

LITERACY: FOCUSED ON THE WORKPLACE

Vignettes and Learning Activities
focusing on the
Literacy - Workplace Link

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KEN'S STORY

Tell me about your family and where you grew up.

Ken: I grew up near MacGregor, Manitoba. My mother was from Sandy Bay First Nation and Dad was from Long Plain First Nation. Dad worked for a farmer. Mom stayed at home and looked after us. There were seven kids in our family, so she was busy. My parents did not encourage us to speak Saulteaux, but I do understand it and can speak it some.

What is your favourite memory of your childhood?

Ken: I loved to go hunting with my Dad. I remember my first successful hunt. I got a bird. The family had a feast to celebrate and invited all the neighbours. Even today, I use the hunting skills I learned from my Dad.

What are your memories of school and learning to read?

Ken: School was tough for me. I had to study hard to understand the work. My marks were not bad. Being aboriginal in a non aboriginal school made it difficult socially too. I never played hooky. My parents would not have liked it if I had. I got my Grade 10, and then our family moved to town. There were other things that happened and my going to school became less important.

Tell me about your first job.

Ken: When I was in school I worked at the butcher shop in town part-time.

After you left school, what did you do?

Ken: Well, my first job was with my brother at a plumbing shop in town. I liked it there and the work was good. They were willing to put me through the apprenticeship program, but the day I was to leave for school, I did not show up for work. From there I ended up doing labour jobs like masonry, carpenter's helper and working the midnight shift at 7-11. Those jobs were hardwork. After awhile I went back to a plumbing shop and began to do the apprenticeship program.

How did that go?

Ken: I found that I had the basics for the work I needed to learn. I had to think back and remember somethings I knew already. I learned that I am good at thinking things through. I can see how something should be done in my mind, then I am able to draw out a plan for how to do the work. The thing I have found the hardest has been doing the math for electrical conversions. You have to get those right!

Have you taken any other courses since you got your plumbing papers?

Ken: Right now I am working on my gas fitters ticket. I goto school two nights a week and Saturdays. I have to do my studying around my work. It is busy. In the future I want to take the air exchange and ventilation program too. I also learn a lot through my work. Every time I have to do a job using new materials, I read the books that come with the things. This way I learn a lot.

Today you have your own business don't you?

Ken: Yes, three and a half years ago I left the company where I had worked for many years and started my own business. Most of the work I do is for an aboriginal community near where I live. I enjoy working on my own.

You have three sons and two daughters. What do you tell them about studying and working?

Ken: I always tell them they are smart and that they can do a good job. I tell them to work hard, be honest, pay their bills on time and to show respect. I don't know if any of my family will do the same work I do, but I want them to find work where they are happy. If you are happy with your work, you will be good at it.

KEN'S STORY Vocabulary Match

Match these words with the meanings below.
Write the word in the blank by the meaning you choose.

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| childhood | difficult |
| speak | labour job |
| favourite | butcher shop |
| memory | apprenticeship |
| feast | conversions |
| neighbours | important |
| community | materials |

1. a way of learning a skill _____
2. changes _____
3. work one does with ones hands and muscles _____
4. the time one is a child _____
5. of value _____
6. a place to buy meat _____
- 7 things used to do a job _____
8. hard _____
9. a big meal _____
10. something remembered _____
11. a group of people living together _____
12. something one likes a lot _____
13. to say _____
14. people living close by _____

KEN'S STORY

Learning About Past Tense

PART 1

Past tense is used to talk about things that have happened already. Write the past tense by adding the -ed ending to the root words below.

1. work _____
2. stay _____
3. look _____
4. learn _____
5. play _____
6. start _____

PART 2

Circle the correct form of the verb in each sentence.

1. Mom (stayed, stay) at home and (look, looked) after us.
2. Dad (worked, work) for a farmer.
3. I (has, had) to study hard
4. I (has, have) three sons and two daughters.
5. Our family (moves, moved) to town.
6. I (learns, learn) a lot through my work.
7. My marks (was, were) not too bad.
8. I (learned, learn) that I am good at thinking.
9. You have to (got, get) them right.

