

President's Message

As the heat of the summer intensifies, we know that we are not far from another graduation ceremony. Let me congratulate all the participants in our various programs for your accomplishments this year. I hope you enjoy the evening!

2007/2008 was a watershed year marking the metamorphosis of East End Literacy into Toronto Centre for Community Learning & Development (CCL&D). This was the culmination of a couple of years of discussions and strategic planning with input from the board, staff, learning participants and our extended community. It was amazing for me to witness the angst and eventual satisfaction as the new plan and, in particular, the new name fell into place. I can feel the confidence from all involved that we are headed in the right direction.



As we look to our theme for the graduation ceremony; “Strong Communities Together,” be reminded that it is no coincidence that our name includes the word *community*. Over its more than 20 year history, and in our recent planning activities, CCL&D has understood that empowering individuals is accomplished through a holistic training approach that allows them to integrate and take advantage of the community around them. The Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP), a truly innovative program, takes the concept one step further by empowering women with the skills to strengthen their communities and then by sending the participants out to expand the capacity of communities across the city. Building strong communities is what CCL&D does!

With its shiny new name and renewed confidence, CCL&D is attracting new initiatives that will make for exciting times ahead.

This year marks my sixth and therefore my last year on the Board of Directors of CCL&D. I would like to take a moment to express my sincere respect for the board, staff and learning participants that I met and worked with at CCL&D. I have learned much from those I have shared this experience with. I look forward to finding ways to stay involved with CCL&D over the next few years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Cooke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. To the right of the signature is a vertical red line.

Doug Cooke
President, Board of Directors

Executive Director's Message

When I first joined the staff of this organization, it was clear to me that if I was going to do anything meaningful with the rest of my life, this would be the place to begin! For me, the organization then known as East End Literacy, embodied a “can do” spirit and vibrancy where it was okay to have a million ideas per week about the possibilities: changing community, changing lives. But we were and still are a relatively small organization, with big ideas. So we have kept on dreaming and doing - hindered only by the limits of our imagination and creativity.



So today, we are the Centre for Community Learning & Development, and when people say you guys think outside the box, we say what box? And where we continue to thrive on “fixing” our organization, our programs and services, even if they are not broken! So needless to say, it is very gratifying when students in our Academic Upgrading Program claim an overall 98.8% level of satisfaction with our program.

But that’s not all! Four years ago the “lost contact” rate for our students hovered around 17% - individuals who, for one reason or another, just disappeared. Today, that number is down to a big fat zero! And this has translated into 36% of our academic upgrading students reporting as being employed upon exiting our program and the other 64% going on to further training and/or education.

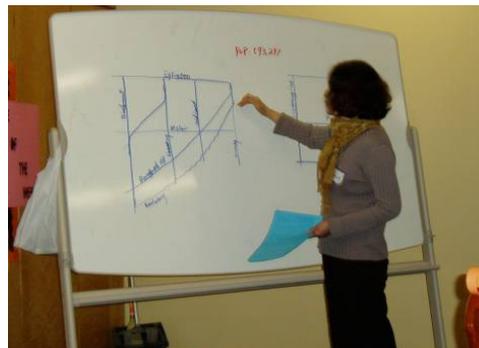
This is not the organization I joined in the early 1990s, but the seeds for what we have become were planted long before my time. We have simply had the benefit of time on our side, and the good fortune to continue recruiting really committed, dedicated and passionate staff, as well as board members who are so devoted and steadfast, that when they talk about CCL&D you can literally feel their sense of pride. It was six years ago that we said “*our mission was to be the most integrated, progressive literacy organization in Toronto*” and they really took that seriously. I guess we all did!

And we are a very different organization today, because of that shared commitment to being the best that we can be... we encourage our program participants to think this way and they exhort us, through their commitment and willingness to learn, to take our own advice. So we do! But we are a learning organization that is being challenged on a daily basis to adapt to the changing dynamics of our community, and to constantly update our knowledge base in order to ensure that we are facilitating learning and conversations that are based on current ideas and the wisdom of cultures from across the globe.

For me personally, the highlight of my year was listening to trainees from the Immigrant Women Leadership & Development course, armed with PowerPoint Presentations, explain to a room of individuals from community organizations and the Toronto Public Library, the process and findings of their community needs assessments, while confidently using a *theory of change* framework to explain their recommended solutions to some of the problems facing our communities. Every one of those trainees has benefitted from the collective and accumulated wisdom of our staff team, but perhaps more importantly, they had each other!

Handwritten signature of Alfred Jean-Baptiste.

Alfred Jean-Baptiste
Executive Director



IWIP Participants delivering Community Needs Assessment (PowerPoint) presentations to Community Members

Strong Communities Together

IWIP (Immigrant Women Integration Program) is one of the programs of CCL&D (Centre for Community Learning & Development). I was so lucky to be selected to join this program in 2007. I never had Canadian educational experience before. This was my first time to have very professional training in Canada.

The course focused on Community Leadership & Development. I got some book knowledge about Community Capacity Building, Theory of Change and Mediation from this course; I learned how to write proposals, do needs assessment and organize workshops during these several months. Step by step, I found my communication skills enhanced as I learned Communications Management & Techniques.

I have a deep belief that during this training experience, I not only got knowledge from my teachers, but I also learnt a lot from my classmates. They came from different countries including Egypt, Afghanistan, Bengal, Indonesia and China. This was a multicultural group. We often discussed different topics and shared ideas. We learnt from each other and also had a lot of fun!

