



# 100 SNAPSHOTS OF ONLINE LEARNERS

From 600 small, rural, remote, Indigenous  
and Francophone communities across Ontario

June 2019

## THE ONLINE LEARNER'S EXPERIENCE

*“Online learning offers flexibility and convenience, making it possible to juggle a busy family life and get an education that leads to a good career.”*

*John Degroot, Online Learner  
St. Thomas*

This quote from one of the snapshots of 100 online learners from communities across Ontario using [Contact North](#) | [Contact Nord](#)'s services highlights the significant advantages offered through local access to education and training.

To better understand what local access to education and training in their communities means for learners, Contact North | Contact Nord spoke with 100 past and current students about their motivations, experiences and results, as well as the role Contact North | Contact Nord, as a community-based organization, plays in helping them complete their degrees, diplomas, certificates, or upgrade their skills.

Reading these 100 snapshots of real student experiences conveys a sense of the determination, capacity and dedication of learners across Ontario. The online learners reflect the provincial diversity - aged from 17 to 70, with incomplete high school or looking to earn a first or second degree, from all regions, and with different family situations, interests and life experiences.

For the past 33 years, Contact North | Contact Nord has partnered, as a shared service, with Ontario's 24 public colleges, 22 public universities, 9 Indigenous institutes, 76 district school boards, 200 literacy and basic skills providers, and 50 skills development training providers to provide underserved Ontario residents with local access to education and training opportunities to help them get a job. Through the free services provided at its 116 online learning centres, Contact North | Contact Nord offers over 4 million Ontario residents living in 600 small, remote, rural, Indigenous and Francophone communities access to online post-secondary education and training without having to leave their home communities. Contact North | Contact Nord responds to 800,000+ requests for services each year.

### FIVE KEY THEMES FROM THE SNAPSHOTS OF 100 ONLINE LEARNERS

#### 1. COMPLETING PROGRAMS AND COURSES TO ESTABLISH OR IMPROVE THEIR PLACE IN THE WORKPLACE

Overwhelmingly, Ontarians are completing online programs and courses to establish or improve their place in the workforce, training for jobs with a future to support their families and contribute to their communities.

## **FIVE KEY THEMES FROM THE SNAPSHOTS OF 100 ONLINE LEARNERS**

Some learners are training for their first jobs; others are changing to careers they see as offering better potential or hoping for promotion. Lay-offs in manufacturing and retail and on-the-job injuries sparked many to train for emerging employment opportunities as a result of an evolving economy and personal circumstance. A return to the workforce, especially for women with young children, is often preceded by completion of an online certificate, diploma or degree. A high percentage of the snapshots end with the statement the learner is now working in her or his community in her or his field of study, particularly business, health, and education. Their online learning success underlines the link between enhanced education and better employment opportunities.

### **2. LEARNERS ACQUIRE ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO SERVE THEM WELL IN THE WORKPLACE AND IN LIFE**

As part of their success in online learning, learners acquire essential skills to serve them well in the workplace and in life. The new abilities most often mentioned are time management, organization, self-motivation, determination, and self-discipline. Computer skills are essential to online learning and many learners report starting their programs with few skills and considerable trepidation. Soon they are capable and comfortable using computers for learning, collaboration, communication, exchange of documents and other skills valued by employers. In addition, learners gain self-confidence, independence and a strong sense of accomplishment.

### **3. STAYING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES TO EARN A DEGREE, DIPLOMA, CERTIFICATE OR UPGRADE THEIR SKILLS**

Staying in the communities to earn a degree, diploma, certificate or upgrade their skills is a deciding factor in enrolling for many of the learners. They do not have the option of moving closer to a campus and commuting is not possible. Families cannot be moved, and many learners are still employed as they learn. In some cases, the reluctance to leave results from seeing friends move to far away campuses, only to come home before graduation. Many of the learners highlight the importance of family, friends, the comfort and familiarity of their community to their educational success. Others mention graduating with little or no debt as a considerable benefit to learning at home. Learning in the community most often results in working in the community upon completion, benefitting not only the learner but also the community and broader region.

### **4. ONLINE LEARNING IS EFFECTIVE**

The snapshots make it clear online learning is effective. Ontario educators design and offer online programs and courses that engage students and motivate and support their successful completion.

## **FIVE KEY THEMES FROM THE SNAPSHOTS OF 100 ONLINE LEARNERS**

Many of the learners comment on the initial strangeness of learning without a teacher in the room, but as one says of a web conferencing class: “this is my campus”. Instructors are accessible through phone, messaging, online classes and tutorials, and several students mention the quick and comprehensive help they provide. Access to recorded lectures receives high praise from learners for providing flexible access and repeat viewings for better understanding.

Many learners report a higher level of class participation online as they find online less intimidating than live classes. The isolation of online learning is countered through interaction with other students in collaborative projects, forums, study sessions and, for a number of courses, Facebook pages set up by peers. The presence of other students at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centres leads to development of informal study and support groups.

Having discovered the benefits of online learning, a number of employed graduates continue their online studies on a part-time basis to improve their qualifications and opportunities for advancement or new careers. Although many learners take some time to adapt to the new ways of learning and interacting inherent in online learning, one comment describes their overall conclusion: “the benefits of online learning far outweigh the challenges.”

### **5. STUDENTS USING AND BENEFITING FROM THE RESOURCES OF THEIR LOCAL CONTACT NORTH | CONTACT NORD ONLINE LEARNING CENTRE**

The 100 snapshots reveal students using and benefiting from the resources of their local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centres in different ways, according to their needs. Most first engage with the local online learning centre staff as a valued source of information on online educational opportunities available across Ontario. Students are offered information and help with their choice of online programs, courses and providers, and are supported throughout the registration process.

For many, this is a first experience with post-secondary education and online learning. Several students explain how Contact North | Contact Nord’s local staff helped them define a pathway through high school completion, study skills programs and college readiness courses into a college program aimed at their career goals. In addition, staff may refer students to local support services for financial and other assistance.

Once they are registered, students use the computers at the online learning centres to connect to their courses, receiving guidance on online learning and technical support. Many students stress how important the online learning centre is in their learning, as they are able to concentrate without distractions, as well as benefit from high-

## **FIVE KEY THEMES FROM THE SNAPSHOTS OF 100 ONLINE LEARNERS**

speed Internet access, the presence of staff and other learners, and establishing a schedule that keeps them motivated and progressing. Those who chose to study from home can use Contact North | Contact Nord's web conferencing platform and have access to the personal and technical support services. For example, staff encourage student retention through encouraging e-mails and other personal contacts.

As the final step in their learning, students are able to write exams at the online learning centres, so they do not have to travel to far off campuses.

The 100 snapshots give these 100 students an opportunity to share their experiences with online learning and the importance of local access to education and training. Their stories reflect the realities of thousands of others across Ontario who participate every year in online post-secondary, secondary, literacy and basic skills education and training. Their success in achieving career, academic and personal goals strengthens individuals, families, communities, regions and Ontario as a whole, both economically and socially.

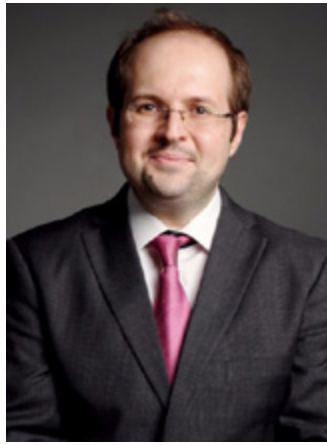
## ABDUL ALHAMDO

### SIOUX LOOKOUT

Educational Institution: Lakehead Adult Education Centre

Program: English as a Second Language course

*“Online courses is good, especially because it is recorded.”*



As a newcomer to Canada, Abdul Alhamdo found his way to Sioux Lookout, and needed to improve his English language skills to find work. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Sioux Lookout, he enrolled in Lakehead Adult Education Centre’s English as a Second Language course.

Abdul and his family emigrated from Syria in 2015. “There are no English courses offered in Sioux Lookout,” he explains. “Online courses is good, especially because it is recorded.” He attended several interviews for employment, however, was unsuccessful due to his language skills.

He connects to the live classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform at the online learning centre and from his home computer. Being able to connect from his home computer is convenient for Abdul so he is home when his children arrive from school.

Abdul is looking for a part-time job that will help him improve his English language skills and integrate into his new community.

## ISABEAU ALLARD

WAWA

Educational Institution:  
Canadore College

Program: Recreation and Leisure  
Services Diploma

*“Contact North helped me  
find the possible programs  
I could take online.”*



Isabeau Allard lives in Wawa, a small mining town 200 km west of Sault Ste. Marie. She completed the Recreation and Leisure Services Diploma program online through Canadore College.

Originally from Montreal, Isabeau has lived in Wawa for the past several years. To find a job, she decided to complete her first English language college program. All of her previous education was in her first language

of French. She already completed a college diploma program in Equine Sciences but wanted to find work in the tourism sector.

“Contact North | Contact Nord helped me find the possible programs I could take online,” says Isabeau. She realized her options were limited in the remote town but learned about how online learning would make it possible for her to study at a distance. Aside from being able to remain rooted with her young daughter, she was able to make her own schedule.

“It helped to be able to come into the centre while also having the option to stay home when I needed to be with my daughter. I was able to record all the classes. I had some classes at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 a.m., which were not good times for my daughter, but I could record and listen later,” explains Isabeau.

She appreciated the flexibility online learning offered, however, she does acknowledge how important it is to be self-disciplined and meet assignment deadlines. Many of her assignments involved contributing to online discussions, quizzes and smaller writing assignments she submitted over the Internet.

She appreciated the use of computers made available at the online learning centre as they were faster and more efficient than her own. When she went into the online learning centre, there would sometimes be other students taking online courses as well, and she could share the experience and challenges of learning at a distance with them.

In addition to attending classes online from her own community, she was grateful she was also able to complete her placement in Wawa. With the qualifications from her brand-new college diploma, she secured a full-time job in Wawa after she graduated.

## MADI AOKI

WALLACEBURG

Educational Institution: Lakehead District School Board - Adult Education

Program: English (College Preparation) Grade 12 course

*“You need to be self-disciplined to work on your own, but it really works for me.”*



When traditional high school was not working for Madi Aoki, she turned to online learning. Through the Chatham-Kent Public Library, she learned about the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Wallaceburg where she could get help with her study options.

Madi enrolled in Lakehead District School Board – Adult Education’s online English (College Preparation) Grade 12 course.

“You need to be self-disciplined to work on your own, but it really works for me,” she says. Madi has mental health issues and needs to set her own hours and work in a less distracting environment.

Staff at the online learning centre also provided referrals to other community resources. Madi found a part-time job at a local grocery store through a referral to Goodwill Career Centre’s Employment Ontario Resource and Information Centre.

She is completing her Ontario Secondary School Diploma and planning to graduate in June 2019.



## DAVID BEAUDRY

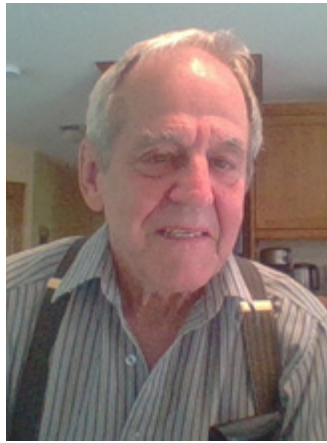
### BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution:

The LearningHUB and Durham College

Program: College Readiness and  
Fundamentals of Addiction Certificate

*“David finds online learning  
relatively easy.”*



Once David Beaudry retired, he saw an opportunity to pursue educational goals he abandoned in his youth. He began by enrolling in Trillium Lakelands District School Board’s Ontario Secondary School Diploma and graduated with his diploma at the age of 72.

While completing his diploma, he learned about Contact North | Contact Nord and the

support available to explore options to complete an online certificate. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge, he enrolled in The LearningHUB’s College Readiness program. He prepared for college with basic skills courses including Learning to Communicate with MS Word course and Understanding Your Learning Style course.

“When I started schooling in 2016, I was completely computer illiterate,” David explains. Once he completed the College Readiness courses, he felt prepared to enrol in Durham College’s Fundamentals of Addiction Certificate program.

“It was a big learning curve,” he shares. “My last 15 years working was as a subway operator for the Toronto Transit Commission.”

David finds online learning relatively easy though. He communicates with classmates on a message board and if he needs any assistance with his computer, he reaches out to staff at the online learning centre in Bracebridge.

David is planning to graduate next year and looks forward to helping others with addiction issues.

## CRAIG BECKMAN

DRYDEN

Educational Institution:  
Lakehead District School Board -  
Adult Education Centre

Program: Chemistry (College  
Preparation) Grade 12

*“It was over two decades since he was in high school and taking the one course online was the perfect solution.”*



When Craig Beckman attended a job fair in Dryden, he learned about the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre. With the support of staff at the online learning centre, he enrolled in Lakehead District School Board – Adult Education Centre’s Chemistry (College Preparation) Grade 12 course.

“I feel that taking the Chemistry course helped me get a job interview,” he admits. He was out of work for several months and hoping to secure employment at the local saw mill. He knew Chemistry was a requirement and decided to upgrade his high school credit. It was over two decades since he was in high school and taking the one course online was the perfect solution.

As part of his experience, Craig became familiar with free online courses available such as Spanish. He travels to Mexico on vacation with his family and likes to brush up on his Spanish before they leave. “I want to look at more free courses; there are so many different ones. I had no idea there was so many available,” he admits.

Craig was called for an interview by the mill and is hopeful for a job offer.

## BETTE BELANGER

PARRY SOUND

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Social Service Worker

*“I am considering an online university degree.”*



Bette Belanger is looking forward to graduating in Spring 2019 and getting to work. At the age of 53, she decided to pursue an online college diploma to help her find a job in the social services field.

With the support of YMCA of Muskoka/Simcoe Employment Services, Métis Nation of Ontario and the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre staff in Parry Sound, she enrolled in Northern

College’s online Social Service Worker program.

Bette lives in the rural community of Britt, a 40-minute drive to Parry Sound or an 80-minute drive to Sudbury. She worked abroad for 11 years as an English teacher and is hoping she can find work in the social service field with her new skills from the Social Service Worker program.

Working from home was important for her choice of colleges. “This is the only way,” says Bette about online learning. She connects to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform, which allows her to see and hear her instructor and classmates. In her first year, she used the free Internet and computers at the online learning centre in Parry Sound to connect to her classes. In the second year, she connects from her home computer with reliable Internet and only needs to go to the online learning centre to write exams.

Her placement is in Parry Sound and she is making valuable connections for future employment. “I am considering an online university degree,” shares Bette. After her experience with her college program, online learning is a great way to juggle work and studies.

Bette graduates in Spring 2019 and is eager to apply her new knowledge and skills.

## LINDSEY BELIVEAU

CHAPLEAU AND ELLIOT LAKE

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Social Service Worker

*“I prefer online learning.  
This is my school at the  
online learning centre.  
This is my campus.”*



As a young mother living in a northern Ontario community, Lindsey Beliveau was looking for an online college program. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Chapleau, she enrolled in Northern College’s Social Service Worker program.

“I prefer online learning,” said Lindsey.

She did not want to travel from Chapleau to Northern College’s South Porcupine Campus. “This is my school at the online learning centre. This is my campus.”

She liked coming into the online learning centre where staff was available to help resolve any issues with connecting to her Northern College classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. She could also talk with staff about what she was learning.

Lindsey found her Northern College professors to be understanding about online students who were juggling jobs and families. To stay on top of her coursework and meet the many assignment deadlines, she was extremely organized and diligent.

“I liked coming to the online learning centre; it was much easier to work because there were no distractions,” said Lindsey.

The other advantage she appreciated about Contact North | Contact Nord was the presence of online learning centres across the province. She moved to Elliot Lake while still enrolled in her program and simply connected to her classes from the online learning centre in that community.

“The benefits of online learning outweigh the challenges,” Lindsey claimed. She graduated in 2017.

## ANICK BÉRIault

HAWKESBURY

Educational Institution: La Cité

Program: Éducation en services à l'enfance (Early Childhood Education)

*"I need to be there for my son, and online learning is much easier for me on every level."*



After working with children for over a decade, Anick Bériault needed to qualify as an Early Childhood Educator before getting a better paying position.

Employment Services Centre in Hawkesbury, part of the Employment Ontario network, referred her to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Hawkesbury to explore her options to upgrade her education.

"I was at home with my son and I wanted to study online," says Anick. This was a second attempt at getting her credential. She took two evening courses on-campus but found the travel back and forth to Ottawa very draining.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre, she enrolled in La Cité's Éducation en services à l'enfance program and discovered the online program was the solution to achieving her educational goals while not disrupting her family life. "I need to be there for my son, and online learning is much easier for me on every level," says Anick.

"I could go into the online learning centre if I needed quiet, but I also liked working at home," she explains. She used Contact North | Contact Nord's web conferencing platform to connect to her classes. She also wrote exams at the online learning centre.

Anick completed her placement in Hawkesbury which helped her with additional opportunities to find work after graduation.

