

# FULL CIRCLE

## 20 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT STUDIES AT FRONTIER COLLEGE

REFLECTIONS ON A VISION:  
MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT  
TO PROVIDE INTEGRATED LEARNING  
FOR ADULTS



FRONTIER COLLEGE INDEPENDENT STUDIES MAY 2002



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OF INDEPENDENT STUDIES (I.S.)  
AT FRONTIER COLLEGE

REFLECTIONS ON A VISION:  
MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE  
INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

COMPILED BY **DAVID GREIG**



*Karen, Dani and Adrian*

## PUBLISHER



Frontier College Frontière

HELPING CANADA READ

ENSEMBLE POUR MIEUX LIRE

© 2002 Frontier College Press

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the following people who made this book possible:

- **David Greig**, Independent Studies Manager, for project development, research, editing, and writing
- Independent Studies staff (current and past) **Susan Macdonald, Cathy Berry, Angela Outwater**, and **Flora Hood** for contributions and suggestions.
- **John Hawkins** of *Inter Access – Information Design* for design, typesetting, graphics, production.
- Former Frontier College staff who shaped and developed Independent Studies over the years (please forgive us if we've excluded anyone by oversight) **Marsha Forest, Marilyn Collins, Laurie Hornell, Tracy Carpenter, Ed Wadley, Rita Mancini, Elaine Benton**, and others.
- And finally to all the **students, tutors** and **friends** of Independent Studies for making our program so amazing.

*Cover photo of **Edward Uyeyama***

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## **PREFACE BY JOHN DANIEL O'LEARY, PRESIDENT FRONTIER COLLEGE**

Twenty years ago, the members of Frontier College were asking ourselves, "Where is the frontier?"

As ever, the world was changing. The mines, logging camps and railgangs where Frontier had worked and taught for decades were disappearing; people were living in cities and large communities; technology was changing our lives. In the midst of all this, we asked, where should we be teaching?

Then, one crisp, autumn morning a young woman, Marilyn Collins, small of stature but with an enormous heart, marched into the College and announced: "I have a frontier for you!"

Marilyn took us to institutions and group homes where large numbers of young adults with physical or intellectual disabilities lived. And she told us how most of these people had never been to school, had never been given a chance to reach out for their dreams through education.

"These people want to learn. I'm going to teach them. And you, Frontier College, you're going to help!"

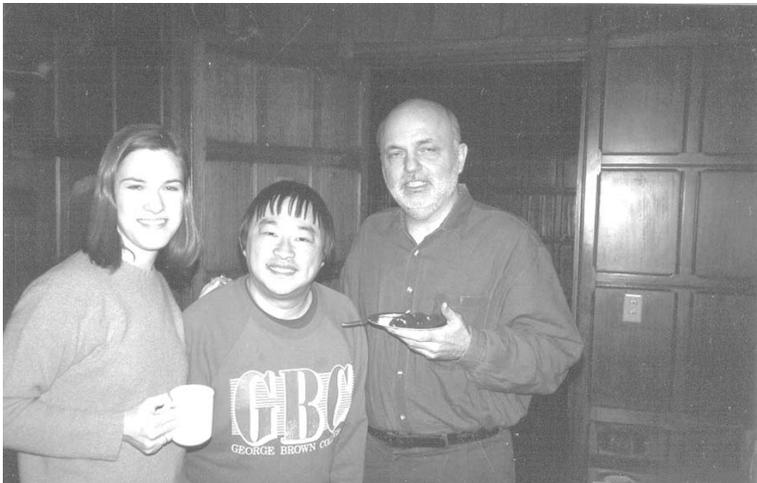
And so began the program we now call Independent Studies.

Marsha Forest, the wonderful teacher who developed the Student Centred Individualized Learning (SCIL) program, was, with Marilyn,

the original driving spirit of I.S. It was Marsha who taught us that education is a celebration and in this spirit we are celebrating 20 years of the I.S. program.

Most weekdays now, the College is busy and bustling as people gather, grab a coffee, laugh and get settled for a morning of learning and teaching. The faces have changed and are changing. Some people stay a short while. Some stay longer. But each person brings something pure and precious with them - a dream. The dream may be simple. It may be grand. But it is the pursuit and attainment of these dreams through the power of literacy and learning that animates, that sparks, the students, tutors and staff of our I.S. program.