Actually I was at a difficult stage in my life during the training, because I had been in Toronto only for two months when I joined IWIP. I had to look after my son by myself and I had so much stress just surviving. I could not depend on my savings because I was not sure when I would find a job. Everyday when I finished the class, I taught Ballet Fitness and Joint Exercise in several community centres. I was lucky because I had my teachers and classmates. I often got courage from them. I had a lot of friends support me to overcome every difficulty during this tough time.

To me, keeping communities strong, especially in times of difficulty, makes all the difference. Now I'm the settlement worker in Riverdale library. I am so proud of being a student of CCL&D! I will never forget how my teachers and classmates helped me. Many thanks to all of them from the bottom of my heart!



2007/08 IWIP Participants with **Sarah Shi** (front row, 2nd from right)

Strong Communities Together

I have a totally new understanding of the concept of Community since I have been living in Toronto for the past 20 months.

My community is like my warm home. I find protection, support and care there. When I was totally lost in Toronto in October 2006, I found WoodGreen Community Services. They helped me with every difficulty I met as a family member. They even helped me to buy a long-distance card. This was a very tiny thing, but it was so important and touching at that time. Their smiles melted the snow in my heart. Their kind words built my confidence to start a new life in my new environment.

Community is a place for you to plant seeds and grow fruit. Recommended by WoodGreen, I was lucky to join IWIP and study at CCL&D. It's such a supportive atmosphere and unforgettable learning experience in my life. We are not only learning knowledge of community services together, but also sharing happiness, sadness, culture, food and much more.... Although we came from different places, and we speak different languages, we understand and love each other. We are just like our classmate Freshta's new baby, we keep on growing and growing, and now it's the time for the baby girl and all of us to shine.

Community is a platform to make a contribution. I'm now working in Better Beginnings now. I am so moved and impressed by so many touching behaviors and stories everyday. For example, I saw my manager, supervisor, specialist and home visit worker spending a whole day to design a plan for a special needs child. They help some families living in poverty to get food from food banks. They help other families in need in other ways. I feel the spirit of community and concern is so overwhelmingly strong.

There are hundreds of such community services around Toronto. They each play their own role and connect with each other. Strong Communities Together will make Toronto's tomorrow more beautiful.



IWIP Participant **Christina Yu**

Strong Communities Together

I lived in Scarborough for two years and I didn't know much about my neighbourhood. But I could feel the difference between Canada and my home in Indonesia. Later on, I moved to downtown Toronto, and I felt unsafe there because the neighbourhood was so crowded and there were people everywhere.

I locked myself in my home almost everyday, but my sons always asked me to take them outside for walks. Then I give myself courage to go out. I went to visit a community centre and starting to make some friends. I starting to take my sons to the park and have chats with some mothers. The mothers always helped and supported each other. I don't have any family here except my husband, but my neighbourhood is part of my family now. My neighbourhood gives me a lot of strength and courage to face the challenges that I have.

The more I get to know my neighbourhood, the deeper my sense of belonging grows; it grows more and more every single day. When communities get together, everything is possible to happen. Example: When I needed to complete my IWIP workshop about bed bugs, my community gave me a lot of support and information that I could use to make my workshop successful.

Strong Communities Together is a perfect vision for CCL&D. Why? The students, teachers and workers are from different cultures, beliefs and backgrounds, but we can work together to make better and stronger communities.

I wish I would never graduate from my program at CCL&D; the positive energy that CCL&D created is really changing my personal life inside and outside.



IWIP Participant **Shinta Martin**

My Community

When I saw my neighbourhood and my building for the first time, it was on a sunny day in summer. The first thing that caught my eye was the huge number of children playing around in the gardens. The women's traditional Indian and Pakistani clothes were flying with the delicate winds in harmony with the scooters, bikes, flowers and green grass. It was a warm and safe place. I felt my family will be happy there. Some of this rosy picture changed after I lived there for three years, but the children's joyful voices and the spring flowers are still the same.

The horseshoe-like shape of the area enables it to be very convenient. The elementary school, shopping mall, library and the mosque are a few steps away. I cannot imagine moving from my beloved neighbourhood, even though the services provided to this highly crowded, newly immigrant neighbourhood cannot compete with the growing needs.

I have a dream for my community, but it is not going to come true unless all the residents cooperate together and raise their voices. My dream for the elementary school that hosts more than 1800 students is to be bigger and my dream is that we never see those ugly portables outside the schoolyard again. My dream for the hi-rise buildings is to be as bright and clean as it was 10 years ago. For the coming few years there'll be no vacant apartments. There must be a new project to add more units of houses and buildings to the area; otherwise we are going to have a housing crisis. My dream is having a wide, free basketball court, a tennis court and a huge swimming pool with days for women only. When the recreation centre that is now being renovated reopens again, some of these wishes will come true, but the other ones need harder, systematic efforts from everyone for the good of the community.



IWIP Participant **Mona Hashim**

“Strong Communities Together”

The Core Component Leading to a Healthy Neighbourhood

A community can be a strong one only when all the residents are engaged and participate in community activities with great enthusiasm. A community is a place where residents not only get services but also offer help and support to others. On the whole, it is a place where respect, friendship, understanding, and assisting exist. If everyone contributes a little bit of love to others, this community will be like a big family. When all members of the family join forces together, nothing is impossible and our goal of having a healthy neighbourhood will be achieved successfully.

As an internship student, I am now working with Action for Neighbourhood Change at Glendower Community. I participate in some activities which help me understand the strength of team work. It is great to see that by working together, our community is getting more and more strength. As I am community-oriented now and after my study, it offers me the great inspiration to devote my time to the community.