Anick graduated in 2015 and is now working in the field.

## CHRISTINA BERNARD

MISSISSAUGA FIRST NATION

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Social Service Worker

*“Many times I cried and felt I wanted to quit...But the next day, I would get back at it.”*



Christina Bernard’s goal was to get a better job to support herself and her son. She started with a visit to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Mississauga First Nation, adjacent to Blind River where she lives.

With the support of staff at the online learning centre, she enrolled in Northern

College’s Social Service Worker program.

“Everything was a challenge for me at first,” admitted Christina. “I didn’t know anything about computers.” She was grateful to go to the online learning centre where she received help with computer use and connecting to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform.

As she became more familiar with using computers, she worked from her home computer. Her program was full-time with two or three online classes a day.

Christina shares how overwhelming it was as a mature student returning to school. “Many times I cried and felt I wanted to quit,” she says. “But the next day, I would get back at it.” Connecting with classmates on a group Facebook page was beneficial for her. She asked questions, shared notes and she discovered another student living in Blind River.

“I was not scared to ask questions,” she says about her interactions in class. “I was brave in front of the screen; not seeing others.” She did meet some of her classmates during a face-to-face lab held in Parry Sound, which enhanced her sense of belonging when they returned to classes online.

Despite her challenging start, Christina graduated in June 2018 with honours. She completed her placement in Blind River where she was hired on a 3-month contract after she graduated.



## JENNIFER BETTS

### MARATHON

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Business Administration -  
Human Resources Diploma

*“Being able to study online meant she could take the opportunity to change careers without uprooting her family.”*



The initial reward for returning to post-secondary education for Jennifer Betts was increased self-confidence. Earning a Business Administration - Human Resources Diploma from Confederation College provided a pathway to a new career and the courage to accomplish a number of long-held goals.

Jennifer wanted to obtain education to support a career change to provide more stability and allow her to spend more time with her family. Her husband is disabled and the family depends on her sole income. They live in Marathon and have one child at university; their other child is still at home attending high school.

Being able to study online meant she could take the opportunity to change careers without uprooting her family to attend an on-campus program. Jennifer adjusted her shifts at work to attend classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform and complete assignments. “The room I worked out of at the online learning centre was cozy, not like in a big classroom. No distractions, and I could put my full attention to the lecture,” Jennifer shared.

Deciding to take the 2-year Business Administration - Human Resources Diploma program put her outside her comfort zone. This was a second college diploma for Jennifer. She earned a Social Service Worker Diploma in 1998 and worked as a Personal Support Worker in the community for the past 15 years.

In her new program, she learned new skills in accounting, marketing and business writing. “I felt that going to school pushed me to find out more things about myself,” admitted Jennifer. In the first year of her program, she finally got her driver’s license.

She secured a part-time placement as a Human Resources Assistant with Confederation College’s Human Resources department working out of the Marathon campus. Her goal as a new graduate is to find work with a local business.

## FABIAN BONAPARTE

ORLÉANS

Educational Institution: LearningHUB

Program: Basic Computer Functions

*“I find online learning to be great quality and I am comfortable now to explore taking my Master’s degree online.”*



Fabian Bonaparte found he could no longer avoid learning how to use a computer and a smartphone. His employer told him it was an asset to have computer skills, but within a few years, it became mandatory. With the support from the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Orléans, he discovered a world of possibilities with technology.

“I need to get in line with the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” joked Fabian. “I realized this is something I need to learn.”

The Online Learning Recruitment Officer at the Orléans online learning centre helped Fabian find an interactive course to learn the basics of using computers. He says people his age, forty and over, appreciate this type of learning to stay relevant with technology. In fact, Fabian admits he actually likes computers now. He initially thought online learning was not suitable for his learning style that relied on an in-class environment. He was also hesitant about the quality of online learning compared to an in-class course.

“I find online learning to be great quality and I am comfortable now to explore taking my Master’s degree online,” says Fabian. He liked being able to come into the online learning centre located at the Orléans Cumberland Community Resource Centre, away from distractions at home. The staff at the online learning centre were able to help him with any connection issues and encouraged him throughout his course.

His success with online learning also improved his job performance now that he is more comfortable with using computers, tablets and smartphones. As a result, he is now more confident updating his safety credentials with his employer through online learning.

Fabian is a lifelong learner, and with his initial experience with online learning a positive experience, he is ready to continue taking more courses.



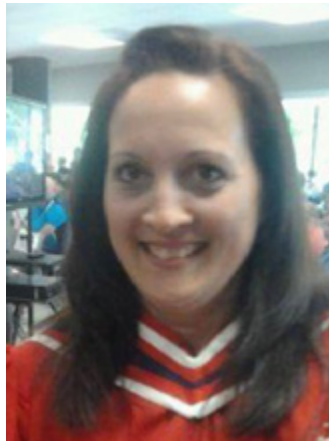
## DEBBY CAIRNS

SHELBURNE

Educational Institution: Loyalist College

Program: Early Childhood Education

*“Looking back, I wonder how I did it all!”*



Debby Cairns owned her own cleaning business for over a decade and needed a change in her career. She decided to pursue a career as an Early Childhood Educator and enrolled in Loyalist College’s Early Childhood Education Diploma program.

“I owned a computer but didn’t really know how to use it,” she says. Getting familiar

with the college portal for retrieving and uploading assignments was challenging; however, one of her instructors patiently walked her through the steps. “Instructors were there all the time, I had so many questions and they e-mailed or called right back.”

When it came to write her first exam, she discovered she could write her exams at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Shelburne where she also received encouragement as she completed her program.

She completed her three placements in organizations close to home and continued part-time with her business.

“Looking back, I wonder how I did it all!” she exclaims.

Debby graduated in 2016 with her Early Childhood Educator Diploma and started working with the local school board three months after graduating. She now mentors other Early Childhood Educator students.

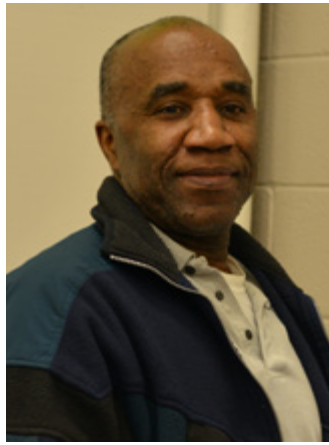
## DICKIE CAMPBELL

MADOC

Educational Institution:  
Algonquin College

Program: Business -  
Accounting Diploma

*“After getting laid off, Dickie needed to retrain and find a new career path.”*



Living in Marmora, a small, rural community 47 kilometres north of Belleville, Dickie Campbell was grateful to have the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre close by in Madoc. Contact North | Contact Nord was a critical component to his participation in the Ontario Government’s Second Career program. Through this initiative, he graduated from Algonquin College’s online Business – Accounting Diploma program in 2016.

After getting laid off from Sears Canada, Dickie needed to retrain and find a new career path. “I started with META Employment Services in Marmora and they suggested I could do studies online,” Dickie explained. A requirement of the Second Career program was to check in daily. He was able to work from the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Madoc, which allowed staff to confirm his attendance.

Initially he was unsure about his comfort with online learning, but quickly discovered he liked the convenience of remaining in his community while retraining and learning at his own pace. If for some reason he was not able to attend his class, he could listen to the recording.

“When I was young I had two to three jobs. I never worried because I always found work. But now at my age, can’t do that anymore,” he admitted. At 52 years of age, Dickie wanted to focus on his school work and the new way of learning. He completed five courses each semester and remained focused with all of the reading, regular assignments and quizzes.

Dickie not only acquired a new career path, but a comfort with online learning. After graduating, he remains connected to the staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Madoc and receives information about upcoming online learning opportunities.

## VAIBHAV CHOPRA

HAILEYBURY

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Business -  
Accounting Diploma

*“At first it was a little tricky for me, but easy to learn.”*



Vaibhav Chopra is an international student from India and enrolled in Northern College’s Business – Accounting program. He attends at Northern’s Haileybury campus and has one or two courses delivered on Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform.

He first encountered Contact North | Contact Nord and online learning when he arrived for a class on-campus and was directed to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre co-located on the Haileybury campus. “At first it was a little tricky for me, but easy to learn,” says Vaibhav.

He appreciates the flexibility online learning offers, particularly the option to connect to his classes from his home computer when it is extremely cold outside. Vaibhav also likes that the lectures are recorded and he can review them as many times as he needs.

Vaibhav works on group projects with students located in other parts of the province. “I worked online with other students and we did a presentation together,” he says.

Vaibhav is fond of Haileybury and the people he has met. He graduates in Spring 2019 with his diploma and would like to stay in Canada and find a full-time job in the area.

## ALYSSA CONNELLY

ENGLEHART

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Office Administration General  
Certificate program

*“The flexibility of online learning is perfect for her growing family who prefer living in a small, rural community, close to family.”*



Alyssa Connelly was thrilled to learn from a friend about the services available from the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Englehart.

She just enrolled in Northern College’s Office Administration General Certificate program and was travelling from her home in Englehart to Northern College’s Haileybury campus during the week to attend classes.

With the support of staff at Contact North | Contact Nord, she was able to attend her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’ web conferencing platform from the online learning centre in Englehart or her home computer and avoid the 100 km round trip each day.

After graduating from high school, she completed Northern College’s Personal Support Worker Diploma program and worked for a year in the field. When her two children were in daycare, she decided to enrol in Northern College’s Office Administration General Certificate program.

Online learning offered more time and flexibility while she attended school full-time. “I was first set up with distance learning at home, but I preferred to go into the online learning centre,” explains Alyssa. She likes the option of working from home when necessary but prefers the routine of getting out of the house to work at the online learning centre.

The flexibility of online learning is perfect for her growing family who prefer living in a small, rural community, close to family. Her favourite story about online learning is how it can be done almost anywhere; for example, she connected to her class using her mobile phone while waiting for her daughter at dance class.

She also found the support of Contact North | Contact Nord invaluable, especially when she calls Contact North | Contact Nord’s Technical Support Hotline and gets an immediate response.

Alyssa graduated in Spring 2018 and was offered a full-time Educational Assistant position with the local school board.

## VALERIE CORBIERE

M'CHIGEENG FIRST NATION

Educational Institution: Native Education & Training College of Business, Healthcare, Human Service & Technology

Program: Personal Support Worker

*“She appreciated the opportunity to remain in her community with her family and complete her placement close to home.”*



Valerie Corbiere of M'Chigeeng First Nation almost lost her final year of the Personal Support Worker program at Everest College in Sudbury when they suddenly closed their doors. She returned home and received support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in M'Chigeeng to find an alternative way to complete her program.

She completed a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) test and was accepted to Native Education & Training College of Business, Healthcare, Human Service & Technology's online Personal Support Worker program. All she needed to complete her diploma was a final placement and to write the final exam.

“As soon as I sent in a question, they responded,” says Valerie about her instructors in the program. Being at a distance from instructors was familiar for her since she previously completed several high school courses at a distance.

She appreciated the opportunity to remain in her community with her family and complete her placement close to home. “I like visiting with clients, who are mostly elderly,” she explains. She knows many of the clients and one of her clients is her auntie.

Valerie wrote her final exam at the online learning centre in M'Chigeeng and graduated in June 2016. After graduating, she quickly obtained employment in the community.

## JASMYNE COWLES

### RED LAKE

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Practical Nurse Diploma

*“She got comfortable with using the platform after a couple of weeks and learned to listen better.”*



Jasmyne Cowles of Red Lake is one of many high school graduates who took the opportunity to pursue their post-secondary education through online learning. Through word of mouth, she connected with staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Red Lake and enrolled in Confederation College’s Practical Nurse Diploma program.



She was one of five students in Red Lake to graduate from the program in 2015. “I would have got homesick if I had gone away,” admits Jasmyne. She saw friends leave to attend school in Southern Ontario but return before completing their program.

“It was a little different, especially after just coming out of high school,” says Jasmyne. All five students used Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform to attend classes. She got comfortable with using the platform after a couple of weeks and learned to listen better. She also found the professors helped to make students feel comfortable with online learning. “The teacher was in Fort Frances and we saw her presentation on the screen. Sometimes, she would show us YouTube videos or draw out explanations for us.”

Cowles likes living in Red Lake and is grateful she was able to obtain her post-secondary education and get a job in her community upon graduation. She benefited from the support of Contact North | Contact Nord, her family and friends, and completed her education with much less debt.

## TANIA COWLEY

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution:  
Durham College

Program: Accounting Specialty  
(Certificate)

*“Going to the online learning centre is much more convenient than driving down to the city.”*



As a small business owner, Tania Cowley acted on a suggestion to get an accounting certificate. She enrolled in Durham College’s online Accounting Speciality (Certificate) program.

When she needed a proctor for an exam, she connected with the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge. “Going to the online learning centre is much more convenient than driving

down to the city,” she says. “It’s quiet, not a large group of students, and it takes down the stress and anxiety.”

The program is predominately independent studies aside from interacting with classmates in online discussion boards. “There have been some online forums, discussion in groups, and group assignments,” she explains. She appreciates receiving feedback and giving feedback through this method.

For her taxation course, Tania goes into the online learning centre in Bracebridge to do coursework where it is quiet. “I go for five to seven hours,” she explains. “It is a very intense course. I like being able to know that I can go there and not have any distractions.”

As a small business owner, Tania manages her own schedule and chooses to take a break from courses between July and October when her kids are out of school for the summer and other work commitments.

Tania plans to complete her program in 2020.

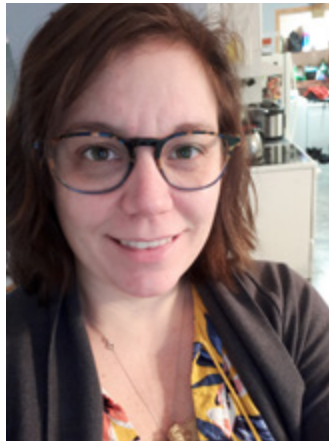
## JENNIFER COX

HALIBURTON

Educational Institution:  
Durham College

Program: Social Service Worker

*“I took online courses about 10 years ago. It has changed a lot! I had to mail in my assignments.”*



Jennifer Cox holds an undergraduate degree in geography, but she found her passion and career path when she became a mother. She now wants to help families with mental health challenges.

Jennifer enrolled in Durham College’s online Social Service Worker program. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in

Haliburton, she received information for applying to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).

“I took online courses about 10 years ago,” says Jennifer. “It has changed a lot! I had to mail in my assignments.” With the support of Contact North | Contact Nord, she receives support to get her courses organized, write exams at the local online learning centre and a little encouragement throughout her studies.

Her son’s diagnosis of ADHD, and her own shortly thereafter, is why she chose the Social Service Worker program, and also why she needed the flexibility of online learning. The program is predominately independent work, however, there is group work and placements completed in the community. “It’s all reading,” she explains. “There are videos to watch, but you have to read all the information they give you. It’s very similar to university, textbook based and read everything!”

Jennifer is planning to graduate in Spring 2020 and once she has her diploma, start her own practice to help other families.



## CHLOE CRAIG

COBOURG

Institution Names: Loyalist College and Fleming College

Program: Office Administration - Medical Diploma, Social Service Worker

*“Contact North | Contact Nord staff check in with me a couple times a month, to see if they can help in any way.”*



When Chloe Craig decided to pursue a career change, she contacted her local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Cobourg. With support from staff at the online learning centre, she enrolled in Loyalist College’s online Office Administration - Medical Diploma program.

“I had been working in retail for over 10 years. I am a single mom and stuck relying on daycare not conducive to retail hours,” explains Chloe. “I knew I wanted an office job with 9 - 5 hours.”

She worked on her assignments at home when her daughter did not need her. The program required her to submit regular assignments on deadline and be good at managing her time. “For the medical terminology course we had to record saying the terms and send the recording back to the instructor,” she explains about one of the courses.

Chloe graduated in 2013 and found an office job about a year after graduating. However, after two years in the job, she left and started full-time studies, enrolling in Fleming College’s on-campus Social Service Worker program in 2017.

“Contact North | Contact Nord staff check in with me a couple times a month, to see if they can help in anyway,” she says. She still writes exams at the online learning centre.

However, she is not done with her education yet. Chloe is graduating with her Social Service Worker diploma in Spring 2019 and starts Fleming College’s on-campus Education Support – Advanced Standing program in September 2019. She embraced on-campus life and was a member of the College’s Board of Governors. “I love school, should never stop learning!” she shares.

## JAMES CRITTENDEN

GEORGINA

Educational Institution:  
Quinte Adult Education

Program: Ontario Secondary  
School Diploma

*“In the beginning, not having a teacher to ask questions was difficult. But it forces you to find the information yourself and you learn more...”*



James Crittenden knew he wanted to pursue a college education. Through a referral from Georgina Trades Training he learned about the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Georgina. With the support of staff at the online learning centre, he enrolled in the Quinte Adult Education online Ontario Secondary School Diploma to finish his last four high school credits.