**John Daniel O'Leary, May 2002**



*Maebh and Edward with John O'Leary*

## INTRODUCTION BY DAVID GREIG



*I.S. staff December 2001 (from left): Cathy Berry, Susan Macdonald, David Greig, Angela Outwater*

When I began to think about what to write as an introduction to this book, a quote I had used in a previous context immediately came to mind. I worked briefly for the UNESCO Institute for Education's Alpha project from 1994 to 1996 and was privileged to attend and document a number of international conferences on "literacy". The quote below is taken from a report I wrote in 1995 that documented the particular conferences that produced the UNESCO Institute for Education's *Alpha 96: Literacy and Work* (edited by Jean-Paul Hautecoeur). This quote illustrates for me the philosophical approach to the work that we have

been trying to do in the Independent Studies program at Frontier College for the past 20 years:

*In the September 19 (1995) issue of Fortune Magazine, the cover story was entitled, The End Of The Job. Fortune Magazine is a widely read American business publication catering to an audience of corporate managers, executives, and other "business people". The article concluded that if (business) organizations are to continue and survive the post-recession restructuring of work, they must do two things: "First, get rid of jobs. Second, redesign the organization (or workplace) to get the best of the de-jobbed worker. A big task, sure. But like any evolutionary change, it will separate the survivors from the extinct."*

*It is the term "the extinct" that is germane to literacy practitioners and educators. It is hardly surprising that a business magazine would take such a Darwinian "survival of the fittest" point of view in relation to work. In the world of business, there have always been "winners" and "losers". Competition ("dog eat dog") has always been the determining concept behind pure market capitalism. The question that has always troubled those who are concerned less with competition and more with social justice is:*

***What becomes of those who have been labelled "extinct"?***

What indeed becomes of those people labelled "extinct" by a competitive culture and society who see them as "losers" with no value? Many are hidden in institutions, kept behind locked doors,

provided with sheltered workshops. Many are people who have been labelled with a “disability” or are simply seen as too different from the ordinary “winners” to possibly have anything to contribute to their communities.

Twenty years ago, the Independent Studies program at Frontier College actively chose to work with “the extinct”. I.S. began to devise programming that would work to integrate all marginalized people, but especially people labelled “disabled”, into a welcoming community of learning. The task was not easy back then. And it’s still not easy today. But we persevere.

We persevere to provide a space in which all people can be integrated into a learning community that champions each individual’s unique gifts and contributions. We persevere against changes in government priorities, funding cuts, cultural shifts, economic influences, business demands and societal expectations. We persevere because we believe in what we are doing. We believe our work has value. We believe that all people have a right to learn and to contribute and to grow as equal members of an equitable society.

To celebrate our achievements over the past 20 years, Independent Studies has put together this book. This book is not strictly a “history”. There is some chronology involved but not in a conventional sense. The book is really a series of reflections that convey the commitment, intent, dedication and success of our program. It is also a testament to the efforts it has taken to continue this kind of work and the manner in which the work has needed to be framed (for funders and others) so that it can continue. We have had to be ingenious in how we describe

and frame our work to fit the ever-changing requirements of various funders. But these descriptions and framings are only words – the work itself has not changed – merely the way we describe it.

By piecing together fragments of the Independent Studies story over 20 years, we see how we have truly come full circle. Our commitment to working to integrate all people into our program is as strong as it was at the beginning. It is hoped that this monograph will help those who come after us to continue into the future with this extremely important and richly rewarding work.

## **THANK YOU**

This book is a celebration of 20 years of Independent Studies at Frontier College. It is dedicated to the many, many people who have been involved with I.S. and who have enriched our lives and the life of Frontier College for two decades. This book is also a compilation of “thank you’s”. Rarely do people get an opportunity, especially in print, to personally thank all the people who make good work happen. The title of this book is *Full Circle*. However, two other words perhaps better convey the spirit of this book: Thank You.