My experience in study and work enhance me with the belief that “STRONG COMMUNITIES TOGETHER” is a very good vision. It is the core of gaining healthy and desirable communities. It is a symbol of our shared determination and devotion to make strong communities collaboratively. To make strong communities, we need to work together. I am proud of being part of CCL&D and will continue to contribute and dedicate myself to communities with my skills and abilities that I learned from IWIP, as well as with STRONG COMMUNITIES TOGETHER in mind.



IWIP Participant **Lucy Ren**

IWIP Makes My Dreams Come True

I will never forget the moment in China when I stood on the platform in front of hundreds of my students and said good-bye to them. That was the last class before I quit my work and ended my career as a teacher. I felt so sad when I told them it was maybe the last time for me to share my professional knowledge with others in teaching or training. But deep in my heart, my dream was one day I still can help others with my skills and knowledge after I start my new life in my new country. My value in life is to be a helpful person to others, because I feel happy when I share my knowledge with others. This makes my life more meaningful.

Like every new immigrant, I experienced a hard time at the beginning. I could not find a job in my profession and I had to work for money to support my family. I felt that I had lost my way to a meaningful life, until I decided to do what I like.

Last year, I attended the IWIP training class at CCL&D. I became a member of IWIP, a small supportive women's circle. One of my learning goals was leading and managing a workshop in our community. It was totally achieved. I have successfully facilitated "Practical Introduction of Internet Use and Chinese Information On-line," a workshop for Chinese seniors in our community. In this workshop, I introduced them to how to get Chinese news on-line, how to search useful information on-line, and how to create a richer experience on-line. When the audience told me that they can now watch Chinese movies o-line at home after the workshop, I felt so happy that they are enjoying their life here more, even though they do not know English. I felt that I found my way leading to my meaningful life, because using my knowledge and skills to help other people living better in our community is my will and my dream. It is IWIP that made my dream come true!

Through training, I learned skills and gained knowledge from the teachers of CCL&D. My communication skills were greatly improved and I became more confident. I studied and worked not only individually but also in a team. We helped and supported each other; we also learned from each other. I felt that we, IWIP women's circle, grew together as a whole.

It is CCL&D, our trainer, leading us to be a strong community together!

Great thanks to all the members of CCL&D!



IWIP Participant **Joanna Hong**

“Strong Communities Together”

Many communities in Canada are supportive; they often have employees that are understanding of a person’s needs. My communities are all of the above and much more.

The workers that contribute to the programs are more than willing to help people achieve their goals, and watch them start a productive and successful life.

My communities are strong, powerful and helpful to the City of Toronto. One of my programs is a drop-in centre for youth between the ages of 16 to 25. They have group activities that run on certain nights of the week. They also come equipped with a food bank and they serve hot meals. My community helps with a number of other things you may need. Their staff spends days working with the homeless and the hungry, and at the end of the day (on certain nights) they just go to support even more of the homeless population. With their minds set to change our world, they set off into the night. This is the program that supported me at my weakest.

Other programs have also impacted my life by teaching me how to live independently and to never give up. They also taught me different coping skills and breathing exercises.

My communities have helped me set goals for my future and to get comfortable with giving speeches.

I believe “Strong Communities Together” is a good vision for CCL&D because they believe in us. CCL&D also helps us achieve our goals and watches us grow into successful people in whatever we want to make of this life.



Academic Upgrading Participant **Ana Acosta**

Living in my Community

I live in a very small community. My community is in my house which involves 13 women. It is good because we are involved and are all a part of the community in our day to day life. We are functional and I go to school every day. I started out working for 2 years at 6 Trinity Square, working with food preparation and serving. It was fun and it occupied a bit of my time during the week.

My small community basically gives me support and so does my friend Laura. I get support from other friends there as well. We all get support from our community, like finding available jobs on the bulletin board. We talk and we give each other support.

I am taking English, mathematics and computers at the Toronto Centre for Community Learning and Development (CCL&D). I'm even getting a new laptop computer on Saturday. I'm really happy about that and feel very fortunate.

Strong Communities Together is a good Vision for CCL&D because it gives me a sense of achievement and it makes me feel normal again.

From Academic Upgrading Participant **Odila Pepe**

Strong Communities

My community is a place where people learn self-defense, self-discipline and self-control. The martial art is called Tae Kwon Do. It is a Korean martial art. I've been taking classes for about 2 weeks. My friend is the instructor. When I'm in class I must respect him as a teacher even if we are friends.

I stay in shape, respect others and learn self-discipline. I feel a lot healthier than I was before. I'm also stress free. Learning Tae Kwon Do taught me to have better morals in life than I had before, making me a better person.

I believe if communities join together they can achieve anything because there is a saying, "joining together makes us stronger." That is why I fully support communities joining together. For example the library and CCL&D are working together so we can have our books ready for class or if we needed a book for reading.



I think if communities join together, we could share our differences and experiences to help both communities go forward. Therefore, a strong community is a good vision.

Academic Upgrading Participant **Jason Ouk**

Strong Communities

Strong Communities means: A group of people who form relationships over time by interacting regularly around shared experiences which are of interest to all of them for varying individual reasons.

Strong communities are good for people because it is good for new comers to Canada. They come knowing very little, like how to find what they need and want. The first time I separated from my family, I felt very sad. I went to Kenya with my youngest sister and my cousin. We did not have anybody to help us. We were scared, but my church community helped us very much. They came to the airport and they took us to the church. They gave us a place to live. They showed us important things that we need. I'll never forget how kind they were to us. I'll always remember them. That's why I believe strong communities are good for people.

The Toronto Centre for Community Learning and Development (CCL&D) is a place where I'm learning better English skills. Its vision is "Strong Communities Together." This is a good vision because strong communities can help people, just like the church helped me. CCL&D is helping me to achieve my goal to go to college one day.