James is from Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, a community outside of Keswick and accessible only by ferry. He moved off the island to pursue his education and job opportunities. “The Internet is hard to get on the Island and more expensive,” he explained.

This experience with online learning is useful to develop his work skills. “In the beginning, not having a teacher to ask questions was difficult,” he says. “But it forces you to find the information yourself and you learn more,” he says. It is worth it for him because he likes not having to travel to attend school. Initially he expected to take night classes at a local high school and was relieved he could take online courses. He also likes the ability to do coursework on his own time and learned the key is to read everything carefully.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre he was able to navigate through each step in the enrolment process, including applying for OSAP funding, to achieve his goals.

James graduated with his Ontario Secondary School Diploma in June 2015, went on to enrol in Seneca College’s Social Service Worker Diploma program, which he bridged to the Honours Bachelor of Community Mental Health in 2016. He graduates in Spring 2019 and is awaiting confirmation of his acceptance into a Master of Social Work degree program.

## KIRK CUTFEET

SIoux LOOKOUT

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: College Access Certificate and  
Business – Human Resources Diploma

*“I just sign in from home;  
I can even sign in from my  
mobile phone.”*



Kirk Cutfeet knew he needed to change careers due to health issues. His transition started with support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Sioux Lookout. “I wanted a backup plan just in case I can’t do construction work anymore,” says Kirk.

“I always saw the Contact North posters around town and driving by the centre, so I went in to talk about going back to school,” says Kirk. He started by enrolling in Confederation College’s College Access Certificate program in 2015. Once he was prepared to pursue his post-secondary studies, he enrolled in Confederation College’s Business Fundamentals Diploma program.

When Kirk started his studies online, he was not comfortable with computers and didn’t even use his phone to send texts. When he started full-time study, he bought a laptop and set up a workspace in his home.

“I just sign in from home; I can even sign in from my mobile phone,” he says. He likes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform to attend live, online classes but also work with classmates on group assignments. “You can easily share your work on the screen. If there are eight of us working on an assignment, we share the screen, and everyone can dive in and put stuff on there.”

He had some doubts when he started but receives a lot of support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre (encouraging e-mails, the ability to write his exams and IT support), his professors and family.

Kirk is completing his 2<sup>nd</sup> year and planning to enrol in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year advanced program that includes a placement in his community.

## JOHN DEGROOT

ST. THOMAS

Educational Institution: Sault College

Program: Personal Support  
Worker Diploma

*“It’s nice having someone here in St. Thomas to support me along the way.”*



When John Degroot had the opportunity to make a career change into the healthcare field, he discovered the convenience and flexibility of online learning and the support services available at the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in St. Thomas.

John, and his wife Nicole, who also completed an Early Childhood Education Diploma program through Loyalist College online, have four children between the ages of 2 and 8. The area took an economic hit in 2009 when the Ford plant closed after decades of employing hundreds. Many, John included, were hired right after high school to work in the car manufacturing plant. Outgoing Ford employees were offered assistance with retraining when the plant closed, and John took this opportunity to take the Sterile Processing Certificate online, the beginning of his career move into healthcare. Upon completion of the certificate program, he landed a job in a local hospital.

Once he was working in the hospital setting, he confirmed he wanted to pursue a career as a registered nurse. The challenge was how he would be able to juggle family responsibilities, working and school.

When he learned about the online Personal Support Worker diploma program offered by Sault College, he reached out to Contact North | Contact Nord. He discovered he could participate in a bridging program between Personal Support Worker and Practical Nursing programs. With the help of Contact North | Contact Nord staff, John determined his credentials for entry to the Personal Support Worker program, got registered and developed a pathway to the Practical Nursing program.

“I do all my classes at home and then go into the centre to write the tests,” explains John. “It’s nice having someone here in St. Thomas to support me along the way.”

Sault College, based in northeastern Ontario, welcomes students from across the province through online learning. The interest and need for personal support workers is high and it is often the flexibility of online learning that attracts students to the Sault College program.

For students like John and his wife, flexibility and convenience are important to the task of juggling a busy family life and getting an education that leads to a good career.

## ROBERT DOMERCHIE

### COBOURG

Educational Institutions: OASIS Skill Building, GCFLearnFree, Fleming College, The LearningHUB

Programs: Managing Change Course, Academic Upgrading and Learning to Communicate Using MS Word 2010

*“Robert likes the routine of going into the online learning centre to use the computers and high-speed Internet.”*



Robert Domerchie enrolled in numerous online Literacy and Basic Skills courses since 2012. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Cobourg, he completed short courses with OASIS Skill Building, The LearningHUB, GCFLearnFree, and he is a graduate of Fleming College’s Academic Upgrading program.

“I like online learning,” says Robert. “I have been working part-time at McDonalds for 15 years and do online studies.”

He lives with a learning disability and appreciates having Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in his community. The staff at the online learning centre assist Robert to find appropriate courses. Robert likes the routine of going into the online learning centre to use the computers and high-speed Internet. He knows if he encounters any computer issues, the staff are there to help him resolve them quickly and continue with the course.

Robert recently applied to volunteer at his local library and hopes to put some of the skills he acquired to good use. He is also planning to enrol in an online office administration program in the future.

## DUAA ELEA

WINDSOR

Educational Institution:  
The LearningHUB

Programs: Hiring Tests: Putting Your  
Best Foot Forward and Improving Your  
Job Skills

*“The information is easy and  
video is perfect way for me  
to learn.”*



As a new Canadian, Duaa Elea wanted to obtain a Canadian education and improve her prospects of getting a good job. With the support of staff at the City of Windsor, Employment and Training Services and staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Windsor, she enrolled in The LearningHUB’s online Hiring Tests: Putting Your

Best Foot Forward and Improving Your Job Skills courses.

Duaa took 10 online courses from The LearningHUB that improved her self-esteem and confidence. “I feel ready, I have confidence now,” says Duaa. “The information is easy and video is perfect way for me to learn.”

Duaa’s first language is Arabic and she is improving her English skills. “Every course has helped me,” she says. “Many things I did not know are linked to self-esteem. I wanted to add more skills, not just computers.”

Duaa started TriOS College’s on-campus Pharmacy Technician Diploma program in March 2018.

## TERRY EWASYKE

WALLACEBURG

Educational Institution: Gale Courses and Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy

Programs: Introduction to Microsoft Word 2010, Intermediate Excel 2010 and Career Explorations

*“He started with Gale Courses’ online courses to get acquainted with online learning.”*



Terry Ewasyke was injured on the job and is now looking for a new career. He worked as a machinist and no longer has the ability to perform the same tasks he did for years.

With the support of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Wallaceburg, he enrolled in Gale Courses’ online Introduction to

Microsoft Word 2010.

“It has been a long time, two decades, since I was in school,” admits Terry. He started with Gale Courses’ online courses to get acquainted with online learning. “Taking courses has given me a starting point and then I can keep taking courses,” he explains. “I just turned 50 but still a long way to go before retirement.”

He was off work for some time and appreciates going into the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Wallaceburg to use the high-speed Internet and computers.

Terry is currently enrolled in Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council’s online Career Explorations course to explore potential career options. Once he identifies the direction he would like to take, he is looking at online post-secondary programs.

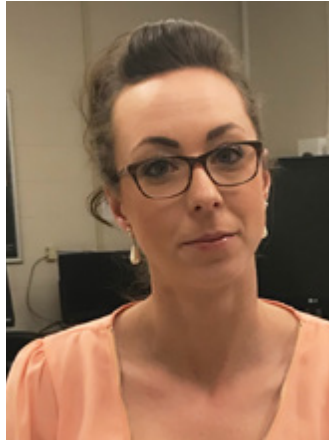
## ALICIA FADER

HAILEYBURY

Educational Institution:  
The LearningHUB and Northern College

Program: Memory and Study Tips  
for Students and Social Service  
Worker Diploma

*“I have 4 kids at home and  
it is very beneficial to work  
from home.”*



With support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Haileybury, Alicia Fader explored her study options for online programs and courses in the social services sector.

She decided to enrol in Northern College’s Social Service Worker Diploma program in Fall 2016.

The first step Alicia took to prepare for the online program was enrolling in The LearningHUB’s Memory and Study Tips for Students. Adjusting to school was initially hard, and getting acquainted with the online environment and acquiring good study habits were useful.

“I have 4 kids at home and it is very beneficial to work from home,” Alicia said about her experience with online learning. “It made it easier to carry on with our lives.” When she missed a lecture because her children were home sick or had a professional development day, she listened to the recording of the lecture later when she had time.

The challenging part of not having a face-to-face experience with an instructor was getting answers to questions in a timely way. “I had an instructor who was very responsive and made sure we understood,” explained Alicia. Classmates and instructors often chatted on the discussion boards and kept communication flowing.

Alicia is glad she made the decision to get her Social Service Worker Diploma and plans to take online courses to enhance her résumé.



## JOY FAILMA

DRYDEN

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Practical Nursing Diploma

*“I never did online learning before but I don’t mind, I actually prefer working with computers.”*



When Joy Failma completed her high school diploma, she wanted to ease into post-secondary studies while remaining home in Dryden with her family. She started by enrolling in the Practical Nursing Diploma program through Confederation College at its Dryden satellite campus. The program is offered at a distance every other year.



Classes are delivered via videoconferencing with the support of Contact North | Contact Nord. The instructors rotate from the four Confederation College satellite campuses with an instructor occasionally in her classroom in Dryden. There were approximately 40 students taking the program across the north and Joy had different opportunities to connect with classmates both in person and over the Internet.

She was not aware of online learning prior to registering for the college program. “I never did online learning before but I don’t mind; I actually prefer working with computers,” explained Joy.

One concern she had going into the program in 2015 was getting help with her studies. If instructors were not always on the campus, she found sufficient resources online and collaborated with classmates. “As long as I found help, I was not intimidated by learning online,” said Joy.

During her studies, she also worked in a nursing home in Dryden to gain experience and help build her practical care skills. This enhanced her appreciation of being able to stay in her home community and consider possible employment opportunities.

Rather than accumulate student debt, Joy saved money by remaining home with her family. The Practical Nursing Diploma program was a stepping stone for further career exploration.

## JOSHANE FIDDLER

SANDY LAKE FIRST NATION

Educational Institution:  
Good Learning Anywhere Sioux-Hudson  
Literacy Council

Program: First Steps

*“He was grateful he could go to the online learning centre and use the computer.”*



Joshane Fiddler lives in the remote, fly-in Indigenous community of Sandy Lake First Nation and completed Good Learning Anywhere Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council’s First Steps for New Learners program.

Joshane and his wife Faith both completed the program. After getting their four children off to school each morning, they headed to the Contact North | Contact Nord online

learning centre in Sandy Lake. In partnership with Sandy Lake First Nation Ontario Works, students received incentives, such as breakfast and transportation to the online learning centre, to participate in the free online courses.

“It started to help us to be motivated,” said Joshane. He was grateful he could go to the online learning centre and use the computer.

Joshane has experience with post-secondary education. When he completed high school in Sandy Lake First Nation, he enrolled with Canadore College in North Bay, but returned home before completing his program. “I had issues with drugs and alcohol, lost my way for a while,” he shared. He was getting his life back on track when he took the opportunity to take the First Steps for New Learners program, and plans to return to post-secondary studies someday.

Once Joshane completed the First Steps for New Learners program, he got involved at the local elementary school.

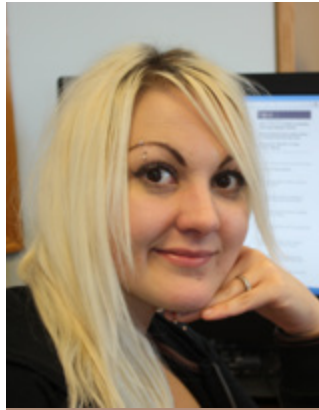
## CRYSTAL FLATT

KENORA

Educational Institution: Loyalist College and Confederation College

Program: Early Childhood Education Distance Diploma and Northern Colleges Collaborative Program in Business Fundamentals Certificate

*“I could work at home, but I love coming to the centre, there are no distractions.”*



Crystal Flatt balances a busy family life and full-time studies. With online learning, she can be available for her two young children and pursue a college diploma at the same time.

“I really wanted to take an Early Childhood Education Diploma program, but they were not offering it in Kenora. I decided to go to Contact North and find out about online programs,” says Crystal. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Kenora, she enrolled in Loyalist College’s Early Childhood Education Distance Diploma program.

“I could work at home, but I love coming to the centre, there are no distractions. Even if the kids are at daycare or school, I get distracted,” she admits.

After completing a busy first year of the program, she decided to switch pathways. Crystal says she just didn’t feel like it was for her, especially with the busyness of raising her own children who were just starting school. With the support of staff at the online learning centre, she switched to the Northern College’s Collaborative Program in Business Fundamentals Certificate.

“I’ve adjusted to the new program,” says Crystal about the live online classes. “When you have questions, the instructors are eager to help.” She has certain days when she goes to the online learning centre in Kenora and connect to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform and other days she connects from her home computer. She appreciates the flexibility; especially when she has a class at 8:30 a.m. and needs to get her kids on the school bus.

Crystal has another seven months to complete the program and is taking the opportunity to research the best home-based business to start after graduation.

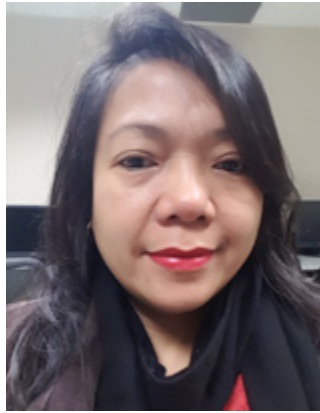
## AMELIA GABRIEL

### ORLÉANS

Educational Institution:  
The LearningHUB and Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council

Programs : Learning to Communicate Using MS Word 2010, Learning to Communicate Using MS Excel and Ready to Work

*“Online courses are enhancing my knowledge.”*



When Amelia Gabriel moved to Ottawa to be close to family, she was inspired to upgrade her skills. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Orléans, she enrolled in The LearningHUB’s Learning to Communicate Using MS Word 2010 and Learning to Communicate Using MS Excel.

She went on to complete 7 courses and then enrolled in Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council’s Ready to Work. This included 17 courses that help students prepare for and succeed in the workplace.

Amelia is a new Canadian citizen and worked in banking and finance in the Philippines and Hong Kong. She arrived in Canada only six years ago and worked in service jobs. “Online courses are enhancing my knowledge,” explains Amelia. “The courses help me in customer service too.”

She finds online courses convenient and can participate in them in the evening. “The Contact North staff stayed in touch with me, and were always asking me if I needed help,” Amelia shares.

After completing the basic skills courses, she decided to pursue a college diploma to help her get a better job. She enrolled in Herzing College’s on-campus Business Administration program.

Amelia is looking forward to graduating in Spring 2019 and finding work at a local business.

## CASSANDRA GEORGE

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution: Quinte Adult Education and Doula Canada

Program: Ontario Secondary School Diploma and Excelled Business Course

*“She appreciates the encouragement offered by staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre.”*



Cassandra George was home with her baby daughter and wanted to complete her Ontario Secondary School Diploma. She reached out to staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge who helped her enrol in Quinte Adult Education’s online Ontario Secondary School Diploma program.

“I found it a lot easier this time, not sure if it was because I’m older but I felt more determined to finish it,” Cassandra explains. She only had electives to complete and liked the course options Quinte Adult Education offered. “I didn’t need my required, just needed electives.” She chose the Aboriginal Beliefs course and Raising Healthy Children course, which helped her decide on a future career path.

Cassandra lives in Chippewas of Rama First Nation and wrote her exams at the library. She appreciates the encouragement offered by staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre, including follow-up calls and e-mails with offers of support and connects with a local librarian and other doulas in her community for support when needed.

She graduated with her Ontario Secondary School Diploma in September 2018 and immediately enrolled in Doula Canada’s online Excelled Business course. She hopes to complete the Doula certification in the near future.

## TRACY GIBBS

### BRANTFORD

Educational Institution: Quinte Adult Education and University of Waterloo

Program: English (University) Grade 12 course, Bachelor of Arts program (Social Development Studies) and Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program

*“Contact North helped me navigate through registering and would regularly check in on me, letting me know they were there to help.”*



When Tracy Gibbs wanted to get a university degree after working in the social services field for 20 years, she went to Contact North | Contact Nord’s Brantford online learning centre for help.

She needed a grade 12 English university level credential to apply for the University of Waterloo’s Bachelor of Arts Degree program. Staff at the helped her to enrol in Quinte

Adult Education’s online English (University) Grade 12 course.

“It was really overwhelming,” shared Tracy. “Contact North helped me navigate through registering and would regularly check in on me, letting me know they were there to help. I felt that I wasn’t in it alone.”

Once she completed her English course, she enrolled in the University of Waterloo online Bachelor of Arts program. She continued to use the services of Contact North | Contact Nord by writing her exams at the online learning centre. She graduated with honours and enrolled in the online Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program at the University of Waterloo, completing the degree in Spring 2018.