# THE VISION: SHAPING A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION FOR INTEGRATION OF PEOPLE LABELLED “DISABLED” AT INDEPENDENT STUDIES

Independent Studies originated with a vision. This vision was shaped by people like Judith Snow and Marsha Forest. Below are quotes from books by Judith and Marsha (and others) that clearly demonstrate the philosophy of inclusion that has informed our work since its inception. Even though the words below were written many years ago, they are as fresh and relevant now as then. We owe a debt to people like Judith and Marsha for forging new territory in education; for providing a blueprint for humane and ethical practice; for giving us a gift of inspiration and dedication.

## ***Sources:***

What's Really Worth Doing And How To Do It: A Book For People Who Love Someone Labeled Disabled (Possibly Yourself)

*By Judith A. Snow*

*Inclusion Press, 1994; p. 24; 44-45; 64; 65*

It's About Relationships

*An Essay By Marsha Forest*

*Frontier College Press, 1989; p. 15*

Action For Inclusion

*John O'Brien and Marsha Forest (with Judith Snow and David Hasbury)*

*Centre for Integrated Education, 1989; p. 11; 29*

Learning And Teaching With Common Sense

*Marsha Forest, Frontier College, 1978; p. 2*

## **MEANING, RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES**

"...There are no disabled people. What is real is that there are people who are vulnerable to being stuck in structures that don't support them, in interactions that lead to stagnant meaning or depending isolation. The good news is that meaning, relationships and support structures are all areas where human beings have countless centuries of successful experience in overcoming limitation. Inclusion calls for us to be with vulnerable people using time honoured means of calling forth and supporting contribution."

## **LONELINESS AND MEANINGLESSNESS**

"Working with hurt and rejected people is not always easy. It takes time, energy and the power of love. There are no simple answers except that we must do it because if we don't, the human cost to us and our children will be enormous. The greatest diseases in North America today are loneliness and meaninglessness. Bringing back the least powerful into our schools is an incredible antidote to the consequences of these diseases..."

## **VALUING DIFFERENCE**

"Inclusion is a spiritual practice. It is a practice of the heart. You have to do it to get it. I am realizing more and more that Inclusion is not primarily something learned through the mind but something discovered through intentionally putting oneself in structures that foster the experience of valuing difference."

## **BEGINNING WITH THE PERSON'S DREAM**

“Helpers who want to assist another person must begin with that person’s expressed dream. Speaking the dream is the beginning of support. If the focus person has not expressed their dream nothing will happen. There must be a tenacious commitment to listen and assist as the person expresses his or her dream – draw it, speak it, sound it, walk it. It must be expressed and it must be heard. Labeled people are seldom listened to. They have a tremendous struggle to be heard. I am beginning to realize how much of the human service system is about trying to get people to agree to follow our ideas of what they should do, ought to do or would be better off to do. I have put so much effort into trying to know what ‘I’ can do to help people. Now I am putting that much effort into trying to know what people I work for really want and dream about, what they want to work on and what they are ready to do.”

## **LISTENING TO DREAMS**

“Dreams can only perform their work of creating the world when people listen to each other’s dreams. By ourselves, we can only express our dreams as fantasies. The process of creating action with results involves first of listening to a dream, then reaching agreement on the value of the dream to the listeners, finding a mutually acceptable concrete expression of the dream and finally planning and sharing action. ...Listening to a person causes that person to be able to know their dream better than before and to know what the next step in bringing that dream about could be. In other words, even if all we can do is listen, this is the most important step in supporting someone

towards bringing their dream into daily community. To listen is to be a mirror in which another person can see themselves in a new way. Along with the new vision comes a new sense of what steps are possible and a new energy from connecting to the dream itself. Any strategy that is to be designed to bring someone into active life in the community must have built a foundation in and have an ongoing way to listen to the person's dream. Without this process being fully honoured the strategy is doomed to be fruitless busy work."

## **INCLUSION AS COMMUNITY BUILDING**

"People who are seen as handicapped or unusual in other ways have a great deal to contribute to relationships and to the meaning of their own lives and the lives of others. Hierarchies tend to exclude these people because they have no obvious place. But by recognizing and calling upon the people in the school as members of the community, a place can be found for the person who was excluded. Indeed it will soon become obvious that the community has been missing this person. Action for Inclusion is fundamentally a community building process. Those who are carrying it out will welcome people with many different roles together, including the excluded student and members of his/her family. In particular fellow classmates will be supported and encouraged to use their strengths and creativity in welcoming the new member. A process will be put into place which allows each person to struggle with the problems that inclusion evokes. In this way the entire community can be responsible for each member."