SAKSAY'S STORY

Today Saksay lives and works in Canada, along way from where he was born in Laos and lived in Thailand.

Saksay came to Canada when he was six years old with his parents, three brothers and one sister. The family lived in a small town and the children began school at once. The first thing they had to do was learn to speak and to read English! He learned new English words as his teacher showed him pictures and told him the name of each thing. Saksay remembers the older students from the high school coming to read with them in their special class. The story he liked best was: Clifford, The Big Red Dog. It was also fun to learn about the Canadian holidays and get treats at Halloween!

Math was easy for Saksay! The math he had done in his home land was harder than what he was first asked to do in his new school.

School was very important to Saksay, his brothers and his sister. His parents wanted them to work hard and to do well. In Thailand, a family has to pay so that the children can goto school. To be able to goto school for free was very unusual and not to be wasted. At home in Thailand, only the very smart would get to go beyond highschool. Most young people would learn a trade from someone in the family. Now they were in Canada, all of the children were expected to take further education.

At age 14, when he had finished Grade6, Saksay remembers beginning to work weekends picking mushrooms at the mushroom farm where his mother worked. The money he earned had to be used to help his family.

After finishing high school, Saksay took a two year college course in Business Administration. When he went looking for work, he found that employers wanted people with experience. Without business experience, job hunting was hard.

Saksay then decided to use a skill he had first learned as a young boy - cooking! He went to a technical school and began to take a commercial cooking course through apprentice ship. "People need to eat," says Saksay of this career choice. Today he uses his business training along with his cooking skills when he prices menus, prepares schedules and does kitchen inventory. One day Saksay would like to own his own restaurant.

"Work is an important part of life," says Saksay. He tells people to look for work they will enjoy. The job he has liked the most was at a Tim Horton's Children's Foundation camping Kananaskis, Alberta. He worked there cooking meals for 160 to 200 people and managing a staff of seven for 3 months one summer. Special foods had to be prepared for some campers. In his off duty hours he spent time with the children doing crafts and playing games. "It was fun!" he says with a grin.

Thinking about work, Saksay says, "After you learn from books, learn more by watching other people. Get lots of experience. Take pride in your work."

SAKSAY'S STORY

When one reads a story, there are often words that are new. If two people read the same story, they may each find different words that are new to them.

Read Saksay's Story again and choose 6 or more words that you would like to learn more about. You will then use the Vocabulary Square frame to record what you are learning about the words you have chosen. If you need help, ask a literacy tutor or another learner.

Because you may not have used a Vocabulary Square frame before, an example has been prepared for you to follow.

| | |
|--|---|
| WORD PARTS (root words, prefixes etc.) mush room | WORD mushroom |
| WORD MEANING A fungus that is eaten as a food, may be eaten raw or cooked. Grows in dark, damp places. | PICTURE  |

VOCABULARY SQUARE FRAME

| | |
|--|----------------|
| WORD PARTS (root words, prefixes etc.) | WORD |
| WORD MEANING | PICTURE |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| WORD PARTS (root words, prefixes etc.) | WORD |
| WORD MEANING | PICTURE |

SAKSAY'S STORY

Answering W-5 Questions

Answer the following questions using complete sentences. Remember that a good sentence begins with a capital letter, ends with a period and tells one complete thought.

1. Where was Saksay born?

2. Who came to Canada with Saksay?

3. What was the first thing that Saksay had to learn at school!

4. How did Saksay's teacher, teach him new words?

5. What did Saksay find easy at school?

6. Where did Saksay work when he was 14 years old?

7. Why did Saksay decide to take a cooking course?

8. When did Saksay cook at the children's camp?

MAKING COMPARISONS

Read Ken's Story and Saksay's Story again. Using the chart below, compare Ken's and Saksay's stories about school, getting a job and why they like their work. Write your answers in the boxes.

| | KEN | SAKSAY |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------|
| First job | | |
| Grade in school completed | | |
| How job skills were learned | | |
| Works for self or for others | | |
| How new things for work are learned | | |
| Beliefs about work | | |