“I was taking seven full-time university courses at one time,” Tracy said. “Don’t even know how I did it!” Tracy has three children who are active in sports and time management was pivotal to her success. Her motivation and determination allowed her to accomplish a great deal in a short amount of time.

“I went back to school for the letters, that’s really what I went back for, but the education process has been transformative for me.”

Tracy is enrolled in McMaster University’s on-campus Master of Social Work program and working as a Teaching Assistant.

## CHERYLE GIBSON

BRANTFORD

Educational Institution: GCFLearnFree and Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council

Program: Office Administration Essential Skills, Applied Medical Terminology, Excel 2016 and Word 2016

*“So far I enjoy online studies.”*



Encouragement from her daughter motivated Cheryle Gibson to take an online program to help change jobs. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Brantford, she enrolled in Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council’s online Office Administration Essential Skills course.

Cheryle recently turned 59 and says she is not ready to retire. She hopes to work as long as she can. For the past 30 years, she worked in the healthcare field, assisting people in their homes after surgery. She wants to work in a medical office now and to help her qualify, she enrolled in Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council’s Applied Medical Terminology course.

In 2016, with support from staff at the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre, she completed GCFLearnFree’s Microsoft Office courses and attended three of PARO Centre for Women’s Enterprise: Taxes, Payroll, Filing and Deadlines...Oh My!, The Retirement Community: How to Tap this Resource and Yes Works. Online learning works with her busy schedule.

“So far I enjoy online studies,” she says. “I don’t feel overwhelmed that I am in a race with others around me.” “I take my computer and go work at Chapters. Sit and have a coffee and work on my studies,” she shares.

Cheryle is planning to complete the Applied Medical Terminology course and is currently hoping to be accepted into Niagara College’s online Medical Front Office Assistant Certificate program starting May 2019.

## ELIZABETH HAINES

SHELBURNE

Educational Institution: Gale

Program: Teaching Children with Disabilities and Empowering Students with a Disability

*“I liked doing online learning because I could do it at my own pace and I continued to look for work while I was studying.”*



While Elizabeth Haines was looking for work, she decided to take some courses to help boost her resume. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Shelburne, she enrolled in Gale’s free online courses Teaching Children with Disabilities and Empowering Students with a Disability.

She previously completed the Personal Support Worker diploma; however, her goal was to find work as a Developmental Support Worker close to home.

Elizabeth was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome and a learning disability in elementary school and was reassessed in high school and diagnosed with ADHD. Managing her own illnesses is what motivates her to help others who live with similar challenges.

After her son left for school each morning, Elizabeth went to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Shelburne to work on her courses. She started by reading through the assigned chapters, finishing with an online quiz. There were 12 lessons in each six-week course. “It’s quiet at the online learning centre and I can focus,” she explains.

“I liked doing online learning because I could do it at my own pace and I continued to look for work while I was studying,” said Elizabeth. After completing the courses, she decided getting her social service worker credentials would increase the opportunity for a job in the her chosen field.

Elizabeth completed the two courses and enrolled in Sheridan College’s on-campus Social Service Worker Diploma program.



## MIKAYLA HALPIN

HAILEYBURY

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Business –  
Accounting Diploma

*“Online learning is very convenient.”*



After finding out she was pregnant at the start of her college program, Mikayla Halpin was grateful to easily switch from attending on-campus to the online program. She enrolled in Northern College’s online Business – Accounting Diploma program.

When she started looking at distance learning options, she discovered

Contact North | Contact Nord. She connects to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform from her home computer. “Contact North is very helpful,” she explains. “I would call and they would help right away, even take control of my computer and fix the problem.”

“Online learning is very convenient,” explains Mikayla. “I am able to be with my daughter and if I need to miss a class, I watch the recording later in the evening.” She admits she never actually liked going into a classroom and worked well with attending classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. “We have group projects and will meet up on Facebook and work on shared documents using Google,” says Mikayla.

Mikayla is planning to graduate in spring 2019 and already started to prepare for starting her own beauty business in New Liskeard.

## GERRI HARVEY

HALIBURTON

Educational Institution:  
Smart Serve Ontario

Program: Smart Serve Certificate

*“I did run into a few problems but [Contact North] staff walked me through.”*



Gerri Harvey went to the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Haliburton to explore options for taking an online program.

Staff at the online learning centre worked with her to find study options in the area of restaurant management, including financial aid options.

She decided to start by obtaining her Smart Serve certificate online. “I am not very computer literate, actually just functional,” says Gerri. The Smart Serve certificate consists of online videos, reading and quizzes. It takes approximately four hours to complete the five modules.

Although she has a computer at home, she preferred going to the online learning centre to use the high-speed Internet and computers, with Contact North | Contact Nord staff available to resolve any technical issues that might arise. “I did run into a few problems but staff walked me through,” she says. “I passed with 93%!”

After completing Smart Serve, Gerri is now working as a server in her community and will consider future online programs.

## KIM HOLDER

KINCARDINE

Educational Institution:  
Fanshawe College

Program: Project Management  
Graduate Certificate

*“Coming from a small town,  
I prefer to take programs  
through Contact North so  
I don’t have to move away.”*



Kim Holder works full-time and is enrolled in Fanshawe College’s online Project Management graduate certificate program. She enrolled in the program to help her secure a permanent position.

After graduating from high school, Kim left Kincardine to attend full-time, on-campus programs at the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College in London. She returned home after obtaining her

undergraduate degree and works full-time. She is only offered contract work and wants to find a permanent job.

“Coming from a small town, I prefer to take programs through Contact North so I don’t have to move away. Just more convenient to stay here,” explains Kim. She learned about Contact North | Contact Nord’s online learning centre in Kincardine when she needed to write an exam.

“I did 2 courses each semester. Was intense but I persevered,” said Kim. She dedicates several hours every night and weekends to her coursework. Because the Project Management program is about working collaboratively, Kim learned important communication skills as an online learner. “Finding a schedule that would work for everyone was a challenge,” said Kim. To address this, they use online forums to meet and work together.

When it comes to connecting with her professors, she finds they respond to her e-mails quickly and welcome all her questions.

Kim is planning to graduate in early 2019 and is applying for permanent jobs related to her new skills in the area.

## DANIELLA HOWSON

ORLÉANS

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Educational Support Diploma

*“I need the flexibility of online learning with two young children.”*



Daniella Howson of Orléans experienced a dream come true when she graduated from Confederation College with the Educational Support Diploma. With the support of the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Orléans, she was able to complete the program online; from her home computer, without leaving her community.



“I need the flexibility of online learning with two young children,” explained Daniella. She had a four-year-old and a six-year-old at the time, making for a very busy period in her family life. She worked as a Massage Therapist for six years and wanted a career change that would allow her to work with children. Through exploring the Internet, she found two preferred options: an on-campus Early Childhood Education Diploma program at Algonquin College’s Ottawa campus and the online Educational Support Diploma program offered by Confederation College, based in Thunder Bay. Once she chose an online program, she attended her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform from her home computer and wrote exams at the centre.

“Online learning is better than I thought it would be. Very nice being able to work from home,” said Daniella. “The family had to adjust. We sometimes had to miss out on activities because I had school work, but everyone was supportive.”

She found the instructors in the Educational Support Diploma program were helpful and understanding and she formed supportive relationships with classmates through connecting in chat rooms and working on projects together, despite the distance.

## JADE HULMES

KENORA

Educational Institution: Loyalist College

Program: Early Childhood Education (ECEP)

*“With the support of staff at the online learning centre in Kenora, she learned about the possibility of getting a college diploma.”*



When Jade Hulmes graduated from high school in 2016, she planned to wait a year before finding a college program outside of Kenora. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Kenora, she learned about the possibility of getting a college diploma without leaving home. She enrolled in

Loyalist College’s online Early Childhood Education program that same fall.

Jade wanted to remain home with her family as her father was gravely ill. She knows her career choice is to be an Early Childhood Educator and discovering the online program is the ideal solution.

“I don’t have good Internet at home and did not think I could do an online program,” Jade admits. The Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre is a 20-minute drive from her home, and she completes her course work at the centre 2 days a week.

Using Contact North | Contact Nord’s services, she connects to her course lessons, assignments and class discussion boards on the Loyalist College website. She admits she does not interact much with classmates. Only once did she reach out on the discussion board to get clarification on an assignment days before it was due. In her final semester, she is required to post a daily blog on the discussion board.

She is employed as a non-certified Educational Assistant at the same school as her mother who is also an Educational Assistant. Her aunt is an Early Childhood Educator and Jade receives support from both her mother and aunt.

Jade’s practicum placement is in Kenora and she appreciates the potential for future full-time employment. Jade graduates in December 2018 and is confident about securing employment in Kenora.

## JENNIFER ILES

CLINTON

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Social Service Worker

*“Essentially, it’s just like being in a classroom, but in the comfort of your own home.”*



Through a referral from The Centre for Employment and Training in Goderich, Jennifer Iles worked with staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Clinton to explore options for post-secondary education.

She enrolled in Northern College’s online Social Service Worker program and started in September 2018.

“I wanted to focus on a career rather than just a job,” she explains. Staff at the online learning centre provided information about available online programs and how to register. Jennifer is a single parent raising two children and the only option for attending a college program was online learning.

“It was a really good choice for us,” she says about her program. She participates in her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform from her home computer. “I like interacting with professors and classmates. I like that classes are scheduled, but if you can’t attend, it’s recorded. Essentially, it’s just like being in a classroom, but in the comfort of your own home,” shares Jennifer.

She is attending her first face-to-face weekend lab in which classmates meet in person and is looking forward to building on relationships with classmates she only knows online.

Jennifer found employment in the social services field before completing her program and says it helps with her studies. She is planning to graduate in Spring 2020.

## JOHN IVEY

KENORA

Educational Institution: Confederation College and Algonquin College

Program: Academic and Career Entrance and Commercial Estimating

*“I did very well, achieved honours.”*



Suffering a work injury late in his career, John Ivey found himself looking for retraining. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Kenora, he enrolled in Confederation College’s Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) program.

The ACE program supported him to upgrade his high school credits and qualify to apply for a college program.

“I am good with math, have a natural ability, but the computers were a challenge,” explains John. Once he completed the ACE program, he was ready to enrol in Algonquin College’s part-time, online Commercial Estimating program.

After a long career in construction, he felt the subject matter was not difficult; however, the computer was. When he started the program, he worked at the online learning centre and once he was comfortable using the online platform, he began working from his home computer. If he ran into problems at home, his wife helped.

“I did very well, achieved honours,” shares John. After being out of school for decades, it was a great feeling of accomplishment. “I had deadlines for assignments and needed to be disciplined.”

After some challenges finding work after graduation, John started work as a full-time Construction Estimator with a local construction company in March 2019.

## MELISSA JACKSON

PARRY SOUND

Educational Institution:  
Quinte Adult Education

Program: Ontario Secondary  
School Diploma

*“Melissa is the first person in her family to graduate from high school.”*



With three young children at home, Melissa Jackson wasn't sure she would ever complete her Ontario Secondary School Diploma program. With the support of the Contact North | Contact Nord's online learning centre in Parry Sound and Gezhtoojig Employment and Training in Sudbury, she achieved her goal.

Staff at the online learning centre in Parry Sound helped Melissa enrol in Quinte Adult Education's online Ontario Secondary School Diploma Program. She also received financial incentives from Gezhtoojig Employment and Training for completed lessons.

Melissa lives in Shawanaga First Nation, located 30 kilometres north of Parry Sound. Finding childcare and travelling to Parry Sound were barriers to completing her high school diploma in the past.

“I needed a lot of motivation, but I just put my mind to it and got it done. There were a lot of distractions out there,” Melissa shared. She liked to work at home, as it fit into her busy schedule and she completed two lessons every day.

“I started with the hard courses first, English and Science,” Melissa said. Gezhtoojig Employment and Training provided a local tutor and Melissa frequently took the opportunity to work with the tutor. She was very determined and did not hesitate to message her teachers for further explanations as well. She also received encouragement from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Parry Sound. This support helped her achieve As in all her courses.

Melissa is the first person in her family to graduate from high school. Her future plans include enrolling in a college program to apply for work in an Indigenous community.



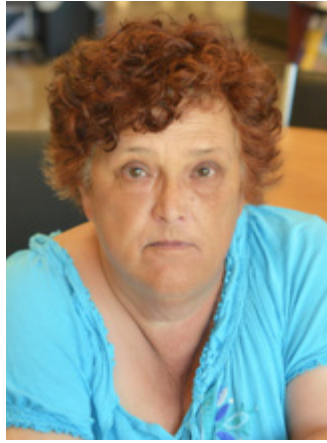
## GAYNOR JONES

BRANTFORD

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Law Clerk Diploma

*“I wasn’t nervous about online learning, actually looked forward to working from home.”*



Gaynor Jones decided to enrol in Northern College’s online Law Clerk Diploma program when she did not have reliable transportation to drive to a college campus. Gaynor lives in Brantford and received support from the Ontario Government’s Second Career program.

“I wasn’t nervous about online learning, actually looked forward to working

from home,” said Gaynor. She participated in all her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform, which she accessed from her home computer. If she encountered any technical problems, she did not hesitate to call the Contact North | Contact Nord Technical Support Hotline.

“When I worked from home, I would have a few hours to do other things,” she explained. Her elderly father was ill at the time and she visited him daily in the local hospital. It was a stressful time for her family and she was grateful for the flexibility of online learning.

The distance between classmates did not hinder them from forming a supportive group. In fact, Gaynor started a Facebook group called Law Clerk Students of the North, which they continue to use after graduation. They shared encouraging posts or provided information helpful to their studies.

Gaynor completed her diploma program with a 3.8 Grade Point Average. Buoyed by her accomplishment, she was grateful for the opportunity at 55 years of age to gain credentials for working in an area she is passionate about. She also intends to continue taking courses online.

## JANALEE JOUDOIN

RED LAKE

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Business Administration -  
Human Resources Diploma Program

*“You can work, have a family and continue your education online.”*



When the opportunity presented for Janalee Joudoin to go back to school, she sought assistance from staff at the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Red Lake. She was working full-time and had 5 kids at home. She decided to enrol in Confederation College’s Business Administration – Human Resources Diploma program.

“You can work, have a family and continue your education online,” explained Janalee. She attended classes using Contact North | Contact Nord web conferencing platform.

“It takes willpower to not go outside when it’s a beautiful day,” said Janalee about the self-discipline required for online learning. She often worked in a separate room in her house while the rest of her family watched television in the living room.

“Online learning – in some ways it was easier, in some ways it was harder,” she said. Although it was not possible to meet up with classmates to work on projects, they used the web conferencing platform or Skype to connect with each other.

“All the instructors I dealt with were understanding when I told them ‘listen, I’m having a hard time.’ They were very, very understanding.” In addition to having great professors, her family was extremely supportive of what she was trying to accomplish.

Janalee graduated in 2015 and continues in her role at the local emergency shelter.

## TOLU KELLY

ST. THOMAS

Educational Institution: Collège Boréal  
and Laurentian University

Program: French as a Second  
Language and Master of Science  
in Nursing - Primary Care  
Nurse Practitioner

*“With technology today you  
can do anything online.”*



When Tolu Kelly was attending Laurentian University on-campus for her undergraduate degree in nursing, she also wanted to learn French as a second language online. With the support of staff at Contact North | Contact North online learning centre in Sudbury, she enrolled in Collège Boréal’s online French As a Second Language program.

“With technology today you can do anything online,” says Tolu. The online program included the opportunity to hear instructors and students practice their vocabulary by taking turns speaking.

Tolu returned to her hometown of Parry Sound after graduating from Laurentian University’s Bachelor of Nursing program and started working. However, she soon decided to enrol in Laurentian University’s Master of Science in Nursing – Primary Care Nurse Practitioner program. The program uses a hybrid model that requires students to attend some in-class sessions but is primarily distance learning.

“It will take three years, part-time to complete,” explains Tolu. “I developed a plan to go into the St. Thomas online learning centre to work on my studies Monday to Friday as if I were in regular school.” She works on the weekends at the local hospital or long-term care home, and in the summer, works as a rural outpost nurse in Moosonee and Moose Factory. Tolu lived in Parry Sound, Sudbury, Moosonee and now London, and each time she found a Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in the community.

She is planning to graduate in 2019 and wants to find work as a Primary Care Nurse in a community on the James Bay Coast.

## AFSHEEN KHALIL

ST. THOMAS

Educational Institution: Quinte Adult Education and Fanshawe College

Program: Mathematics for College Technology (College) Grade 12, English (Workplace) Grade 12 course, and Business - Accounting

*“The instructors reply to e-mails within 48 hours and we have a discussion board.”*



Moving to Ontario from British Columbia signaled a time to change careers for Afsheen Khalil. With a referral from the Goodwill Career Centre in London to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in St. Thomas, Afsheen received support in exploring online college programs.

Afsheen earned an Early Childhood Education Diploma while living in British Columbia, operated a daycare for many years and graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce Degree from the University of Karachi before immigrating to Canada.