From Academic Upgrading Participant **Helen Solomon**

Strong Communities Together

Together Eritrean people help to build a strong community in Toronto, guided by a clear vision and strong leadership. Eritrean people have good social opportunities. For example, in summer time the Eritrean community always offers a picnic when we all eat together in a park, and sometimes we hold the picnic in the country side.

Eritrean people are always working together to develop their community. The Eritrean community encourages independence, self-reliance and security of people.

The Eritrean community sometimes invites other communities or agencies to learn how they support each other. I feel like I have a family and company. I am happy to have strong communities together.

We have a good vision for CCL&D. It encourages us to help each other in achieving our goals.

Academic Upgrading Participant **Mulunesh Habol**



“Strong Communities Together”

1. Pathways

Pathways is a strong community that helps students in the neighbourhood to stay in school and it provides students with 20 TTC tickets for 2 weeks. While I was there I was treated very well. I always went to class and checked in with my S.P.S.W. The S.P.S.W are given to you by your last name and how good you are. I was changed from 3 S.P.S.W in less than 4 months. I try to give back to the community as often as I can. If that means going to the homework club and getting my work done or just going to help out with parties and doing things like mixing and screeching (which means being a D.J.)

The Pathways education program helps young people in Regent Park get back into life and start a great life with school and work. They help you get into college and get a great job. Pathways is sponsored by The Toronto Board of Education and some Toronto sports teams like the Toronto Raptors, the ARGOs and the Blue Jays. They get great help and they also get tons of tickets to go see professional sports teams play. Some of the Raptors and ARGOs come in to Pathways and chat with the students in and around the community. I can say from experience that Pathways has kept me out of trouble with the law and in school. Before Pathways I would be out until late hours of the night with friends and not go to school, but I have changed my life around now. I saw the light and it brought me back to home with the people I love and now the great friends I care about.

2. Centre for Community Learning & Development

The Centre for Community Learning & Development (CCL&D) is a great place for me because they have good teachers and they help you out when you are not doing a great job on your work. In one day my whole life changed when I came to CCL&D. It was the greatest day of my life. I knew that I was doing the right thing; I knew my reading was bad, so I tried and tried and I am getting better. CCL&D’s vision is ‘Strong Communities Together.’ This is a good vision because of the great teachers and staff that work here. By far, all my teachers are the best, like my English teacher named Mike. He can be such a great guy once you get to know him. Then you have my math and computer teacher named Bogdan. He has great confidence in what I can do, like all my division (in math) and other math subjects. Then I have another teacher named Caroline. She sometimes rocks, but don’t get her mad or she will throw a whole bunch of work at you.



Academic Upgrading Participant **Colin Bryant Singh**

Strong Communities Together

Our Lithuanian community plays an important role in our lives. We have to connect ourselves with communities and to model good citizenship. For example, every Sunday, families come to church to attend the mass and give donations to our charities. Our church was recently built, with a lot of money donated by the Lithuanian community to construct the building. The church includes a library, two halls and a kitchen to cater to our events and activities. Our church has an organist and three choirs; children, adults and seniors. After Sunday's mass, people gather in the halls to meet, talk and share traditional food with their families or friends.

Many special events take place in our church in which nearly the entire community gathers, including Christmas mass, Mother's Day, Children's First Communion and the Lithuanian Independence Day.

Another event, which gathers a lot of people in the neighbourhood, including non-Lithuanians, is our Rummage Sale. Most church parishioners try to help in some way. For example, they bring all the unnecessary items from their homes including clothes, furniture, sport equipment, dishes, etc. Others choose to bake cakes or cookies, or to volunteer in preparing and selling furniture, books and other items. After the sale, the church collects the money to help maintain our charities, including the Lithuanian Language School. Some of the money is sent to Lithuania for the elderly, poor and orphans.

Our Lithuanian community also has different sports clubs for children and adults, and folk dance groups.

CCL&D has some similarities with the Lithuanian community. For example, we get together to discuss main ideas, focus on the important tasks to do and solve them in a group. That way, our group can get stronger and win success. We have a good Vision for CCL&D: to care about others, to help each other to attain goals, and to celebrate our achievements.

From Academic Upgrading Participant **Estera**

Strong Communities Together

I believe building a new, better community makes a strong community together. For example, start with the blueprint foundation of the new and redeveloped Regent Park Community. I can see new buildings are going up and the older buildings are being knocked down; furthermore, I see the residents of the remaining neighbourhood moving out faster than I thought they could.

To make the situation better, the builders show us the pictures of the new housing project, with a fancy-looking, glassy-type of condominium building style and also with a shopping centre and a huge swimming pool. The new shopping centre and office buildings will benefit the community in education, healthcare, childcare, security and employment services. It will also benefit us at the Centre for Community Learning & Development.

A community that joins forces by coming together and supporting each other makes it a strong and better community for us and for our children to come.



Academic Upgrading Participant **R. Speid**

Strong Communities Together

Communities are like bricks that need foundation, the mix of different substances to make them strong and last for a lifetime. Every community consists of different people who all have one thing in common. They all give to the society, to the other people, to the world. We are the people that make the community stand strong. It is not the building or the facility, but us as a community; as a family, we are special. When I think about community, I think of schools, churches, fundraisers, neighbourhoods, and many, many more, that help us all feel inner peace and a warm welcome in our hearts. We can find communities that allow us to grow socially, and be able to share our inner thoughts. We can find communities for children and adults in many places that welcome families. Belonging to a community makes us feel special, it guides us to a better understanding of ourselves.

