now.

Plus I've had a lot of problems with my health. I had Bell's palsy - too much stress and everything like that. All that became a real challenge.

I had a lot of help because when you go to school sometimes people give you a lot of meat and fish. The benefits are there. I mean, money's always there for you in your bank.



**I had a lot of help ...  
sometimes people give  
you a lot of meat and fish.**

You've got to be able to conserve - can't just buy anything you want. You have to look after the food you get, make sure there's lots of food all the time. So, it's been good. I've got a lot of stuff here too - a lot of toys and things like that.

I was fortunate to have my wife working at the hospital for a long time. When she got out of her cooking course, she went to work for the hospital.

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## Warren's Story

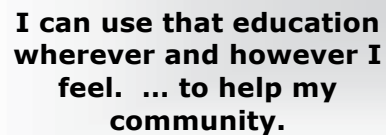
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But this year she didn't go to work, because our little girl had to get up 8:00 in the morning with me and go to school.

Sometimes I'm late for school. Sometimes I've got to stay in school, so she has to come and pick up that little girl. She's six years old. You know, they can run anywhere and do anything. We have to meet them right at the door at the school. We've got to wait for them until they come out, so we know where they are all the time.

That's a real challenge – watching young children all the time making sure nothing happens. Making sure they don't get hit by a truck. Yesterday I was coming out of the schoolyard with my niece, and this little boy just shot right across in front of me. I had a close call there.

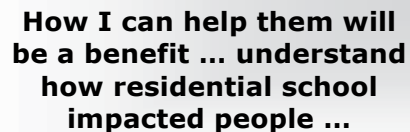
The benefits of coming back to school are if I get a job. The benefit of me completing a course is a benefit to me. I can use that education wherever and however I feel. I want to go back to help my community, because I know there are a lot of social issues.



**I can use that education wherever and however I feel. ... to help my community.**

I've been chief before. I've gone through the whole thing myself. I didn't need education to help me learn about my people. People taught me everything I needed to know - traditionally, culturally, spiritually, and on the land. I learned all that from way back. You know what a struggle it is for my people - what they're going through and why they're going through it.

How I can help them will be a benefit from this course. To understand how residential school impacted people will give me a better understanding. I'll be better able to speak to them and talk to them.



**How I can help them will be a benefit ... understand how residential school impacted people ...**

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## Warren's Story

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Before, I used to walk past them and say, "Hello, how are you doing?" "Oh, good." But realistically, deep down inside, they're not doing good.

Now I'm able to identify some of those symptoms. I grew up with the majority of the community - young people who went to the residential school in our community. That's where we lived most of our life.

Our parents were out in the bush, making a living and trying to get the muskrat, caribou hunting, and things like that. I lived on the land with a lot of traditional food and that's all I eat here, you know. That's all my little girl eats.

In the whole year I've been here we've taken my little girl to the Northern store three or four times this year. The rest is all caribou meat, fish, the whole nine yards - healthy eating and healthy food.




**That's the food that we eat - traditional food.**

That's the food that we eat - traditional food. I hardly go into town and buy any white man food. My daughter hardly eats any junk food. We try to keep her away as much as we can, because she's hyper.

She's going to be adopted into the family. It's five years since she came; she was about that big. Now she's a big bossy girl.

I eat a lot of traditional food. It saves us a lot of money because we don't have to worry about eating chicken every day and going to the store. Just the odd time, we give her that.



**... I learned more about the health of the people. ... that's a big benefit ...**

She doesn't complain about anything, so that's good. All my kids are brought up that same way, on traditional food all the time. When I go home now we'll be eating caribou meat, goose meat, and lots of fish. I've always had confidence all the time. But I learned more about the health of the people. You know that's a big benefit for me now.

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## Warren's Story

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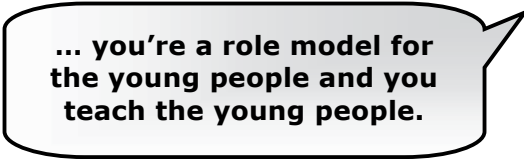
We studied about the brain, about the body, about the mind, and the soul. We studied about alcohol and drugs. We studied about almost everything you need to help a person. I just finished a project on psychosis last week - you know things like that.

We do a lot of studying about how a person would think, how a person would feel, and how a person is growing up. That's going to benefit me in the long run, if I get a job in the community. If people believe that I can do that kind of work.

You know they elected me two, three times. I'm sure they're going to believe in me. Now I have a lot of knowledge, a lot of experience. I have the ability to look after a big organization if I wanted to.

There are a lot of benefits to going to school. I'm 51 now - I just turned 51 two days ago. Getting that education and showing other people that you don't have to be young to get an education is important. No matter what age you are, no matter how healthy you are, no matter how you look - you still have that opportunity to go to school.