With support from Contact North | Contact Nord staff, she enrolled in Quinte Adult Education’s Mathematics for College Technology (College) Grade 12 course and English (Workplace) Grade 12 course. These courses are recommended for entry to Fanshawe College’s Computer Analyst program.

“I worked in the library,” she says. “It was out of the house and quiet.” When she had questions about her coursework, she sought out a neighbour who was good at math.

After completing the required Mathematics and English courses, she enrolled in Fanshawe College’s Computer Analyst program. However, after the first term, she decided it was not a good fit and switched to the online Business - Accounting program.

“The instructors reply to e-mails within 48 hours and we have a discussion board,” Afsheen explains. “We also work on group projects in some of the courses.”

Afsheen is pleased with her final choice and plans to graduate with her Business - Accounting diploma in 2020.

## LIZ KILPATRICK

MADOC

Educational Institution: Quinte Adult Education and Native Education and Training College

Program: Grade 11 Biology (College) and Recreation Therapy

*“Liz is in regular contact with staff at Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre.”*



With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Madoc, Liz Kilpatrick achieved a number of educational goals. When she needed the prerequisite of a Grade 11 Biology credit to apply to the Personal Support Worker program, staff helped her enrol with Quinte Adult Education’s online course.

Liz is in regular contact with staff at Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre and was alerted about the opportunity to enrol in Loyalist College’s Personal Support Worker program offered in her community of Marmora.

She graduated from the Personal Support Worker program and once employed in her community, she reached out to the online learning centre in Madoc again for additional programs related to her field. They helped her enrol in Native Education and Training College’s online Recreation Therapy program. Her employer promoted her to the new position while she completed the program.

Taking online classes, working full-time and parenting teenagers while her husband travels is challenging. “I kick everyone out of the house,” she jokes. “I will give away a shift and spend the day working,” she says about getting time to do school work.

She also works in a supportive environment where professional development is promoted.

Liz plans to graduate in August 2019.

## KERRI KING

BRANTFORD

Educational Institution:  
McMaster University

Program: Human Resources  
Management

*“I found online learning  
really suited my needs.”*



When Kerri King wanted a career change after the birth of her first child, she searched for an online program. She decided to enrol in McMaster University’s Human Resources Management program.

“I found online learning really suited my needs,” says Kerri. “I’m a very self-driven person, particularly when it comes to grades. Flexibility was key for me, as I ended up having three sons as I completed my program.”

Kerri lives in Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation and needed to be home with her young family. She likes mobile apps since she participated in required weekly discussions while caring for her children. She wrote her exams at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation.

“We had weekly discussions in which we had to post our position on the subject matter and then reply to at least two of our classmate’s posts. It created great discussions and strengthened our ability to learn,” says Kerri. Even though classmates were at a distance, the discussion board helped get to know each other.

Kerri graduated in August of 2018 and is now the Human Resource Manager for her community.

## JESS KLEIN

WOODSTOCK

Educational Institution: Lakehead  
District School Board – Adult  
Education Centre

Program: Ontario Secondary  
School Diploma

*“Contact North is helping me  
reach my goals!”*



Jess Klein has her sights set on a college diploma in Recreation Therapy; however, she needs Canadian high school credits to apply. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Woodstock, she enrolled in Lakehead District School Board – Adult Education Centre’s online Ontario Secondary School Diploma.



As she completed her schooling in China before coming to Canada over 10 years ago, Jess had to complete a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) of her prior education and then four high school courses. This was her first time studying in English.

Although Lakehead District School Board is located in Thunder Bay, over 1,000 kilometres away, she can write her exams closer to home at the online learning centre in Woodstock.

“I knew I wanted to do online and want to do the college program online too,” she says. Independent study works best for Jess since she is more comfortable reading English and can take the opportunity to re-read her homework to understand.

Jess has two young children and also works full-time at a local manufacturing plant. She finds the best time to work on her studies is over the weekend when her husband takes the kids outside. Her long-term goal is to work in a long-term care facility.

“Contact North is helping me reach my goals!” she says.

Jess is planning to graduate in Spring 2019 and plans to explore online Recreation Therapy programs.

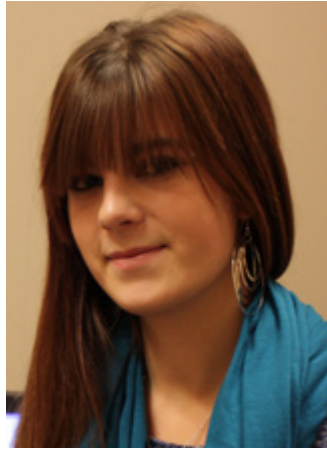
## SARAH LAFLEUR

SOUTH PORCUPINE

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Law Clerk

*“As a single mother of a toddler, she appreciated the ability to listen to the recorded lecture in the web conferencing platform.”*



Sarah Lafleur enrolled in Northern College’s Law Clerk program knowing it was fully online. She attended her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform at its online learning centre in South Porcupine.

There were only two students participating in this program from the South Porcupine online learning centre where they were given a large office in which to work. She spread out her

books and put up post it notes around the desk. “I would treat it like my own office,” says Sarah. She had a good routine of dropping her son at daycare and proceeding to the online learning centre four days a week. She attended classes at the scheduled time and used the other parts of her day to complete her assignments at the centre.

As a single mother of a toddler, she appreciated the ability to listen to the recorded lecture in the web conferencing platform when she missed a class. If she was in need of a quick answer or collaborating on assignments, she connected to classmates around the province on a group Facebook page.

Sarah graduated in Spring 2015 and found a job in the financial sector.



## BRENDA LASLO

CORNWALL

Educational Institution:  
Fanshawe College

Program: Food Service Worker

*“Staff at the online learning centre made all the arrangements for writing the exam.”*



At a job fair in Cornwall, Brenda Laslo learned about the services of Contact North | Contact Nord in her community. She was enrolled in Fanshawe College’s online Food Service Worker program and needed Contact North | Contact Nord’s exam proctoring services.

Brenda worked as a nurse in Alberta and she and her husband moved to Cornwall, Ontario to semi-retire. After not working for several years, she decided to look for part-time work and needed Ontario credentials. The Food Service Worker certificate allowed her to work at a local long-term care facility.

“I found the program easy, just a lot of assignments to complete,” she explains. “I needed to be disciplined.” Brenda only took one course at a time and when she was employed in the field, she started doing two at a time.

“Staff at the online learning centre made all the arrangements for writing the exam,” shares Brenda. She liked the flexibility and convenience of writing her exams at the local online learning centre in Cornwall.

“Finding a job was challenging in Cornwall,” she explains. In a predominately bilingual community, working in the service sector required fluency in both official languages, which she was not. However, she found a part-time job in a long-term care facility in which she was also able to complete her placement.

Brenda graduated with her Food Service Worker certificate and is working part-time at a long-term care facility in Cornwall.

## MARK LEBLANC

SOUTH PORCUPINE

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Northern Colleges  
Collaboration Program (NCCP):  
Business Fundamentals

*“I like the class being recorded, I can listen if I miss something.”*



At the age of 50 years old, Mark Leblanc decided to make a career change. He worked as a pipefitter for a paper mill in Kapuskasing and wanted to get out of the trades and into a business environment.

He enrolled in Northern College’s Northern Colleges Collaboration Program (NCCP): Business Fundamentals program at the South Porcupine campus. The program is blended delivery, both in-class and online.

For the online courses, he connects to his classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform.

“I use my own laptop and work in the college library with classmates,” explains Mark. “I like the class being recorded, I can listen if I miss something.”

Mark is excited about returning to school. “My grades are good and will see what doors open for me,” he says. “I have another fifteen years to work.”

Mark is in the second semester and considering the university bridging option recently available through a partnership between Northern College and Algoma University.

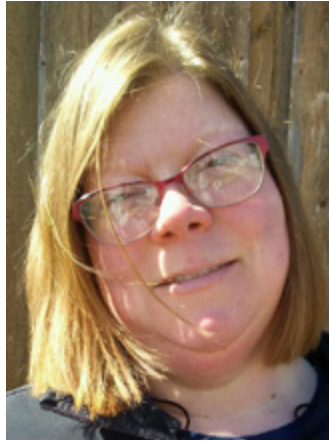
## KENDA LINDSAY

ELLIOT LAKE

Educational Institution:  
Conestoga College

Program: Bookkeeper

*“I work 8 ½ hours a day in a retail environment and online courses are best for me.”*



Kenda Lindsay knew about Contact North | Contact Nord because she worked at the online learning centre in Espanola over ten years ago. With support from staff at Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Elliot Lake, she enrolled in Conestoga College’s online Bookkeeping (part-time) program.

“This has worked out really well for me,” she says. She chose Conestoga College because she plans to transfer credits from an earlier enrolment in the program. In fact, Conestoga College recommended Contact North | Contact Nord for assistance and support with their online program.

“I work 8 ½ hours a day in a retail environment and online courses are best for me,” she explains. “I get the modules, do the assignments at home and do my exams at the Contact North online learning centre.” She gets up early in the morning to do coursework and also studies on the weekends for two to three hours. “It’s a good program. The instructors are awesome,” she says.

Getting her Bookkeeping certificate is part of Kenda’s retirement plan. “I can do bookkeeping at home or get an office job,” she says.

Kenda is planning to graduate in 2020.

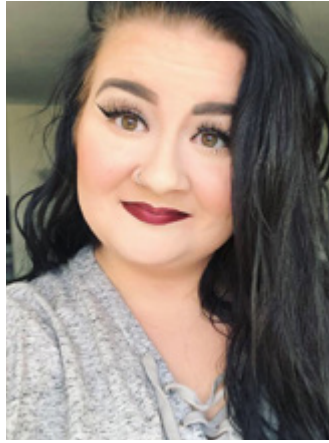
## HANNAH LOUZON

GEORGINA AND WINDSOR

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Business –  
Human Resources

*“It is just the same as if I  
were in a classroom.”*



While living in the north end of Toronto, Hannah Louzon decided she wanted to take her post-secondary studies online. She knew she was living in Toronto temporarily and wanted the flexibility to continue her studies wherever she lived.

She enrolled in Confederation College’s online Business – Human Resources program and discovered the support and services of Contact North | Contact Nord. “All my classes are online, live,” she says. “It is just the same as if I were in a classroom.” Hannah connects to her class from her home computer using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. She also uses the web conferencing platform for connecting with classmates on group projects.

“There are no other students close to me, actually never met anyone in person,” she explains. They also use the group chat feature in the web conferencing platform during her classes and she feels confident about getting what she needs to succeed in her program.

She writes tests and exams at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Georgina, until recently when she moved to Windsor. She is continuing with her studies with no disruption. She found the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Windsor and loves the flexibility and mobility of online learning.

Hannah is completing her second semester and planning to graduate in Summer 2020.

## AMANDA LUPIEN

DRYDEN

Educational Institution: Confederation College, University of Toronto and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Program: Personal Support Worker, Understanding Indigenous Perspectives and Mental Health and Addictions 101

*“It was a very interactive classroom, including doing group work with classmates in other locations.”*



Amanda Lupien takes full advantage of online learning and the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Dryden. A number of years ago, she returned home from the Confederation College campus in Thunder Bay to finish her Business – Accounting Diploma online from their Dryden satellite campus.

She connected to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform at the online learning centre in Dryden.

After working for 10 years in accounting, she wanted a career change. Once again with Contact North | Contact Nord’s support, she enrolled in Confederation College’s online Personal Support Worker program.

“The classes were delivered by video conference,” explains Amanda. “It was a very interactive classroom, including doing group work with classmates in other locations.”

Having graduated with her Personal Support Worker credential and now working full-time in the field, Amanda continues to take online courses to “beef up” her resume with additional certifications and develop advanced skills. She completed University of Toronto’s six module online program, Understanding Indigenous Perspectives. She is now enrolled in the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health’s online Mental Health and Addictions 101 series of online courses.

“I watch the videos on my tablet or on a phone,” she says about the ease of online learning.

Amanda loves her work and plans to continue taking courses online for professional development and personal interest.

## BARBARA LYLE

MADOC AND COBOURG

Educational Institution: Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council, PARO Centre for Women’s Enterprise and The LearningHUB

Program: Introduction to Online Learning

*“I wanted to upgrade my computer skills and figure out ways to make some money.”*



When Barbara Lyle’s husband was ill and passed away, she returned to school. At 61 years of age, she finally completed her high school diploma and also discovered the vast number of online courses she could take. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Madoc, she enrolled in Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy

Council’s online Introduction to Online Learning course.

“I wanted to upgrade my computer skills and figure out ways to make some money,” she explains. “Not a lot of work out there for 60-year-old women.” Unfortunately, she never was able to find a job, however, continued with online courses.

Barbara managed many life challenges. She supported family members with both physical and mental health challenges and spent 20 years caring for her daughter who was mentally and physically challenged due to an accident as a teenager. Then caring for her disabled husband before he passed.

Due to financial challenges, she moved between Havelock, Bowmanville and Port Hope but she appreciates being able to connect with staff at the online learning centres in those communities. She herself dealt with serious health issues and continued taking online courses. Without Internet at home, she used the computers and high-speed Internet available at the online learning centres.

Barbara completed 20 LearningHUB courses, 25 PARO Centre for Women’s Enterprise courses and 10 Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council courses and received their Lois Gray Award for Achievement.

At 68 years of age now, Barbara is not looking for work but enjoying the opportunity to go into the local online learning centre and connect to online courses.

## TERESA LYN

GEORGINA

Educational Institution:  
Durham College

Program: Social Service Worker

*“I dedicate my time to go to the centre, there is lots of support there.”*



Teresa Lyn was pleased to find a college program that suits her learning preferences. With a referral from Job Skills in Newmarket to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Georgina, she received assistance to find a suitable online program. Teresa enrolled in Durham College’s online Social Service Worker program.



She attended college after high school; however, did not complete her program. Now, as the 32-year-old mother of a toddler, she is committed to her education.

She works on her assignments during the day at the online learning centre in Georgina and focus her attention on her daughter in the evening. “I dedicate my time to go to the centre, there is lots of support there,” she says. She is able to use the computers and high-speed Internet. “Staff are very encouraging.”

She says it requires discipline to stay on track. “I schedule my time and do the weekly assignments,” explains Teresa. Her contact with instructors and classmates is through an online discussion board and occasional Google Hangout sessions.

Teresa is completing the three placements required in the program in her own community and making valuable connections.

She plans to graduate in December 2019 and hopes to find a permanent position in her community.

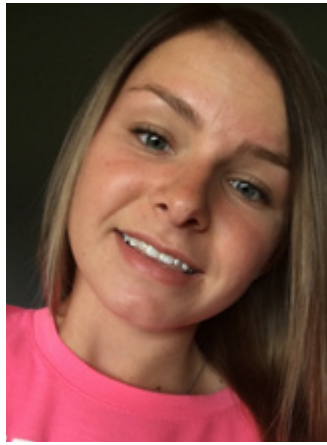
## SIERRA MARKLE

### BRANTFORD

Educational Institution:  
Algonquin College

Program: Office Administration -  
General Certificate

*“Glad I found  
Contact North.”*



Sierra Markle wanted to keep working part-time and get a post-secondary education. She began searching the Internet for an online program and enrolled in Algonquin College’s online Office Administration – General Certificate program.

When she had to write her first exam, she was referred to the

Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Brantford. “Glad I found Contact North,” says Sierra. “I had to write three exams in the first semester and four exams in the second semester.”

She also discovered the staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre were knowledgeable about invigilating exams and encouraging, sending positive e-mails as she moved through the program.

She mapped out assignments on her calendar and dedicated certain days and time to her homework. “I had to be really disciplined,” she says. In addition to the weekly assignments, students participated in a discussion board. Her mother, who has experience in office administration, was also a great resource.

Sierra graduated in January 2019 and was offered a job in February.



## JUDY MARTIN

COCHRANE

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Social Service  
Worker Diploma

*“I never did online classes before and wasn’t sure what I would need but everything fell into place.”*



Having a Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in her community made a significant difference to Judy Martin of Cochrane. Judy completed her Social Services Worker Diploma program from Northern College in 2017.

Without a driver’s license, she could walk to the online learning centre only a block and a half away from where she lives. Originally from Attawapiskat, she moved to Cochrane with her husband and daughter. Judy suffers from Lupus and once she was feeling stronger, she decided to return to school. This wasn’t the first experience with post-secondary education; she earned credentials from Lakehead University as a Native Language Instructor.

Learning more about the social service field from family and friends, she decided to pursue the online Social Services Worker Diploma program. She did not want to uproot herself or her family and wondered about the possibility of an online program. A friend completed the same program online and shared how easy online learning was and the support she received from Contact North | Contact Nord.

“I never did online classes before and wasn’t sure what I would need but everything fell into place,” Judy explained. Judy attended her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform on computers at the online learning centre. She found working at the online learning centre during the week to be important for keeping a routine. “It was very welcoming at the centre,” she shared. However, she also appreciated the classes were recorded and she later listened to the lectures when she was unable to attend.