One particular community I am close to is Centre for Community Learning & Development. From the first time I came in to this community to upgrade my learning skills, I felt a warm welcome and a sense of belonging. Everyone happily welcomed me there. This was the place where I wanted to learn and develop. With every accomplishment, I felt myself grow and become stronger. I trust my teachers and my fellow students so that I can be successful in life. Our community is based on friends, family and relationships; we fully understand each other. We comfort one another and we develop long term goals for our future. We support and care for our classmates. In our society we need more communities like this one to be able to find inner peace, to give hope and feel good about what we do in life. Communities help people to overcome weaknesses and fears, so that they can sense inner peace and confidence in themselves.

I feel I made the right choice to come to this community, so I could fulfill my dreams and goals. This place supported me emotionally through hard times. I found my confidence and support from them, to go on farther in my life, as a student. My school gave me a better vision of my life and a better path to go on. This community makes me feel I'm not alone, and my life journey has just started. People are there for me, and I'm there for them. They have inspired me to be stronger and wiser in my decision making. A community is a vision of our dreams and we make it a reality.



Academic Upgrading Participant
Joanna Domienik
displays new CPR Certification

“Strong Communities Together”

I live in a very strong supportive Community that is helpful and caring. Without the help I’m getting in the Community, I would be lost and have no place to turn to in life

The place where I live is called Evangel Hall, I moved there in 2006. The experience there was really different because I had lived with my family for a very long time. This move was hard for me because at the time I was going through a lot of personal problems.

Evangel Hall gets the residents involved in the Community by having us participate in the planting of our first garden. Also, we are involved in keeping up with the maintenance of the garden and taking care of the property. We have summer barbecues, field trips and movie nights with the people that live there.

Evangel Hall gives the residents the confidence and the self-esteem to get back on track and focused on their goals in life. This is a Strong Community that I live in.

The Toronto Centre for Community Learning and Development (CCL&D) is another strong supportive Community. CCL&D has given me the opportunity to achieve my goals. I have gained the confidence, and the self esteem to move forward in life. When I came to CCL&D I knew how to read, but I didn’t know how to spell or word sentences properly. With the help of Caroline and Mike I’ve gained the skills and confidence to become more creative in writing. I also want to thank Bogdan for giving me the confidence and the opportunity to improve my math and computer skills. I especially want to thank my tutors Isabel for English, and Tim, for math. Without their extra help I don’t know where I’d be right now.

“Strong Communities Together” is a good vision for CCL&D because they are a very committed organization that helps their students to achieve in their learning ability, move forward, and get ahead in life. CCL&D also provides a hands-on learning environment and they prepare us for the real world. CCL&D has been a good learning environment because the instructors are very passionate, caring, understanding.



Academic Upgrading Participant **Joe Hamerlik**

Strong Communities Together

Whenever I volunteer in my community, I develop personal skills and walk away with a feeling of happiness that is priceless to me. There are various tasks to choose from when we are building a bridge to a strong community.

My responsibility in one volunteer program is creating awareness of an issue that affects the environment. As a result of being involved with other people in the project, I have become more patient and tolerant towards others.

During my work on this activity, I was able to practice my communication and writing skills, which I learned at the Centre for Community Learning & Development. It felt great to have a sense of belonging and meeting people who might not notice me otherwise.

My eagerness has given me the confidence to accomplish my tasks to the best of my ability. Learning to compromise and negotiate with others helps me to work better in a team, which is an important tool for success.

My small contributions do make a difference in the community. I have come to appreciate the little things that give me satisfaction, when things are accomplished and others are helped in many ways.

I had never heard the cry of nature calling out for help, but I have learned the importance of the environment through involvement and taking action.

I have now found a new love for the environment and I can strive to do my part in helping it stay strong. I do my part by recycling and picking up litter. This helps to boost my own self-esteem and self-confidence

Having this opportunity to be a member of a strong community has enabled me to demonstrate my skills and ability, and it has helped me become more aware of my potential.



Academic Upgrading Participant **Andrea Searles**



CCL&D at International Literacy Day 2007, Toronto City Hall



Joanna, Mona, Lucy participate in a Clear Writing Workshop with Sally McBeth



IWIP participants work on WHMIS Online Certification
(Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System)



Academic Upgrading participants display recently earned
Basic CPR Certification

Writing Contest 2008

“To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone.”

-Reba McEntire, actress, singer

Each year we conduct a writing contest for all CCL&D participants. Many, many thanks go out to the three judges from the Board of Directors: Doug Cooke, Christine Hughes and Lisa Alleyne. Our judges volunteered many hours to assess and add constructive comments to each of the 16 entries.

To obtain the complete collection of Writing Contest entries, please contact CCL&D. Here are a few selected entries:

Where there is a Will, there is a Way

By Joanna H.

If I tell you a story about someone who learned how to swim in her sixties and still swims a 1000-meter in the pool everyday, what would you think about her? Is she great? Yes, this great woman is my mom.

When I was young, my mom taught me that to be successful you must always do your best and never give up. That was what she did as a role model for me and my sister. When she retired from a senior accountant position, she found new interests in reading and playing ping-pong. One day, my aunt told my mom that swimming is good for controlling high-blood pressure; then she decided to learn how to swim and believe she could be a good swimmer.

It was so hard for her to learn these new athletic skills especially, exchanging breath and treading water. At the beginning of her swim instruction, she often swallowed the pool water and would sometimes choke on the water. She was never afraid of that, if she swallowed too much water at one time, she said to my dad that she couldn't drink tea any more because she was full and smiled. Sometimes she followed my aunt's instruction and worked on it; and other times she just stood beside the pool to watch how others swam. Then she began practicing over and over again to improve her physical actions, after many attempts, she finally announced with pride to her family "I learned swimming in my sixties."