## **HOW TO APPROACH TEACHING**

“Some thoughts on teaching. First learn, then teach. In seeking knowledge, the first step is silence, the second listening, the third remembering, the fourth practicing, and the fifth – teaching others. The ill-tempered cannot teach. Those who would be teachers of the people must first be students of the people. All too often we give people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants.”

## **GOOD TEACHING**

“All good teachers are able to:

- ...respond to individual differences among students by adapting curriculum and routines, which makes it possible for a student with special needs to learn in their classroom
- ...involve all students in class work by using a variety of instructional methods, which makes it possible for a student with special needs to be an active learner
- ...create a safe environment that encourages responsible, co-operative behaviour among students which makes it possible for a student who has been excluded to be a member of the class
- ...collaborate and share tasks effectively with teaching assistants, which makes it possible for a student who needs some extra adult or student assistance to be involved rather than isolated by having an assistant
- ...make good use of resource people without giving up responsibility for their class, which makes it possible for all the

- students in the class to gain from the contributions special educators and therapists can make
- ...build networks with colleagues to renew their sense of purpose and provide mutual help in problem solving, which makes it possible for the student who challenges the teacher's ability to benefit from the experience of many good teachers
  - ...increase the teacher's own repertoire of skills and abilities, which makes the student with special needs a stimulus to the teacher's own development."



*Robert and Adrian*

## **ARCHEOLOGY: UNCOVERING FRAGMENTS OF THE HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT STUDIES**

When tracking down information about the inception of the Independent Studies program, I found a repository of rich historical gems in the minutes from Frontier College's Board of Governors meetings. Minutes of these meetings are stored at the College and go back to 1910! Below are a series of quotes that I pulled out of minutes from the period 1980 to 1983. I have called this section "archeology" instead of "history" because that is indeed what it felt like to piece together fragments of the Independent Studies story. A fuller and literal history could (and should) be written, but for a book of reflections, simple snapshots often speak louder than complex narratives.

Great thanks go out to Marilyn Collins whose vision and dedication truly launched what would become Independent Studies. I was privileged to work with Marilyn in the late 1980s at St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program in Toronto where Marilyn ran "The Morning Group", a class for people with disabilities. I became committed to working in the field of adult literacy because of my experience in Marilyn's class. Now, many years later, I have the personal and professional satisfaction of having been able to create a similar class (along with Susan Macdonald and Cathy Berry) at Frontier College. I feel that my work has come full circle. And I thank Marilyn Collins for being an inspiration to me and to many others.

***Source:***

Frontier College Board of Governors Minutes 1980 – 1983

## **MARILYN COLLINS HAD A DREAM**

“Literacy Developments: Literacy for the Disabled.

Marilyn Collins has begun work to identify, then arrange programmes (new or existing) for disabled adults (mainly shut-ins) with reading and writing difficulties. Marilyn spent two years doing preliminary work without support. This arrangement should provide a good working base for her, and a much needed service for many disabled adults.”

## **LAURIE HORNELL AND THE SUMMER PROJECT**

“Summer Programs:

This summer, Frontier College has undertaken several education projects under the supervision of Laurie Hornell. The primary effort has been in the area of a literacy program for disabled adults. Seven tutors now have over thirty students whom they meet anywhere within the city. We are also working in conjunction with St. Christopher House to compile a resource kit of teaching materials for adults. Two literacy workshops have been held and a course in sign language has been initiated. As well, research is being done to ascertain the educational needs of women and how they can best be served.”

## **THE PROJECT EXPANDS**

“Literacy for the Disabled:

This literacy initiative, begun by the College responding to the determined commitment of Marilyn Collins, has grown rapidly and is now being consolidated. Over 200 “tutor-student matches” were

achieved this past year which makes the program one of the largest in the Metro area. The project has been consolidated under the co-ordination of Laurie Hornell who directs the summer component.

#### Summer Project Update

Literacy for Disabled Adults, Toronto:

12 students employed full-time for 18 weeks. Co-ordinator: Ms Laurie Hornell. Budget: \$41,290 from CEIC (Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission.).