Her classmates started a Facebook group to help support and encourage each other throughout the program. They also had the opportunity to meet in person at the two weekend labs held at Northern College’s South Porcupine campus.

After graduating in May 2018, she secured a job in the social services sector in Cochrane.

## RAVEN MARTIN

COCHRANE

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Developmental Service  
Worker Diploma

*“Raven had two small children at the time and required the flexibility of online learning.”*



Raven Martin’s dream was to work with children when she returned to Cochrane from Southern Ontario to be close to family. She found employment at the District School Board Ontario North East working with special needs children.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Cochrane, she enrolled in Northern

College’s online Developmental Service Worker diploma program.

Raven attend classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform at the online learning centre, or when necessary, from her home computer. Raven had two small children at the time and required the flexibility of online learning.

“I took my studies very seriously and worked at it like it was a full-time job,” said Raven. “It was easy to connect with Northern College’s professors at a distance and other students who I worked with on projects.”

“We would Skype on our own time,” explained Raven. “I had classmates in Barrie, Parry Sound, really all across the province. We also used Facebook to communicate as well.”

She graduated in April 2013 and was immediately offered a part-time job at the Ininev Friendship Centre in Cochrane working with pre-school children. The diploma and job experience eventually lead to a promotion to a full-time position working as the Program Coordinator for the Healthy Kids Program where she still works today.

## JOY MCENTEE

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution:  
Algonquin College

Program: Property Management  
Foundations Diploma

*“I wanted to make sure I could get funding and it was creditable. Contact North helped me with that.”*



Joy McEntee appreciated the assistance she received from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge, including help with study options for available online programs to improve her skills for operating a business in concierge services. Joy enrolled in Algonquin College’s Property Management Foundations Diploma program.

“It’s common knowledge that there are online courses out there. I wanted to make sure I could get funding and it was creditable. Contact North | Contact Nord helped me with that,” said Joy. Her teenage daughter took an online course and Joy wanted to get the same flexibility in her courses because of her busy schedule.

Joy took the opportunity to stagger the start time of her courses to avoid an overcommitted schedule. She started the first course in September, followed by others in November, December and January. All of her assignments and tests were completed online, on her home computer, and she connected with classmates through an online discussion board.

When the Algonquin College online course in Landlord and Tenant Law was not offered at a convenient time for her, she enrolled in Durham College’s online Landlord and Tenant Law course.

After 20 years in the hotel and hospitality industry, she combined her previous job skills with those she learned in the Property Management Foundations Diploma program to start her own business.

Judy graduated in April 2017 and continues to operate her business in Huntsville.

## GAIL MULLER

ST. CATHARINES

Educational Institution: Lynda.com

Program: Word Essential Training  
(Office 365) and Word Quick Tips

*“I could work at my own pace. I am retired and I did the course over several months.”*



Gail Muller, recently retired after a career as a bookkeeper for 30 years, wanted to brush up on her Microsoft Word and Excel skills to help find a part-time job. With a referral from the YMCA Employment Centre in St. Catharines to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in St. Catharines, she received assistance to enrol in Lynda.com’s online courses.



“It’s all video. You can start and stop as you need to take notes,” she explains. “It’s a very good course.” The course also allowed her to print a copy of the video script and work on the suggested exercises until she felt comfortable navigating the online system.

“I could work at my own pace. I am retired and I did the course over several months,” she says. Gail was looking for part-time casual work, nothing with too much stress. She knew the Microsoft Office software she used in the past was out-of-date and wanted to get familiar with the newer version.

“I had no idea there were so many courses available,” she says.

Gail completed two courses and found the perfect job in her community using her Microsoft Office skills.

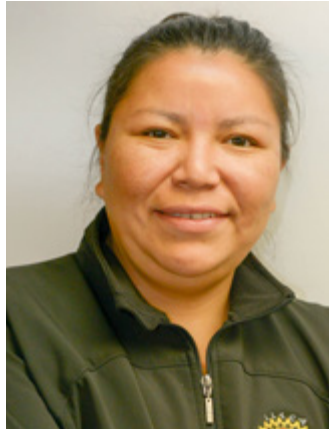
## PETULA NEEGAN

HEARST

Educational Institution: Anishinabek Educational Institute

Program: Native Early Childhood Education Diploma

*“I thought I would have to travel, but found out about Contact North and online learning.”*



When Petula Neegan started working at the daycare centre in Constance Lake First Nation, she needed her Early Childhood Education credential. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Hearst, she enrolled in Anishinabek Educational Institute’s online

Native Early Childhood Education program.

“I thought I would have to travel, but found out about Contact North and online learning,” said Petula. She wasn’t so sure about online learning, but soon discovered the flexibility and convenience. She found the online learning centre in Hearst to be a quiet place to work and connect to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. She also wrote her exams at the centre.

“At first, I thought I would have problems doing online courses, like what if the teacher doesn’t see us because we are not there and doesn’t give us attention?” Petula explains. “The professors were very supportive and I could see everyone in the classroom and they could see me too.”

While completing her program, she worked at the daycare centre in Constance Lake First Nation and appreciated the support she received from her supervisor and colleagues.

Petula graduated in April 2016 and obtained work in the child welfare field.

## JONATHAN NELSON

KENORA

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: College Access Certificate  
and Native Child and Family Services

*“I didn’t think I would get this far in school.”*



Jonathan Nelson followed his sister to Kenora to pursue a college program. He enrolled in Confederation College’s College Access Certificate to prepare to start a post-secondary diploma.

“The hardest part has been to leave my family and community,” he says. He grew up in Wabaseemoong (Whitedog) First Nation, an hour drive away from Kenora. What

he likes about taking his classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform, at the online learning centre located on the Confederation College Kenora campus, is the small group of classmates. “I like that it is a quiet place to study,” he says.

Jonathan is comfortable with the technology and being at a distance from teachers. When he needs support, he reaches out to staff at the online learning centre.

In September 2015, Jonathan enrolled in Confederation College’s Native Child and Family Service program. The challenge is balancing school and work. He works part-time, which can mean a late night before a long day of classes and homework. However, the lectures are recorded and he can listen at a convenient time for him.

“I didn’t think I would get this far in school,” he admits. “But my good marks gave me confidence to keep going.”

Jonathan graduated in 2015 and is working in the field in his community.

## CRAIG NEUFELD

DRYDEN

Educational Institution: Gale Courses and Seven Generations Educational Institute

Program: Certificate in Gerontology and Personal Support Worker

*“Quite surprised I am doing this.”*



Craig Neufeld retired after 36 years working as a truck driver and decided he wanted to work with the elderly. “I wanted to be a paramedic when I was younger,” says Craig. He worked as a Red Cross volunteer driver for the past six years, taking elderly clients to appointments, sometimes several hours drive away.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Dryden, Craig enrolled in Gale Courses’ online Certificate in Gerontology. He started by working from the online learning centre and eventually bought a laptop so he could work on his courses at home. After completing each module, he wrote an online test.

When Craig went looking for a job, he found employers wanted the credentials of a personal support worker. After attending a job fair in Dryden and learning about Seven Generations Educational Institute’s on-campus Personal Support Worker certificate, he enrolled and started January 2019.

“Quite surprised I am doing this,” says Craig. At the age of 56, he wants to make a difference in his community. “It is a lot of work, an intense program,” he explains. He is the oldest and the only male in his class, but he is enjoying.

Craig is entering the second semester of the program and looking forward to the practical experience. He is hopeful about finding work since there is a high demand for personal support workers.

## GAIL ORR

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution: OASIS Skill Building, PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise and St. Lawrence College

Program: Bookkeeping Certificate

*"Lifelong learning is important to Gail."*



Lifelong learning is important to Gail Orr and she started taking online courses from her home in Huntsville in 2004.

In 2009, with the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge, she enrolled in OASIS Skill Building's QuickBooks's courses. Then in 2013, when she retired as a licensed electrician, she enrolled in St. Lawrence College's online Bookkeeping Certificate

program as she decided to start a home-based bookkeeping business.

Over the next four years, she plugged away at her courses. She worked through the course textbook and submitted weekly assignments to the instructor. Students participate in a discussion board which she says was helpful. "The other students came up with other ideas and solutions and that's always interesting."

To help her prepare and run her business, she enrolled in 60 different PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise free online lunch-hour sessions while working on her bookkeeping certificate. Sessions such as Taking the Leap: Business Growth Success and Social Media and Your Business: An Introduction to Twitter was helpful and motivating.

Gail graduated in December 2017 with her Bookkeeping Certificate and is now focused on operating small business.



## KAREN OSTER

FORT FRANCES

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Office Administration –  
General

*“I didn’t think I would be doing as well as I am but I’m getting really good grades.”*



When Karen Oster experienced a serious work injury forcing her to change careers, she decided to return to school. She learned about Confederation College’s Office Administration General program in the local Fort Frances newspaper. She headed to the campus and enrolled in January 2015.

She was making a significant career change as she is a licensed carpenter, and held the position of Head of Maintenance at Ge-Da-Gi-Binez Youth Centre in Fort Frances for six years.

“I didn’t realize that it was online classes through Contact North,” admits Karen. “It was a strange adjustment but I got used to online learning.”

It didn’t take long to get comfortable with online learning and connecting to classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. “I don’t even know what a few of my teachers look like,” Karen explains. “I didn’t think I would be doing as well as I am but I’m getting really good grades.”

At first, Karen was intimidated by the new technology and not having an instructor in front of her to ask questions. However, she finds the text chat feature works well. “It’s the same as being with a teacher,” she explains.

Karen graduated in August 2015 and is now working at a local business.

## JONATHAN PAQUIN

HAILEYBURY

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Northern Colleges  
Collaborative Program in Business  
Fundamentals Certificate

*“Technology, video  
conferences, learning on the  
web, this is the future.”*



Giving up his career as head mechanic in his home town of Earlton due to health issues was devastating for Jonathan Paquin. However, he discovered a new career in accounting through Northern Colleges' Collaborative Program (NCCP) in Business Fundamentals Certificate.

After a serious accident damaged his knees, doctors instructed him to seek a new career that did not require long periods of standing. After exploring his career options, he settled on accounting. Jonathan's neighbour runs a small accounting business and he decided it was a career he might enjoy.

With the support of the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Haileybury, he registered for the three-year diploma program and attends his classes using Contact North | Contact Nord's web conferencing platform.

This was not the first time he attended college. He graduated from Canadore College's Automotive Service Technician program with a trade certificate. Jonathan admitted he was not very tech-savvy and was not good at typing when he first started the program, but he did improve during his first year.

"I have a lot of doctor's appointments," he explained. "It's better online because I can watch the recording later." When he started the program, he was overwhelmed with all the technology he needed to learn but staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre helped ease him into online learning.

"Technology, videoconferences, learning on the web, this is the future. Time for me to get on the band wagon," he said about his experience with online learning.

## JANETH PASCO

MOOSONEE

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Social Services Worker

*“I never miss a class, but I do like being able to review the recording of the lecture.”*



Janeth Pasco came to Canada from the Philippines in 2006 and after living in Toronto for four years, she moved to Moosonee. She worked as a registered nurse in the Philippines, but worked in social services since her arrival in Canada.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online

learning centre in Moosonee, she enrolled in Northern College’s online Social Service Worker program. She wanted to acquire her social work credentials and improve her job prospects.

Janeth has a young daughter, works full-time and did not want to leave Moosonee. “This is my first time with online learning,” she explains. “I like it so much.” Her employer was very supportive and has accommodated her schedule. “I never miss a class, but I do like being able to review the recording of the lecture,” she says.

Despite living in a remote community, she pursued her education goals, including completing her required placement in Moosonee.

Janeth is planning to graduate in May 2019 after completing her placement and is starting a new job in Moosonee with the Cochrane Temiskaming Resource Centre.

## CORRINE PATCHETT

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution: Fleming College

Program: Office Administration Diploma

*“Corinne wished she had known how easy it was to obtain a college certificate online.”*



Corrine Patchett decided to change careers after taking a 4-month break from work to heal from a physical injury. With the help of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge, she learned about and enrolled in Fleming College’s online Office Administration program.



“I was unsure about online learning,” admitted Corrine. It was decades since she attended school and had little experience with technology. She worked as a waitress for many years and wanted an office job.

She received support from the Ontario Government’s Second Career program and treated her studies like a job. “For online learning you have to treat it like a job to keep on track. I would go to the centre and focus on school for 4 or 5 hours and then go home,” she explained.

When it came to group projects, a challenging aspect of online learning, she connected and worked with like-minded students. They were efficient and productive by using WhatsApp, a smartphone application for communicating by using text. They organized conference calls, shared information and supported each other through their studies.

Corrine said the experience pushed her to find solutions, whether seeking support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre, on the Internet, or from family members.

Although a challenge to adjust when she started the program, Corinne wished she had known how easy it was to obtain a college certificate online. She plans to continue taking online courses.

## REBECCA PILLIPOW

KENORA

Educational Institution: Confederation College and Lakehead University

Program: Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree

*“We attended classes through videoconference...it was still fairly interactive.”*



Rebecca Pillipow learned about her acceptance to Lakehead University’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree program when she was volunteering in Nepal. Although she was also accepted at the University of Ottawa, she wanted to study online and stay home in Kenora.

Lakehead’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree program is a 4-year program in collaboration with Confederation College. Only offered every 4 years, this was a unique opportunity for her to live with her parents and save money for her other passion, travel.

She was familiar with online learning and Contact North | Contact Nord as she completed Confederation College’s online Pre-Health Sciences Certificate the year before. Rebecca shared that learning online is not always easy, requires discipline, but it is definitely rewarding.

“We attended classes through videoconference,” explained Rebecca. “It was still fairly interactive. We also had a Facebook group and connected that way. We never felt that we didn’t know who we were talking with.”

Although the Lakehead University library and on-campus resources were not available, instructors did make many of the resources available online. Rebecca found other benefits to studying in her home community. “It was nice having a small class size because our instructors knew who we were versus being unknown in a large lecture hall.”

They also had smaller groups for the clinical work which meant they had more time to practice. She did her practical work in local Kenora organizations such as the seniors’ nursing home, hospital and mental health clinic.

Rebecca is taking her nursing expertise to developing countries to help those in need.

## JEANNETTE PITAWANAKWAT

WIKWEMIKONG FIRST NATION

Educational Institution: Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute

Program: Business Diploma

*“Contact North allowed me to take my classes from my home laptop.”*



After being involved in a car accident, Jeannette Pitawanakwat of Wikwemikong First Nation thought her dreams of completing her Business Diploma program from Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute were dashed. However, with the support of Contact North | Contact Nord and the online learning centre in Wikwemikong, she completed her studies and reached her goal.

Jeannette was forced to spend four months in a wheelchair as her hip and hand healed. “I was just about to do exams when the accident happened and I thought I wouldn’t be able to finish my Diploma,” recalls Jeannette. “Contact North allowed me to take my classes from my home laptop.”

She found it challenging being restricted to a wheelchair for 12 weeks but grateful she could focus on completing her studies at the same time. If she had any issues with the technology, she just called the Contact North | Contact Nord Technical Support Hotline, which operates from 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., five days a week, and a Technical Support Specialist helped her resolve any issues she experienced.

Taking the Business Diploma program was a way to switch careers since she worked 12 years as a nurse. Her long-term dream is to start her own business.

“I would work from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every day and once I was able to walk, I would attend my classes at the Wikwemikong online learning centre.”

Jeannette not only overcame the physical challenge of recovery but she received an award for academic achievement. “Online learning is beneficial especially for those struggling. I was still able to succeed and achieve my goals. It’s possible through online learning!”

## GORDON POLLARD

DRYDEN

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Pre-Health  
Sciences – Pathway to Certificates and  
Diplomas and Paramedic

*“I had great instructors, some that I will never forget and a big reason why I remained in this area to do my diploma.”*



After travelling across Canada and returning home to Dryden, Gordon Pollard received support from the Ontario Government’s Second Career program to enrol in Confederation College’s Paramedic program.

Gordon prepared by enrolling in Confederation College’s Pre-Health Sciences certificate program to get him up to speed in high school English, Chemistry, and Biology,

and prepare him for the intensity of the 2-year Paramedic program. “I had great instructors, some that I will never forget and a big reason why I remained in this area to do my diploma. I could have gone to Thunder Bay or Kenora and lived on my own, but I would much rather be here.”

Using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform at the online learning centre in Dryden, Gordon connected with instructors and classmates across the province. Distance education is familiar to his family. His sister completed the Personal Support Worker Diploma program in 2011. “She encouraged me, but just knowing she did it made it easier for me to decide,” says Gordon.

His passion for healthcare was ignited when he volunteered with First Response and dreamed of becoming a paramedic. “To go to school in my home town and potentially work and give back is what motivated me,” he says.

“We know how hard it is and we are in it together,” says Gordon about the camaraderie developed by his classmates. Some of their classes required them to check each other’s pulse and temperature and practice their CPR skills, which led to stronger bonding and friendship.