Reba McEntire once said "To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone and a funny bone." In other words, follow your dreams, stay persistent, and don't lose your sense of humor. With the combination of confidence, courage, intestinal fortitude, and a little bit of a sense of humor, my mom became a good swimmer and got healthier. She demonstrated to me that one could be very successful even in their retired life.

My Path of Success

By Nadia

A famous actress and singer Reba McEntire once said, “To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone.” Here is how this saying worked out for me and led to my success.

I definitely had a wishbone, which helped me to achieve my dreams in a difficult time. I was twenty-seven years old, already divorced, and very poor. My husband had taken everything: the fridge, the stove, the TV, and VCR. I had to start over and do something by myself. I dreamed about my own business and searched for a product to produce. One day I found it. It was small, soft, cute, sweet, and easy to make. It was a toy. I was happy, viewing a bright future.

I knew a backbone attitude would help me to overcome all obstacles. I had the foundation: knowing how to produce; but I had no money to start. I borrowed some from my father, bought the materials, and first pieces were made. I liked the toys so much, and I was so happy, without even knowing whether I was going to be able to sell them. Of course, everything did not go too smoothly. I tried to sell them in kiosks and stores but not one was sold.

Then I went to the craft market and started selling them by myself. I could not believe my eyes. For three days I sold all the toys I had made. Now all I had to do was to make more toys. Later on, the business expanded, and I improved the toys by putting a whistle inside. Everything had gone so well, and I produced the toys for five years. My backbone worked well for me.

I always had a positive view about my success and here is where my funny bone worked. I was creative but I never took things too seriously, and that helped me to be more productive.

Having a wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone attitude gave me strength. My life changed completely. I was happy.



Academic Upgrading student **Nadia Miloucheva**

The Bones that Move me Forward

By Joanna D.

What makes us successful in life? There are many personal qualities to help overcome obstacles in our life. We do our best to be successful and to achieve everything that is desirable; therefore, we are looking for ways to find our happiness. How do people achieve their success in life? Is it their money or maybe their hard work? What about their personality? A person with a backbone is usually strong and can overcome many life difficulties. A person with a backbone is a strong individual who overcomes obstacles in life, who has confidence, determination and ambition to succeed.

In many different ways I can say that I am this person. I overcame many obstacles in my life that I had to deal with. I had to make decisions about how to change my life and make the best of it. With my backbone, I did the best to motivate myself to achieve my goals and to move forward in life. My life has not always being easy for me, but I am determined to build a strong foundation for my daughter and myself. I want to succeed!

I could say that I am a dreamer, who has carried a wish bone through most of her life. I have wishes and goals. I believe in myself! In my life I want to have a better living, a better future, stability, and the best things that life has to offer. One of my dreams is to become a nurse and reach out to those in need. I visualize my success through my wishes to make them my reality.

However, life is not all about being serious, productive or even indestructible. I think we all need a little laughter; not everything is always perfect. Sometimes, when things get a little rough and the world's weight is on our shoulders, we need a good sense of humor to laugh it off. Everyone needs a funny bone to remind them to see life in a positive view. We shouldn't take things too seriously and let ourselves get distracted from daily routine. "Every minute spent being sad is sixty seconds of unhappiness." Sometimes I lose myself in a world of perfect harmony, and distract myself from my worries and problems, so I don't let stress overload me. I try to see problems in a different light and perspective. When things get tough and I don't seem able to go on anymore, I tell myself, "I breathe, I live and the rest will follow" With my funny bone working for me, I let wonderful things come my way.

I would like to tell a story of who I am and what made me to be. My story begins when I was 21. My life then was different from what it is now. I was happy, busy, and I had so much going on, with so little to worry about. But all this changed when I found out I was pregnant. I felt overwhelmed, confused, and devastated. I felt like my perfect world had collapsed around me. My boyfriend, my closest friend, shut down emotionally. Our relationship fell apart; neither of us could communicate nor reach out to the other. I was all alone, feeling lost and abandoned. I didn't know where to go or what to do. Month after month, my life turned into a twisted and rocky road. Everything around me spun and twisted, drawing me deeper and deeper into sadness. To make things worse, I found out I had a blood defect which meant I could not only lose my growing baby, but my own life too. I took a chance! I thought if life gave me this opportunity to have this baby growing, I should be thankful and let life take its own course. I guess some things in life are just meant to be, and some are not. I moved forward and became strong. I knew I made the right decision.

Today I am happy and very lucky to have a wonderful little girl, who fills my life with all kinds of happiness; there is never a cloud or a gloomy day. She is my life my inspiration, my air, my heart. I would never give away the tears and laughter of the months and years that I went through. A backbone, a wish bone and a funny bone made me today a better person, a strong woman, and a loving mother. In my life I found my place, my belonging. I am someone to somebody. I am proud to stand strong and cherish all that I have, because I have only one life to live.



Joanna D. helping out at
CCL&D's Word on the Street booth, Sept. 2007

Twilight Beyond Night

By Christina

Life is the combination of countless tastes: sweet, sour, and bitter....This is life. We live on dreams, strive for dreams and enjoy the process of dreaming. To succeed in life, we do need of three things: a wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone.

I never thought my life could change into something so different when I was over 40 years old. When we landed in Canada in October 2006, we were totally lost. Everything had to start from the scratch, we had to register my daughter for school, learn how to take TTC, and how to get ready for the official certificates as well. We were also very puzzled about what my husband and I were going to do in this new country. How many times my warm and sweet home in China came to me in my dreams, my relatives, my friends, and my job; even some beautiful landscapes, my favorite foods would come to my mind clearly and more attractive than before, this would make tears run down my face, but I was able to hold on. I knew there was a strong voice in my heart that said, "tomorrow is much better than today." The wishbone helped me to survive the hardest time in my life.