Literacy for Disabled Students, Hamilton:

10 students employed full-time as tutors. Co-ordinator: Ms. Judy Perry. Budget: \$32,325 from CEIC."

### **THE PROJECT GROWS AND TRACY CARPENTER BECOMES CO-ORDINATOR**

"Literacy for Adults with Disabilities, Toronto:

Two additional volunteer training sessions have been held. The transition from Laurie Hornell to Tracy Carpenter as project co-ordinator has been smooth. A grant of \$5,000 for the project has been received from the United Church. Meetings have been initiated to secure full funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services."

## **FUNDING ARRIVES!**

“Finance:

\$58,000 from the Ministry of Community and Social Services (Ontario), to operate our “Literacy for Disabled Persons Program in Ontario”.

Literacy for Adults with Disabilities, Toronto:

The major breakthrough here is the funding. This project has been breaking ground for three years... and finally is solid. This has been greatly assisted by acquiring Maggie Wilson on a grant program, to assist Tracy Carpenter in the management of the program. Training and refresher sessions are now being held nearly once a month, and the waiting list of students continues to grow.”

***(Note: Funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, COMSOC, has continued from 1983 to 2002. Thank you to COMSOC for continued support of our work.)***

## **THE PROJECT BECOMES A PROGRAM**

“Literacy Project Ongoing

Literacy for Adults with Disabilities, Toronto:

This successful project now has over 40 matched pairs of students and tutors. It will peak at over 80 this summer. The waiting list is over 50. Tracy Carpenter is the Co-ordinator. Funding comes through the Ministry of Community and Social Services.”

## **ED WADLEY'S REPORTS**

Ed Wadley was co-ordinator of Independent Studies in the 1980s and 1990s. Again, important fragments of our history were left behind in the form of reports written by Ed for our funder, COMSOC. His reports richly detail the vision and the practice of Independent Studies and the continuing efforts to integrate all people into the program. Below are excerpts from Ed's reports from the late 1980s.

***Source:***

*Independent Studies reports to COMSOC by Ed Wadley*

### **A BROAD DEFINITION OF SUCCESS**

"The broad and perhaps most appropriate definition of literacy is the ability to participate in society. When applied to the Independent Studies Program, we assert that anything accomplished which further enables a person to enhance his or her participation can be defined as a success. Given our broad definition and given the many different individual goals which our learners have, a success can be as subtle as an increased excitement with respect to learning; certainly a bona fide success in our view."

## **“GETTING IT”: UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE DO**

“Many prospective tutors come expecting the tutoring to mirror the ‘school’ approach and some find it difficult to dislodge their preconceived notions of what tutoring is all about. Some even decide that this is not for them. All well and good. We design the orientation so that people are given tacit permission to select themselves out and in this way we maintain quality control. Those who stay will have bought into and embraced what we stand for.”

*(Note: This was written in 1989, and describes precisely how we work today in 2002.)*

## **WORKING WITH REAL NEEDS AND REAL LIVES**

“The people who come to the Independent Studies Program for tutoring have a wide range of backgrounds. They may have a physical challenge... Of course the one need which is common to all is the desire to improve reading and writing skills. However, given the fact that there may be larger and more pressing needs in some people’s lives, and given the necessity of considering the whole person when developing a curriculum, our tutors are often working to address the more immediate needs first in order to set in place an environment which will be conducive to educational progress later on... (One) learner has spent the last fifteen years of her life in a chronic care hospital because of a physical disability. Her most immediate needs are with respect to mitigating the regimented and insular lifestyle which the institution imposes on her. Consequently, her tutor had been working towards allowing the learner to participate more in community activities and achieve a less segregated lifestyle. Neither your co-

ordinator nor the tutors are social workers. However, we can't work in a vacuum either. The improvement of reading and writing skills can only be accomplished when real needs and priorities are at least on their way to being addressed. To ignore those needs would probably result in failure. "

## **IT'S ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS**

"The relationship which forms between a matched pair need not be a friendship and, in many cases, it is not. However, it is apparent that, in quite a few instances, the tutor becomes an ally, and advocate and an all around staunch supporter for the student and her/his interests and needs. One tutor has described the relationship which has formed between the pair in nothing less than glowing terms. These two individuals have been meeting for over a year and the tutor reports that "life would not be the same" without her student. A call to the student produced almost the same phrase with respect to the tutor. "

## **EXPANDING THE VISION OF TUTORING BEYOND READING AND WRITING**

"We have a learner who is labelled mentally retarded, living at home with his parents. He has no job and few outside contacts. He has many needs, some of which should have been addressed by his tutor.