So you're a role model for the young people and you teach the young people. "Hey! You know there are opportunities out there. Don't throw it away." That's my message.



**... you're a role model for the young people and you teach the young people.**

Don't throw it away because the government of northern Canada under the Treaty Act has given us the opportunity to go to school to get our education. If we want to develop our own self-government and do our own thing, we need educated people.

So I hope that the benefits that I learn from this school, college, will show others. The teachers are so well trained to help us educate ourselves and understand what we're going through. Some are tough, some are hard - but that's why I go to school, to learn. We learn the toughness of going to school or the ability to train our mind better so we can understand.


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## Warren's Story

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At 51 I'm still going to school and I'm confident. If I see young guys I say, "You're only 18 years old; you'd better get back to school. You've got lots of opportunity to go to school. I'm doing that at 51. Why don't you do it now so you don't have to struggle later?"

"And there'll be job opportunities available for you when you come home. Right now there's nothing in the community for you - all you're going to do is alcohol, drugs, homelessness, everything like that."



**... we have to start  
teaching ourselves to help  
our young people.**

There's no direction for them - so we have to start teaching ourselves to help our young people. Say to them, "Get to school, it's the only way out." That's the big promotion for our young people here in the north. We have to start getting them out. If we don't, we're going to never have self-government. White people come and run our organizations and tell us what to do.

In my community we probably could run self-government because we're all educated now. But you know what really gets to me once in a while? We've got mayors of different races. That's not self-government.

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## Wendy's Story



**Wendy** is Dene. She has two children. Wendy speaks English. She completed grade 11 at school. Wendy attends a pre-employment training program for women. This is her second year there.

I'm in the women in trades pre-employment program. I wanted to come back to learn the basics that I learned previously from the pre-trades. So I brought lots of experience from my pre-trades training.

**I wanted to come back to learn the basics that I learned previously ...**

It was interesting. The math was kind of hard, but I got to learn more. And this one too - it's all kicking in. I am interested in trades. I'm interested in carpentry, yeah. I learn more hands-on and stuff. It's interesting.

My skills would probably be with science more likely. I gained more of that when I was going to the trades program. So now I'm learning more about measuring, stuff like that. You have to convert them (the measurements), so it's more like doing the math. At home I'm good at cooking and cleaning.

The biggest challenge for me is trying to just stick to a program right to the end. So, I'm doing that - getting up every day. Sometimes I'll go do something at night, but I still manage to go to school the next day. I want to be a top student - my friend and me. I think I've missed one class. That's a bit hard for me because I have kids.

**I want to be a top student - my friend and me.**

I have a little one too. I only took six months off since she was born. I think after this I'm going to stay home with her for a while. She's two and a half. She's going to be starting pre-school pretty soon.

## Wendy's Story

The exam part at the end is hard for me. But the tests are okay and quizzes. I need to study more. We have to study power tools.

**... completing a course is my biggest achievement.**

For me, completing a course is my biggest achievement. It takes a lot of commitment and stuff. For a while I thought I couldn't do this – I couldn't do the pre-trades. It took a lot of courage from me to do that.

At first I couldn't even know the math problem. And I had some frustration there for a while. But now I really got the hang of it. So it's kind of awesome. I'm having a great time here. Just doing all the work is a challenge.

My attitude has changed as a result of coming back to school. I have more confidence in myself. We also encourage each other. I don't think I speak out more. I'm a quiet person I would say. And still a little bit shy.

I also found out something about myself - that it's okay to be quiet, as long as you work hard and all the rest of it. I like learning from others too.

**My family totally supports me. It's good for my kids to see me going back to school.**

My family totally supports me. It's good for my kids to see me going back to school. I would say it's a good idea. My daughter would come and visit me in my classroom once in a while. She's kind of happy I'm going back to school too.

Because I was off for six months and she's like, "Mom, when are you going back to school?" I said, "I'm going to try for this course." She was kind of happy when I told her I was going to school. Oh, because she thought she could walk alone to the store. Or play outside until 9:00.

I volunteer in the community. I volunteer for the friendship centre - more like for the feast and stuff. More likely out at the friendship centre that I



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## Wendy's Story

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volunteer for. I cook and things like that - at home. Yeah, they just bring their stuff over and I'll cook it. Then I'll bring it back.

Last job I worked was in Hay River. I was going to school there in 2000. And I was working part-time in the Pizza Hut. It was for the money - and something to do.

If someone asked me about going back to school I'd think, "Yeah, go for it." It's what my friend says, "If you want it, go get it." Yeah. I would say, "Go for it. Because every job needs an education. Yeah, you need your education."



**Go for it. Because every job needs an education.**

I'm more independent as a result of coming back to school. Just being here every day shows I'm independent. Coming here every day. It's not only about money - it's also about experience.

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