My husband and I went back to study English with our backpacks which we hadn't used for about 18 years. After we came back home, we almost forgot that we spent so much time learning. My daughter had no friends at that time, she wasn't happy at all, she was struggling with English and it affected other subjects. Then there was the financial stress. We realized we needed to find employment as soon as possible. My husband found a labor job. He worked from 3:00pm to 12:00pm. After a few days, he got sick, and then he was fired. I couldn't find a job at that time, but we were inspired and encouraged by each other as a family. Life taught us to have a backbone and enhance the strength of that backbone.

Everybody who knows my family always say, "you have a very happy and harmonious family." That's true, even in our difficult times, we could find chances to get together and enjoy ourselves, we played cards and made each other laugh, we cooked together, and even though I cooked so badly, my daughter and my husband ate everything and told me it was delicious. We went on nature, walks with some friends. We loved totally relaxing and were impressed by the beauty of nature. We slowly began to love the new country. We felt we were a part of this new country. We were allowing our funny bone to shine.

To see twilight beyond night means I own a wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone in my life. Keep this in mind, and you will always enjoy a healthy and a happy life.

“Becoming a Social Service Provider is Not Easy”

By Nadira

Success is the achievement of something what we desire, plan, or attempt. If we aim to accomplish and put everything into it within reason, then we usually could give ourselves credit as having success. Success is also a large part of evaluating how satisfied we are with life and ourselves. For me setting personal goals and following through with hard work is success.

To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone and a funny bone."-- Reba McEntire. Without those three things success is not only impossible but also dreams that never come true.

Wishbone means a dream that we believe a wish, goal or aspiration what inspires us along the pathway to success. Having goals gives our lives a sense of meaning and purpose. To attain the success that we want, we need to dream. Every success story starts with big dreams, and we need to have a clear vision of what we want to achieve. Setting realistic goals in your life can help you achieve all that you dream of. Take your dreams and turn them into goals, and we will achieve what we are dreaming of. Without goals, dreams, we are like a ship that has sails without destination. Therefore, if you want to be successful, you must have a wishbone.

Backbone means strength, determination and hard work that help us to achieve our goal. No one achieves success just by sitting and staring at the wall every single day. Working hard is easy when we have a clear goal, a vision, and passion for what we do. When people succeed in life, it is because of hard work. So I would like to say that, the road to success comes through hard work and determination. That's why a backbone is key to success.

Funny bone means to put on an optimistic, pleasant front; be energetic and positive of mind so that you can be happy in every situation whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Always try to be optimistic in every matter. We should not forget about the problems that might come up on the way but we should prepare for remembering that, “Life is not a bed of roses.” So not only positive thinking is important but also preparedness. So we avoid being shocked or devastated when obstacles appear. Having a funny bone will give you a feeling as you push through challenges on the road to success of satisfaction, and help you to be successful.

I would now like to share a personal story, as a human being, I also have a wish. I want to become a successful social service worker where I want to help women who need empowerment. My big goal is to create my own organization and try to help immigrant women who face various problems when they came here to Canada. I would like to help them overcome the problems they face in the first few months upon arriving here. I want to do things differently from any other social service organization, that's why I applied to the CCL&D – IWIP Training Course. This course is assisting me in accomplishing my goal. I know it is hard work for me to juggle two big responsibilities at the same time: studying and to taking care of my family, but I am determined to do my best to do both properly.

Whether I am successful or not, I will try to be happy and positive. I believe that if I am hard working, success is possible for me one day. It could be after a few years or several years from now, this is adequate for me. So finally, I would like to say as long as you have a dream (wishbone), prepare and work hard (backbone), and remain optimistic (funny bone), you will succeed.



Sarah, Nadira and Odette participate in True Colors® Workshop

Strong Communities Together

“Strong Communities Together” is a clear vision statement that guides us in our classroom work. Our students form a community in which they encourage and help each other to achieve their goals. As a community, they share their challenges, and they celebrate together when they meet and overcome those challenges.

When the students come together for the first time, they are usually strangers to one another and rather protective of themselves. After a day or two together, they start to reach out to the others in the class, getting to know each other and figuring out what they have in common. By the time a month has passed, they are friends and members of a community. In this community, they clearly care about one another.

They bond with the other communities at the Centre for Community Learning & Development to become one strong community together.

It has been a privilege to witness the building of these strong communities over the past year, and, for Level 4, to have been a part of that process. Have a wonderful, and safe, summer! To those of you who are moving on, best wishes for continued success in your new communities. I’m looking forward to seeing in September those of you who are returning to the CCL&D community to continue your path to your goals.

Eleanor McKechnie
Level 4 Instructor



Eleanor at Word on the Street Sept, 2007

Strong Communities Together

Today, July 17, 2008, we bring to a close another successful year at Centre for Community Learning & Development. In 2007/2008 our closely-knit and supportive community of Academic Upgrading and IWIP participants, has created many shared memories: the holiday party, Communications Management Techniques classes, CPR training, Know Your Rights workshop, Bed Bugs workshop, WHMIS training, and ESL classes. Two programs working together make CCL&D a stronger, more cohesive community.

This new evolution in the life of our agency has led to intense learning from one another and the formation of friendships across classrooms and programs as never before. The change is most palpable at this time of year, as participants end their year and prepare to move on independently. When one participant said, "I wish I would never graduate," she was voicing what we all are feeling. We wish this closeness and support would last for ever, but our strong community will endure. In addition, we are learning to build stronger communities, and this skill will serve each of us well as we move on to the next stage of our life's journey.