Gordon graduated in 2014 and is now working as a paramedic.

## DEBBIE POTTS

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution: Loyalist College

Program: Early Childhood Education

*“Once I wrote the first exam, staff checked in with me regularly.”*



Debbie Potts learned about the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge from Loyalist College. She enrolled in the online Early Childhood Education program and was directed to the online learning centre to write exams.

“Once I wrote the first exam, staff checked in with me regularly,” she says. “It was a

brand new experience, mostly the computer part,” she shares. “When I first started the program, I didn’t even know how to insert a photo in an e-mail.”

Debbie was already working in a daycare centre but needed to get the Early Childhood Education credential. Colleagues recommended the online program and she likes the flexibility and convenience. She continues working full-time and does her coursework in the evening and weekends.

“In the beginning, I did most of my coursework on the weekends, and that was not fun. So, I started to do coursework over lunch, or in the evenings and leaving at least one day off on my weekend to have a life,” shares Debbie.

Her employer was very supportive and she completed several of her placements in the daycare where she works.

Debbie is graduating in June 2019 and looking forward to a summer of no homework!



## CHRISTINE REBELEIN-WALLER

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Early Childhood Education

*“I was much more confident going into my classes knowing they were live classes. I really like the feedback and interaction with other people.”*



Through a referral from Agelic, an employment services organization in Bracebridge, to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge, Christine learned about the opportunity to complete an Early Childhood Education diploma through online learning.

After sitting down with staff at the online learning centre to explore her options, she enrolled in Confederation College’s online Early Childhood Education program.

Christine comes from a family of teachers; both her parents taught for 30 years and her brother is a teacher. She is achieving a high grade point average in all her courses and expects to make it to the College’s honour roll when she graduates this spring.

She lives close to the online learning centre in Bracebridge and attends the majority of her classes from the online learning centre. She uses the free Internet and computers to connect to her classes on Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform.

“I was much more confident going into my classes knowing they were live classes. I really like the feedback and interaction with other people,” she says. She writes exams at the online learning centre in Bracebridge and appreciates the extra support she receives from staff, such as learning how to put together a PowerPoint presentation.

Christine is completing her last semester in Winter 2019 and will finish with her third and final placement in her community. Her placements offered experiences in a variety of community organizations. She is hopeful about employment after graduation since she is aware of job opportunities through her placements.

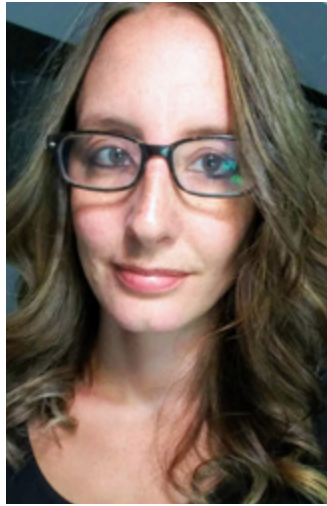
## ASHLEY REID

COBOURG

Educational Institution: Quinte Adult Education

Program: Ontario Secondary School Diploma

*“I am more confident now, I wasn’t even good with computers when I started and now I don’t have to ask for help.”*



When Ashley Reid was on maternity leave in 2018, she decided to finally complete her high school diploma. With a referral to Contact North | Contact Nord, she used their services to enrol in Quinte Adult Education’s online Ontario Secondary School Diploma program.

“I knew you could do college courses online but I didn’t think I could do high school online,” says Ashley. With two young children under 5, she worked on her courses from

her home computer when they were sleeping.

“I had a tutor for the first courses,” she explains. The tutor was provided by another community agency. “If I had any misunderstandings she would help me.” The last time Ashley was in school was over 15 years ago. She left school at the age of 14 and worked in a fast food chain. She progressed to a management position without needing her high school diploma.

“I don’t think I would have been able to do it any other way,” she admits. “I am more confident now, I wasn’t even good with computers when I started and now I don’t have to ask for help.”

Ashley completed six courses in just two years and will be graduating in June 2019. Once her children are in school full-time, she plans to enrol in a college program.

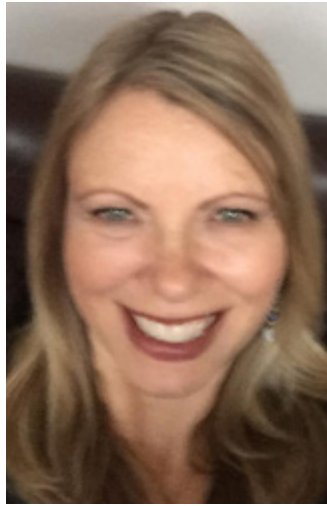
## ROSALYN REID

COBOURG

Educational Institution:  
Loyalist College

Program: Early Childhood Education

*“The online option offers more flexibility.”*



Having flexibility with her schedule was the deciding factor for Rosalyn Reid’s decision to enrol in Loyalist College’s online Early Childhood Education Diploma in 2014.

“The online option offers more flexibility,” says Rosalyn. “Can study on your own time.” With two young children and living in a rural area of Ontario, it was the only way Rosalyn could make a career change. She is a university graduate with a degree in marketing from Scotland where she

emigrated almost 15 years ago.

With an online, anytime program, she connects to Loyalist College’s learning management system from her home computer to find out what textbooks she needs, receive assignments and due dates. “There is a message board for students and the course coordinator answers questions by e-mail,” she explains. She participated in 3 placements, all located close to her home and the third placement was in her son’s school.

She discovered her local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Cobourg when it was time to write an exam. “Contact North offers a nice atmosphere to write exams,” she shares. She also appreciates the supportive e-mails she receives from staff at the online learning centre.

Rosalyn graduated in January 2018 and is taking some time before seeking work close to her community.

## PEGGY SHELSWELL

ESPANOLA

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Office Administration  
General Certificate

*“Once I realized that I was capable, I just kept telling myself I could do this!”*



As a single parent of two children, Peggy Shelswell’s goal was getting a job to fit with her family responsibilities. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Espanola, she enrolled in Northern College’s Office Administration General Certificate program.

“For 20 years I have worked in retail. The grocery store and the discount department store,” she says. Her best option was to

acquire some new skills. The Office Administration program would only take one school year to acquire valuable transferrable skills.

Peggy connected to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. “I went into the centre every day for both video and audio classes,” Peggy explains. “If I needed a quiet area to do homework I would stay after my class.” She often listened more than once to the recorded lectures when she found a concept challenging and needed to review the explanation.

Peggy admits it was challenging to get comfortable with the computers and software applications. “Two weeks into the program I said I can’t do this, what am I doing?”

With encouragement and support from both instructors and Contact North | Contact Nord staff, she overcame her fears. “Once I realized that I was capable, I just kept telling myself I could do this.”

She admits she carried around a picture and quote from a former student featured in the Contact North | Contact Nord course guide and every time she glanced at the picture, she told herself, “if they could do it, so can I’.

Peggy graduated in Spring 2012 and within 2 weeks of her graduation, she received a job offer at the local optometrist office.

## BRANDON SILVERSMITH

BRANTFORD

Educational Institution: The LearningHUB and Quinte Adult Education

Program: Punctuation Course, Reading Comprehension Course and Ontario Secondary School Diploma

*“He mostly worked on his courses at home but received encouragement and support from staff at the online learning centre.”*



Throughout the five years Brandon Silversmith spent to complete Quinte Adult Education’s online Ontario Secondary School Diploma, he was determined to complete higher level courses to enable him to pursue a university degree.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation (now located in Brantford), he enrolled

in several of The LearningHUB’s online courses, including Punctuation and Reading Comprehension to prepare him for Quinte Adult Education’s online Ontario Secondary School Diploma program.

“I started with English, took a break and then took Calculus and Computer Science,” says Brandon. He mostly worked on his courses at home but received encouragement and support from staff at the online learning centre, including helping him find tutors when he was struggling with assignments.

His interaction with teachers was through e-mail. “Sometimes I would use YouTube and Google, all of those things helped,” he says.

When he was invited to receive his diploma at the Quinte Adult Education offices in Belleville, he immediately made plans to drive the 3 1/2 hours to finally meet his teachers. “I can’t put it into words how important it was to meet my teachers and receive my awards in person” Brandon says.

Brandon graduated with his Ontario Secondary School Diploma in June 2016.

## BENJAMIN SMITH

FORT FRANCES

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Paramedic

*“Online learning was a new learning experience and once I got used to it, it was ok.”*



Benjamin Smith was very grateful to receive a spot in Confederation College’s Paramedic program. “When I decided I wanted to be a paramedic, it was a bit late to enrol at colleges close to me, but Confederation College had a spot,” says Benjamin.

He moved from Oxford County in southern Ontario and participated in the blended learning Paramedic program at Confederation College’s Fort Frances campus. Courses such as patient care and legal aspects of patient care were delivered online using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform, while the courses requiring demonstration were done in-class at the Fort Frances campus. His instructors and other classmates were often located in Thunder Bay and other Confederation College campuses across Northwestern Ontario.

“Online learning was a new learning experience and once I got used to it, it was ok,” he says. He appreciated the opportunity to get into the program rather than wait another year and the unique experience of living and studying in a Northern Ontario community.

When it came time to complete his placement and ride-along, he returned to Oxford County as he wanted to work in his own community.

Benjamin graduated in April 2015 and was hired by Oxford County Emergency Medical Services part-time. “I love my job,” says Benjamin.

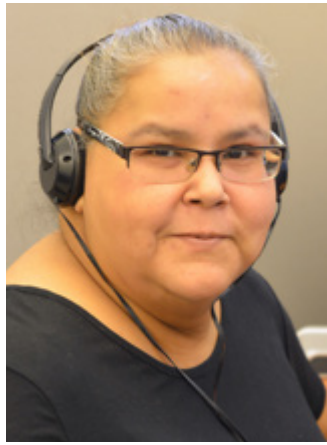
## WENDI SMITH-STEVENS

PARRY SOUND

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College and Anishinabek  
Educational Institute

Program: Early Childhood Education  
Diploma and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum  
Disorder Certificate

*“There were times I was frustrated and wanted to give up and staff would encourage me. I have done all these programs with their support.”*



Wendi Smith-Stevens lives in Shawanaga First Nation and with the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Parry Sound, she enrolled in Confederation College’s Early Childhood Education diploma program in 2008.

At the time, she had two small children but wanted to obtain credentials to work in a school environment. “I didn’t want to go all the way to Thunder Bay,” says Wendi. “I found out that I could take the program at a distance.” She took her children to daycare and went to the online learning centre where she used Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform to participate in her live, online classes. Her classmates also used the web conferencing platform to work on group projects and make presentations.

After completing her diploma, she worked in an elementary school close to her community and then found work at the Shawanaga Healing Centre.

When Wendi decided to pursue the Anishinabek Educational Institute’s Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Certificate, she once again reached out to staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Parry Sound. “There were times I was frustrated and wanted to give up and staff would encourage me. I have done all these programs with their support and encouragement,” says Wendi.

Although she attended five 2-week sessions in North Bay, her children were older and being away for short periods was manageable. She worked on her assignments from home and wrote exams at the online learning centre.

Wendi graduated with the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Certificate in 2017 and applies her new learning in her role at the Shawanaga Healing Centre. She also has the opportunity to share her experience with her daughter who is considering an online college program.

## RHEA STARKES

### MARATHON

Educational Institution: Western University, Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children

Program: Domestic Violence Risk Assessment and Management

*“Contact North | Contact Nord is a great resource in the community.”*



Rhea Starkes and her staff at the women’s shelter in Marathon often participate in online professional development courses. With support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Marathon, Rhea, as well as all the staff at the shelter, enrolled in the Domestic Violence Risk Assessment and Management program offered by Western

University’s Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children.

“We are a small shelter and don’t have a lot of money so anything we can do online will make it more efficient,” says Rhea. “We always have to keep up with training.” The program offers modules each staff person can complete on their own, and if need be, stop and return at a more convenient time. There are quizzes at the end of each module and staff receive a certificate upon completion that is placed in their personnel file.

Rhea says Contact North | Contact Nord is a great resource in the community and appreciates the regular alerts by staff about upcoming training courses.

Rhea and her staff are planning to take more online courses related to their work, in topics such as concurrent disorders and human trafficking.



## MANDY STELLING

BRANTFORD

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Northern Colleges  
Collaboration: Business Fundamentals

*“Online learning allows me to sit at the arena, plug in my head phones, and login to my classes while my kids have a hockey practice or game...”*



Mandy Stelling had a general idea of the business diploma program she wanted to take and enrolled in Confederation College’s online Northern Colleges Collaboration: Business Fundamentals program.

The program is offered on Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform, providing students a live experience. Mandy had previous experience with online learning that did not involve live video and is relieved

this program was delivered as a more interactive experience.

“As a mom of two kids, I am so busy,” she says. “Online learning allows me to sit at the arena, plug in my head phones, and login to my classes while my kids have a hockey practice or game.” She knows she will also never miss a class because it is recorded.

When it came time to write her first exam, she went to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Brantford where she lives.

There were times where her kids are home from school and her classes start at 3:30 p.m. “The kids love it when we do homework together. It’s actually increased our family time,” she shares.

After the first year of the program is complete, students have the option to branch into specific areas such as accounting, human resources or marketing. Mandy is now completing her second year in marketing.

She is planning to graduate in Spring 2019 and start her own business in event security.

## TRACY THIBIDEAU

ST. THOMAS

Educational Institution: Algonquin College and Northern College

Program: Community and Justice Services and Social Service Worker

*“[Contact North | Contact Nord] staff were helpful and encouraged me to ask questions about placements and attending labs.”*



Tracy Thibideau planned to dedicate a few years to completing a diploma program that would get her a permanent job she loves. Through a referral from Community Employment Services in Ingersoll, she learned about the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in St. Thomas.

With the support of staff at the online learning centre in St. Thomas, she enrolled in Algonquin College’s online Community and Justice Services diploma program.

Tracy worked in social services for 25 years, however, never obtained a permanent job. With a college diploma, she expects more opportunities to be available. She was aware of online learning and preferred working from home. She previously completed several online, anytime certificates, requiring her to read modules downloaded to her computer and submit assignments by e-mail.

“I have significant hearing loss, I use bilateral hearing aids,” explains Tracy. “If I were to go into a big classroom, I would go crazy with the noise.”

After completing the first year of Algonquin College’s Community and Justice Services program, she decided to switch programs. With the help of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in St. Thomas, she explored online diploma programs for Social Service Worker. “Staff were helpful and encouraged me to ask questions about placements and attending labs,” Tracy said.

Tracy enrolled in Northern College’s online Social Service Worker program and connects to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. She completed 2 lab sessions in Parry Sound and looks forward to her placement at Oxford County Human Services in January 2019.

## CHIVA THOMPSON

NIPIGON-RED ROCK

Educational Institution: Quinte Adult Education and Confederation College

Program: Ontario Secondary School Diploma and Pre-Health Sciences – Pathway to Advanced Diplomas and Degrees program

*“Online was really easy.”*



Chiva Thompson of Red Rock Indian Band drove 18 hours to Belleville to attend the graduation ceremony for completing Quinte Adult Education’s Ontario Secondary School Diploma. With the support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Nipigon, she completed her diploma without

leaving her community.

“I left school at 17 only 5 weeks away from graduation after I lost my step-dad,” shared Chiva. At 25 years of age and with a 5-year-old son, she wanted a better future for her family. Online learning offered the opportunity to remain in her community with her son and family support, while furthering her education.

Chiva focused on school during the week and worked on weekends. “Online was really easy,” she said. She appreciated the quiet at the online learning centre and regularly used the computers and Internet to complete her course work. Even after being out of school for 9 years, she dove into her studies and received high marks.

She also liked the ability to model the importance of school for her son. “He was proud that he went to school and so did I.” Her dedication and success also inspired friends and family around her, encouraging them to consider online learning.

After graduating with her Ontario Secondary School Diploma in June 2017, she enrolled in Confederation College’s online Pre-Health Sciences program. She is not sure what career is right for her, but she is clear about her love and aptitude for mathematics and science.

## BRONWYN TRAFFORD

SHELBURNE AND GEORGINA

Educational Institution:  
Durham College

Program: Business - Human Resources  
(2-Year Diploma) and Bookkeeping  
(Certificate)

*“It was nice to go somewhere  
quiet and small.”*



Bronwyn Trafford worked in a call centre when she received a brochure outlining college programs available online. “I wanted to go back to school. I couldn’t just drop everything, I had to keep working,” she explains.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Shelburne, Bronwyn enrolled in

Durham College’s online two-year Business – Human Resources program. “I had no idea how to go about registering or anything,” she explains.

Bronwyn took the part-time program that allowed her to work and complete the assignments at her own pace. “It took me four years to complete,” she shares. When she started the program, she was living in Shelburne and moved to Newmarket. However, the move did not disrupt her studies as she connected with the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Georgina.

The program requires self-discipline as the instructors are only available by e-mail. “You are pretty much on your own except for some group projects,” she explains. “There were links to YouTube videos, and extra resources, too.”

