

## My education-----a personal success story

*by Reid Peters*

There are many contributing factors that brought me where I am today. In this essay I will outline my personal success story starting with the challenges I faced in school and the reason behind my decision to leave. I will also explain how quitting school affected my life and I will also include an explanation why I decided to go back to school. I will also tell how my life had changed since I have returned to school and about any hardships or difficulties I have experienced. Finally, I would explain what my next steps are and how I plan to accomplish these steps.

I started my education journey in the worst possible way. I was taken from my home at the age of five and put into St. Mary's Residential School in Mission, British Columbia. The first year I failed because I do not remember being taught, rather I was left alone to fend for myself. When I left the residential school at age twelve I found that I had to play catch-up because I was not up to par with the students in the public school system. Grade seven was a tough year for me and grade eight proved to be a little easier, but in grade nine I started to get better

grades. In grade 10 I was a shining star, because I got recommended in every course I took except for English which was a test that everyone had to take. When I got out for summer holidays I got a job in the logging industry where I got the taste of money. It felt very good to have a job in the great out-doors that put a lot of money in my pocket.

After two months of grade eleven I decided to change my education path from the General Program to the Academic Program which proved to be the wrong decision. Back then I did not have anybody to talk to in the school system to help me out with my new decision. The first week in the Academic Program I knew that I was on the wrong path in education. I found myself doing catch-up again in a program that I was lost in. I tried to go back to the General Program but it was too far into the year of schooling to change back. I knew I would fail so rather than waste my teacher's time as well as my time; I withdrew from the Academic Program. I remember walking out of the school yard with a heavy load on my shoulders and wondering what was in store for me. When I look back at the education decision I made, I often wonder what life would have been like had I graduated. My mom was very angry with me for quitting school without consulting with her about my problem. She told me that if I was old enough to

make a major decision that would affect my life; I was old enough to move out and find a job.

The next year I planned on going back to the General Program but the taste of logging and money kept me away. In those days I thought I could make a good life in the logging industry. Being taught by experienced loggers made my work easier which excelled to the head position at age seventeen. This promotion, as a hook-tender involved organizing a crew of six men in a safe and productive logging manner. I thought of this job as an important part of my life and that I would retire at a ripe age. The first 20 years of logging was great but the next 25 years proved to be a strain because the logging industry was slowly breaking down. We as loggers have overcome all the rules and regulations that the Forest service, Fisheries, Work Safe B.C. and environmentalist have put together, but the slow collapse of the logging industry of today proves that it is a hard way to make a living. This is why I looked at education as being the answer to my problem.

A few years ago I decided to become a Correctional Officer, because of the steady work and because I wanted to work with the incarcerated First Nation people. The first thing I had to do was to up-grade, so I went to the Agassiz Library and took home a GED book which I studied for a couple of months. Then I took

the GED test at the University of the Fraser Valley in Chilliwack, which I passed. At the same time that I was studying the GED I was commuting to the Agassiz Employment Center to teach myself how to type and to learn the functions of the computer. I had all the paper work ready to register as a Correctional Officer at the prison system, but all the times that I tried to register they were not taking any more applicants, so I went back to logging to pass time while I waited for registration. My education plans changed that same year because of the job I took in the logging industry. I worked most of the season safely, and then I had a logging accident. The injury prevented me from going back to my main job in the logging industry and it prevented me from becoming a Correctional Officer. So, now I had to make another change in my life. The decision I made was to go back to school to get a Diploma in the Social Service, First Nations Option Program, where I could work with the First Nation's people to better their lives as well as my own. In the spring of 2008 I took an English assessment, which I found I had to start with an up-grade in English 071 for the 2008 summer semester. I also had to include an up-grade course of English 081 in the full course load fall semester and I also had a full course load in the 2009 winter semester, all of which I maintained a GPA of 3.44. Since I returned to school I take every course with an open mind and I am also ready to take on all challenges. After being away from school for 45

years made it a little difficult to adjust to students and a classroom, but I find the difficulties are behind me now. I also found I had to learn how to study again to get all the information out of the text books, because I was away from school so long. Now what I have to do is carry on with what I am doing, semester after semester until I reach 62 credits for the Social Service-First Nation Diploma. I find that in the University there is so much help for students just for the asking, which makes a big difference compared to my earlier years of high school.

I had quite a rough beginning in education starting with residential school; then I had to play catch-up in the public school, plus having made a bad choice with the Academic Program which proved to be fatal. In happier news, the Social Service Program has accepted me into their program. I know feel that being in the University is the right education path and I am looking forward to my continual studies to the Social Service-First Nation Diploma.