2007/2008 was a truly an outstanding session. We created a new high point in the life of our agency. Working together makes us stronger. Next year staff will be working very hard to reach, and maybe even surpass, this year's high levels of achievement.

Thank you and congratulations to all participants. Your courage under difficult situations and dedicated hard work is an inspiration to us all. Also, Thank You to our wonderful faculty and staff at CCL&D. Each morning I look forward to coming in to the office, greeting staff and interacting with Toronto's most creative, inspiring, supportive, and dedicated office-mates.

To those participants who ending their time at CCL&D: You never end your connection to us. Please keep in touch as you move on to your next step. We are so proud of your achievements and please know that it has been an honour to play a small part in your success.

To those who will be returning next year: I look forward to seeing you September 8, 2008 so we can continue the journey together.

To All: Have a safe and relaxing summer. Enjoy your well deserved rest.

Brenda Silver
Coordinator, Academic Upgrading Programs



**“Communities are built around meaningful relationships.
The strength of those communities
comes from the heart, the soul, and the spirit of those that belong in it.”**

My experience with CCL&D has been phenomenal! It's about how CCL&D and a small, tightly-knot group of kindred spirits make things possible. It's CCL&D's passion for excellence, the drive to be the best, the commitment to community service, caring of our family of staff and program participants that makes it a strong community. And that's my community! Inspiring, growing, learning, sharing, and just plain AMAZING!!!

The past training year had been full of surprises!

Our program participants from the Academic Upgrading Program made huge leaps and bounds in their effort to move forward and make a difference. They took on the challenging tasks that confronted them, and they prevailed!

Our Leaders-in-Training from the Community Leadership & Development Program – Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP) painstakingly accepted the demands of their course; the challenge of learning new theories and concepts on Theory of Change, Community Capacity-Building and Community Development, among others, and be able to apply and share it.

Majority of them said they never thought they could do it. Truth is they had it in them all along. They just needed a little prodding. Most of all, they needed to believe!

To all of you, my congratulations and best wishes for a job well-done! You guys ROCK!!! Remember that your perseverance and hard-work are key to accomplishing your goals. See obstacles as opportunities to learn. Don't ever stop learning and growing!



A quick note to my mentors and colleagues in the office: We at times differ in opinions but somehow we always find ways and means to settle – and come up with brilliant ideas and results. How awesome is that? We look at things through varying lenses but I know we have a shared vision of piecing things together to better serve and continue strengthening our programs and our community. Thank you for the learning experience, every single day!

Maria Navarro
Director of Training and Development

Sharing Strengths

As the year draws to a close, I feel as though I began my vision for both the I.W.I.P. and Academic Upgrading students on my own island; but have finished the year in a village of sorts. I am so proud of all the students in both programs, it is quite amazing how much progress was made and how many success stories have been shared.

This is the first year since beginning my teaching career here, back in 2000, that I have felt such interconnectedness between students, instructors, and their training. Learning goals were achieved; strong friendships were forged; mutual respectfulness developed between student and teacher; teacher and student.

For all my students in both programs: continue to build on the skills and knowledge you have obtained this year, and share it with your family, friends, and communities; as you move forward on your respective learning paths.

Through our shared learning experience this year; each and everyone of you has strengthened my own capacity to know, grow, and share with others, and for that I am sincerely grateful.

For those who are leaving CCL&D remember you are capable and courageous, and for those who are returning stay, motivated and positive.

There is a Haudenasaunee Proverb from the Seneca Nation that says, “He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone.” I believe all our students are able to apply this teaching, because of the team work they exhibited with their peers and within the greater community this year.

Caroline Outten
Coordinator, Training Resource Development/
Academic Upgrading and I.W.I.P. Trainer



My Year at CCL&D

Now that it comes to writing about CCL&D and my past school year here, I must admit that I have some trouble knowing where to start. I have enjoyed my time here. It is a great learning environment – hence it's also a great teaching environment; and, in many ways I will be coming out of this year with more than I ever came with.

As a teacher there are times when I would like to impart the illusion that I'm knowledgeable about most subjects that come up. Unfortunately the reality is that I'm not. I don't really know all about the struggles that my students face and the obstacles that they overcome in order to find a way to get to school and better themselves academically.

I must admit that the more I have learned, the more I have been impressed. I would like to take this chance to thank my students for the effort and the general tone of lighthearted respect that has been present in the class since I have come here. Generally I've found that my class has been an accepting and supporting group, no matter how much one person may get on another person's nerves.

Personally I think this group that I'm involved with is a great picture of a supportive community. You have a group of people with outstanding differences and difficulties in life, all working towards separate goals with one thing in common. They want to improve their academic skills; and they are willing to work with, accept, help and sometimes even ignore each other when needed to reach these goals.

The reality is that this micro community could not function well without the input of the administrative staff from CCL&D. Therefore, I would like to thank the administration for their help. I must also thank the other teachers, Bogdan, Eleanor and Caroline for support and guidance - and sometimes just great conversation. Lastly I must thank my students, who know so much, but often just need a little bit of help to get it on paper – Joe, congratulations, Ana - I do listen and yes you have a lot of important things to say - Colin, I've been very impressed with your work ethic in school and out- Odila, you get to school every day before I do and that's very impressive - Jason, you're a very understanding person who is full of talent - Doug and Helen, I haven't seen as much of you two but I can tell that you're both full of talent. Finally I'd like to wish everybody a great summer. Keep on track with your studies.



Mike Rashleigh
Level 3/4 Instructor