Bronwyn says she never liked the traditional classroom and learning this way suits her. She realizes it can be challenging at times, but she keeps to a schedule. Writing exams at the Shelburne online learning centre was “super convenient” since she lived only two minutes away. “It was nice to go somewhere quiet and small,” she says.

She graduated with her Business – Human Resources diploma in January 2016 and started a contract working in an accounting firm. To increase her chances of securing permanent employment in the firm, she enrolled in Durham College’s online Bookkeeping Certificate program.

“It is a sacrifice, there were months when all I did was work and school, but in the end, it is really worth it,” she says.

Bronwyn graduated with her Bookkeeping Certificate in January 2018 and now has a permanent position in the accounting firm.

## MARGO TURPLE

M'CHIGEENG FIRST NATION

Educational Institution: Native Education & Training College of Business, Healthcare, Human Service & Technology

Program: Personal Support Worker

*“Online learning was perfect for me...I live a busy life and where there was Internet, I could complete my assignments.”*



Margo Turple lived in the United States for many years before returning to Manitoulin Island hoping to find work in her field. Since her Certified Nursing Assistant credentials were not recognized in Canada, she needed to quickly obtain a Personal Support Worker certification to qualify for work.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in M'Chigeeng First Nation, she enrolled in the online Personal Support Worker program offered by Native Education & Training College of Business, Healthcare, Human Service & Technology.

“I wanted an online program that I could complete in a year,” says Margo. “I actually completed within seven months.” She did not have Internet at home and caught the school bus in Sheshegwaning First Nation to the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in M'Chigeeng First Nation. She used the computers and high-speed Internet available at the online learning centre to complete her courses.

“Online learning was perfect for me” she says. “I live a busy life and where there was Internet, I could complete my assignments.” Margo spent a month in the United States while enrolled in the program and did not have to interrupt her studies thanks to the Internet and her laptop.

When it came time for her placement, she found a spot at Manitoulin Lodge in Gore Bay. Margo graduated with her Personal Support Worker Certificate in August 2018 and is now working full-time in Gore Bay.

## BROOKE UKRAINYC

WINDSOR

Educational Institution:  
Fleming College

Program: Human Resources  
Management

*“I really enjoy learning and  
online learning is so flexible.”*



Thanks to a close friend, Brooke Ukrainyc discovered she could easily take a college program online. In October 2016, Brooke enrolled in Fleming College’s online Human Resources Management program.

When it came time to write exams, she found she could write her exams at the local Contact North | Contact Nord online learning

centre in Windsor. “It’s so convenient,” says Brooke. She especially appreciates the effort staff make to accommodate her busy schedule to proctor her exams and the quiet environment to write in.

“I work full-time and have two daughters,” Brooke explains. “I get the kids to bed by 9:30 p.m. and stay up doing homework till 11:00 p.m. That’s how I get it all done!” Some of the courses required her to complete assignments and write an online quiz every week, while other courses were less demanding. Due to staggered course starts, she started courses when it suited her schedule.

“I think I want to take another program. I really enjoy learning and online learning is so flexible,” she says.

Brooke is graduating in Spring 2019.

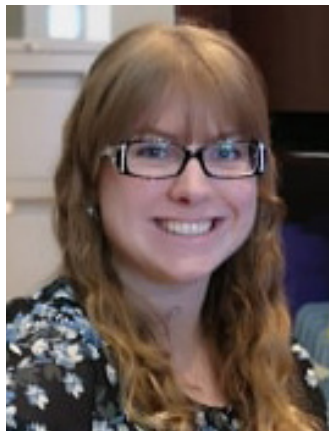
## LAURA VAN BOXTEL

WALLACEBURG

Educational Institution: Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council

Program: Office Administration Essential Skills course, Excel course, Accounting course

*“They [Contct North] helped me stay focused. I would neglect my studies and they would call and I would think, ‘I better get back on track.’”*



After graduating from Carlton University with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Laura Van Boxtel decided to take online courses in administrative skills to help in her job search.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Wallaceburg, she enrolled in Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy

Council’s Office Administration Essential Skills course.

“We did everything over e-mail; I never actually met the staff at Contact North,” explains Laura. Staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre provided study options and she explored the Good Learning Anywhere – Sioux Hudson Literacy Council’s website for more details about the courses.

After taking the first course, she enrolled in Excel and accounting courses. “The courses are self-directed with a lot of reading and finish with an online test,” she says. “The more I learn about Excel, the more I like the program.”

Laura says she appreciated the follow-up Contact North | Contact Nord staff provide during her studies. “They helped me stay focused. I would neglect my studies and they would call and I would think, ‘I better get back on track’,” she admits.

Laura found employment in the financial sector after completing the short courses and is looking forward to steady advancement in her job. She believes the courses were a great stepping stone to prepare her for the full-time job she found as an Administrative Assistant.

## MICHAEL VAN PATTER

DRYDEN

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Educational Support Diploma

*“When it comes to online learning, it is comfortable for me.”*



“I have Asperger’s Syndrome,” shares Michael Van Patter. He lives with his family in Dryden and after graduating from high school, he enrolled in Confederation College’s Educational Support program.

With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Dryden, Michael connected to his classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s

web conferencing platform. Michael says he feels intimidated in a big classroom setting and much prefers his own private space at the online learning centre. Due to his learning challenges, he receives assistance from his instructors, classmates and family to complete his coursework. He appreciates the encouragement from staff at the online learning centre and the opportunity to remain close to family while pursuing a post-secondary education.

“When it comes to online learning, it is comfortable for me,” admits Michael. His placements were all completed in local elementary schools. His experience with online learning and local placement opportunities gave Michael the confidence to accomplish his goals.

Michael graduated in Spring 2018 and is seeking employment in his community.



## CHRIS VARGA

BRACEBRIDGE

Educational Institution: Lynda.com

Program: Learning Excel 2019,  
Learning Construction Estimating,  
AutoCad 2020 Essential Training

*“I am always upgrading my education.”*



Living in a rural area and being unemployed can be challenging. Chris Varga is grateful for the support offered by staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Bracebridge who helped him to research study options for professional development.

He first enrolled in Lynda.com’s Learning Excel course to upgrade his knowledge and use of Excel software. Through a partnership with Brampton Library, Chris has free access to Lynda.com courses and completed 6 courses, including Learning Construction Estimating and AutoCad 2020 Essential Training.

“I am always upgrading my education,” he explains. “YouTube is my favourite thing ever invented because I can watch videos over and over until I understand and with Lynda.com, it offers guided video courses.”

Chris previously worked in management and construction and hopes the professional development courses improve his credentials for finding work in the field. He lives a 25-minute drive outside of Bracebridge and appreciates the high-speed Internet access that allows him to take courses from his home computer.

Chris is working with staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre to explore more online professional development courses.

## RACHEL VELKOVSKI

SOUTH PORCUPINE AND HALIBURTON

Educational Institution:

Northern College

Program: Northern Colleges

Collaborative Program in Business

Fundamentals Certificate

*“We have a teacher who is directing the class, it’s offered at a particular time online and I find that very convenient.”*



Rachael Velkovski relied on the flexibility and convenience of connecting with her online classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform when she enrolled in Northern Colleges Collaborative Program (NCCP) in Business Fundamentals Certificate.

Familiar with online learning, Rachael earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Athabasca University in 2011, delivered fully online. “I find this a lot easier,” Rachael said about Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. “We have a teacher who is directing the class, it’s offered at a particular time online and I find that very convenient.”

For the first year of the program, she participated in her classes at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in South Porcupine. When she moved to Minden, Ontario between her first and second year, she found the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Haliburton.

What Rachael liked the most about working from a Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre is the technical support and other students around her. “If you are by yourself, it’s frustrating, but when you have someone there supporting you, it relaxes you.”

Working alongside other students at the online learning centre in South Porcupine, the small group of students ensured everyone understood the lecture. Rachel explained she and her classmates debriefed each lecture since the professor was not physically in the room to ask for further clarification.

Rachael previously worked as a bank manager and is confident she will secure employment in the financial sector when she graduates in 2020.

## MÉLANIE VILLENEUVE

MATTAWA AND NORTH BAY

Educational Institution: Confederation College and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Pre-Health Sciences  
Certificate and Mental Health and  
Addiction 101 Tutorials

*“Working at the online learning centre, there were very few distractions. I know if I were in a classroom I would have been distracted.”*



Melanie Villeneuve worked for 10 years as a Personal Support Worker in Mattawa, a community 60 kilometres east of North Bay, before deciding to pursue her nursing credential. With the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Mattawa, she enrolled in Confederation College’s online

Pre-Health Sciences Certificate.

“It would have been a major setback had I needed to go to North Bay every day,” says Melanie. With three busy kids at home and over a decade since she was a full-time student, she used the online Pre-Health Sciences Certificate program from Confederation College to prepare for the academic rigors of the nursing program.

“I used YouTube a lot to get help with math and chemistry. I paused and went back until I got it,” she said. “Working at the online learning centre, there were very few distractions. I know if I were in a classroom I would have been distracted.”

Melanie used the online learning centre four days a week to work on her assignments. “I found it tough not being face-to-face with an instructor, but if my kids were sick, I could stay home.”

She remained in her community while she completed Canadore College’s Practical Nursing Diploma program online and appreciated the continued support and encouragement of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning. She also knew if she needed a quiet place to work, the online learning centre was available.

Melanie achieved her long-term goal of transitioning from a personal support worker to a nurse. She continues to receive support from staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in North Bay, who assisted her to find the online Mental Health and Addiction tutorials offered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

She now works as a nurse in North Bay.

## VANESSA WADGE

HAILEYBURY

Educational Institution:  
Northern College

Program: Office Administration -  
Executive Program

*“I actually like online learning quite a bit. If I am having a bad day, the class is recorded, and I won’t miss out on classes.”*



Vanessa Wadge enrolled in Northern College’s online Office Administration – Executive Diploma program after graduating from high school in June 2017. She learned from Northern College that several of her courses were delivered online using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform.

“I actually like online learning quite a bit. If I am having a bad day, the class is recorded, and I won’t miss out on classes,” Vanessa said. “I like being able to connect from pretty much anywhere!”

In May 2015, Vanessa was diagnosed with epilepsy as she was completing grade 10. She was unable to attend school regularly and finished her high school through online learning offered by the district school board, obtaining her diploma.

She initially planned to go away for college by moving to Timmins to attend Northern College’s South Porcupine Campus. However, after completing her first year online, she appreciates the advantages of staying home with her parents. She also receives support from Northern College’s Accessibility Services and staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Haileybury. Distance is not a barrier for Vanessa. “Professors are still very thorough with their answers, and I called once or twice, especially with bookkeeping.”

Vanessa is on a reduced course load and is scheduled to graduate in May 2020. “I would like to get a job in an office,” Vanessa shares. “I would like to work in a dental office or any health care office.”

## MICHELLE WHITNEY

COBOURG

Educational Institution:  
Confederation College

Program: Business –  
Human Resources

*“I wanted an online program so I could stay home with my young son.”*



Michelle Whitney enrolled in Confederation College’s Business – Human Resources program and then discovered the support offered by the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Cobourg. Michelle lives in Bowmanville and needed to write exams close to home.

“I wanted an online program so I could stay home with my young son,” says Michelle. “When I started the program, my son got so sick. I probably would have been kicked out of a regular class with all the time I would have missed.”

Michelle connected to her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. Lectures are recorded and she listened to the lecture when she missed a class.

The program started in January 2018 and students fast track right through the summer. Michelle’s long-term goal is to work in human resources and has now completed the required courses to qualify to write the Canadian Human Resources Professional Certification.

“My education is not ended,” says Michelle. “Contact North has inspired me to keep learning.”

Michelle is planning to graduate in Spring 2019 and write her Canadian Human Resources Professional Certification exam..”

## BETTY-ANN WHITTON

GEORGINA

Educational Institution: Loyalist College

Program: Office Administration –  
Medical Services Diploma

*“It was comforting to know  
I wasn’t alone.”*



At 50 years of age, Betty-Ann Whitton found herself unemployed and with no career goals. Through the collaborative partnership between the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Georgina and Job Skills in Keswick, she registered in Loyalist College’s online Office Administration: Medical Services Diploma program, which put her back on track.

“I did some career counselling with Job Skills and then came to Contact North because I wanted to take the program online,” Betty-Ann explained. Betty-Ann worked for the same company for the past 25 years and when she was laid off, she took some time to consider her next step.

She was aware of online learning from family members and needed the flexibility and convenience with her family responsibilities. She had elderly parents to care for and a son still in high school. But, she was still scared of heading back to school at her age; it had been a long time since she was in class.

Betty-Ann obtained support through the Second Career program, which helped her financially. She established a routine of going to the online learning centre and attending her classes using Contact North | Contact Nord’s web conferencing platform. Coming to the online learning centre every day allowed her to be more productive and make friends with other students studying at the centre. “It was comforting to know I wasn’t alone,” she admitted.

To support her studies, she volunteered at the Southlake Regional Health Centre, adding to the value of studying in her own community and making connections with organizations where she could potentially find work.

She completed the diploma in one year, without having to leave Newmarket, and got back into the workforce, this time in a whole new career.

## SHANLEE WINTERS-RICHARD

SHELBURNE

Educational Institution: Upper Grand District School Board

Program: Ontario Secondary School Diploma

*“Going back to school was not so intimidating.”*



Rather than returning to high school in Shelburne for her last two credits, Shanlee Winters-Richards chose Upper Grand District School Board’s online Skills Upgrading program so she could work while she completed her Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

The Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Shelburne partners with the Upper Grand District School Board to offer the program, which includes an on-site teacher at the online learning centre.

“I went into the online learning centre twice a week and also worked at home,” said Shanlee. “Going back to school was not so intimidating”. She used the computers at the online learning centre and received academic support from the on-site teacher. Working alongside a small number of other students was encouraging for Shanlee.

Shanlee knows the career path she wants to pursue. She graduated with her Ontario Secondary School Diploma in August 2018, and with the support of staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre, enrolled in Georgian College’s on-campus Pre-Health Sciences Certificate program, starting in January 2019.

“I would like to work in the healthcare field as a Personal Support Worker or a Nurse,” says Shanlee.

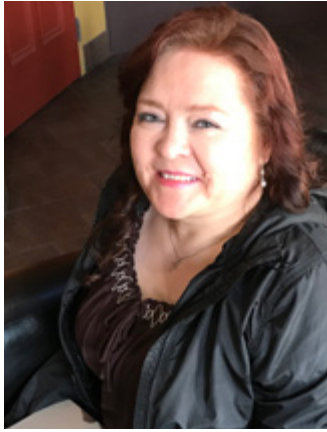
## SUSAN WIPER

WINDSOR

Educational Institution:  
St. Lawrence College

Program: Bookkeeping Certificate

*“She knew an online program provides the flexibility to study from home.”*



After Susan Wiper lost her job in Leamington, she decided to enrol in St. Lawrence College’s part-time online Bookkeeping Certificate program. Staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre in Windsor helped Susan explore study options that suited her lifestyle and educational goals.



“I wanted to take either bookkeeping or graphic design,” said Susan. “I knew I wanted to work from home.” She also knew an online program provides the flexibility to study from home.

Enrolling in a post-secondary program was significant for Susan. Born in Mexico, she immigrated to Canada with her family at the age of 13. She married young at the age of 16 and never had the opportunity to complete high school. She was nervous before calling her instructor at St. Lawrence College for help, but once she was on the phone, it felt like she had known her for years. Susan discovered the instructors were supportive and many went out of their way to assist her.

Susan was also able to write her exams at the online learning centre in Windsor. “I don’t do well with exams. I get nervous and lose my train of thought,” she said. However, her exam results improved dramatically with the support offered by staff at the Contact North | Contact Nord online learning centre.

Susan graduated in December 2017 and started looking for work she could do from home.



## CHANTELLE ZEHR

MADOC

Educational Institution: Loyalist College

Program: Office Administration –  
Health Services Diploma

*“The staff at the online learning centre was helpful, the professors were quick to respond to your questions and the online platform was easy...”*



Chantelle Zehr was living in Madoc and working as a server in a Belleville restaurant for over a decade. In 2014, she learned about Contact North | Contact Nord and, with their support, enrolled in Loyalist College’s online Office Administration – Health Services Diploma program.

“It was a big deal to go back to school,” says Chantelle. She wanted to work in the local medical clinic but did not have the qualifications. With the support of the Ontario Government Second Career program, she went back to school full-time.

“I worked at home sometimes but mostly at the online learning centre. I could stay focused at the centre,” she explains. The program was self-directed and other than contacting her professors with any questions, she worked on her own.

With young children at home, she appreciated the flexibility of working at her own pace. “The staff at the online learning centre was helpful, the professors were quick to respond to your questions and the online platform was easy to navigate,” she says.

She completed three semesters back-to-back and offered to work in the reception area of the clinic as a volunteer. The day she completed her final exam, the clinic offered her a full-time job.

Chantelle continues to work at the clinic and loves it.