

JANET'S STORY:



As a 57 year old Odawa woman I am very cognizant to the importance of education. For many reasons that number towards the infinite I was unable to obtain my Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Odawa was and remains to this day my primary language, a fact to which I am very proud hearted. Comprehension of the English language and its countless rules have always plagued me with linguistic complexities and an inability to articulate it fluently, particularly in written form. Apprehension of a grade 12 diploma was made even more so remote once I had four children to welcome into the arena of my responsibilities. The decades flew by at the speed of time and with my children now grown up I rekindled my longing to graduate.

The journey towards my educational goals began at the Shki Naabwin (Look Ahead) Adult Education Program in 1996. It was a good program but, I was unable to obtain any high school credits as the programs focus was directed on Learning Basic Skills (LBS). Once the program closed I moved to Webbwood and enrolled in night classes at the Espanola High School. A major hurdle to this learning attempt was getting to Espanola with no transportation. I enlisted in night classes with a high school transcript which numbered 14 credits to my name. Through the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process I was eligible to add 12 equivalency credits to my transcript bringing my total to 26 credits. Grade 12 was now only four credits away. I needed my grade 10,11 and 12

English, plus one elective grade 11 course of my choosing. While this seems like a small feat for most I can assure you that for someone with my limited scholastic skills all those English courses appeared to in another galaxy. Having moved back to Wikwemikong I was pleased to discover that my community initiated the Wikwemikong Adult Education Program or WAEP for short which in my language means "hurry up." The teacher running the program is Pete Charbonneau and his confidence, patience, respect and teaching abilities were the jet fuel I needed to carry me forward. Mr. Charbonneau enrolled me in a grade 10 English Independent Learning Course (ILC). Students are given 10 months time to complete a course and it really took me all of these months to obtain a single credit. My Mathematics and computer skills were extremely low and Mr. Charbonneau assisted me in developing these skills by registering me in online classes. I do not like to use the word "hate" but man did I hate the unknowns of technology and arithmetic. Little did I know that I would quickly grow to understand and appreciate these variables in my learning curve.

Two more years passed and I added two more credits to my transcript leaving me one grade 12 English course away from my goal. So eager was I to obtain this credit that shortly after getting my knees replaced I would negotiate the uphill climb to WAEP during the full bluntness of winter. It took me four years to get four credits and my final grade 12 English mark was 82% a fact to which I am very proud. Also proud are my four children all of whom understand the difficult enduring journey I set off on too many years ago.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform young and mature people alike that it is never too late to go back to school and make your dreams a reality. Mr. Charbonneau and WAEP have truly changed my life and he will help you change yours. A massive chii-miigwech to Chief and Council for supporting this great program. There is no reason for any community member to leave Wikwemikong to access this level of non-formal learning. Education is not only important but it is an empowering source of knowledge and knowledge is the key to wisdom.

Janet