Instead of trying to help him with his needs, the tutor would say things like 'I don't know what to do with him. He reads quite well'. It became obvious to us that no matter how many times we restated needs and possible ways to address them, the tutor was not prepared to expand his vision of tutoring beyond reading and writing. "



## **REFLECTIONS BY SUSAN MACDONALD**

Susan Macdonald has been the guiding light of Independent Studies for many years. Indeed she's been a part of Frontier College for 15 years. Susan's dedication to our program *is* our program. There would be no Independent Studies without Susan. Susan's joy in discovering the person in front of her – and not the student – is an embodiment of inclusion in action. Susan always approaches each person who comes into our building as a person first. She gets to know them as people and then, and only then, does the learning process begin to unfold. On behalf of all the students and tutors (and staff and others) who have benefited from Susan's gifts over the years – thank you. We know that retirement to her place in Burnt River is somewhere on the horizon for Susan, but hopefully for us this well-earned retirement won't happen for many years to come. Thank you, Susan. Below are Susan's reflections on her work with Independent Studies.

### **REFLECTIONS ON INDEPENDENT STUDIES**

One of the questions that arises for me as a mother of a child with a disability is, how to find a career where my child is thought of as a gift, not a liability; where inclusion allows me to contribute all the particular skills and insights that have come from my personal experience of disability.

Frontier College valued the personal experiences I gained from my son. This has enabled me to focus on the needs of my students rather

than being compelled, as I might have been in many other work positions, with spending my time and energy apologizing for my son, being professionally limited by my son, and using most of my talents fighting a system rather than helping it to flourish.

Frontier College, with its philosophy of inclusion, recognizes that individuals with disabilities are people who have cultivated unique and useful skills and strategies for living and learning. These strategies and skills that have evolved through their personal struggles have created a wealth of intelligence and wisdom that is of great benefit to all. In my years at Frontier College, I have had an opportunity to share the "skills and strategies" I have learned through my son's challenges and, in turn, the skills and strategies have benefited me and my son.

My years at Frontier College have been a dynamic illustration of the power and creativity that is unleashed through the philosophy of inclusion. One of the most important and gratifying changes I have witnessed at Frontier College is that the instructing process, rather than being offsite where tutors were left to their own devices and unsupported by the Independent Studies staff, students are now welcomed into the College itself. In the College, they have access to instructors and all the support staff. Because of this, we are able to give more effective support to both the tutors and the students, and we at the College, instructors and staff alike, are able to participate directly in the teaching effort, and in the pleasure of watching firsthand as the teaching process flourishes. In other words, we actually get to know the students.

Previously we got to know the volunteers at the tutor training, but our

contact with the students was once at the interview, then once a month by phone. The students seemed to have no identity within the College.

It was a good thing that I had my own student so I could weave my understanding of the student-tutor relationship into my work with the student-tutor pairs. Now that students come to the college, we have an ongoing and mutually fulfilling relationship with them.

One of my most memorable moments in tutoring is an experience I wrote about in *Chatelaine* magazine. *Chatelaine* magazine asked Frontier College to write an article for them in which a student and a tutor would give their version of the Frontier College learning experience. The student I chose was Donna Lovell because I knew she had the talent and flair for writing. The article demonstrated that tutors and students have very different experiences in and of the process, but one common factor emerged: trust. She trusted me with the vulnerability and deep personal nature of her emerging creativity. It has been a privilege to be worthy of that trust.

Donna has been a member of our Board of Governors at Frontier College and has gone on to be the chair of the Learners Council at the Ontario Literacy Coalition. She is an Independent Studies success story.

My work at Frontier College began because of a son who, one might think, would have held me back in my career. Fifteen years have passed. Now this son is actually attending classes at Frontier College.

He is living proof of the miracles that are created when institutions embrace acceptance and inclusion.

**Susan Macdonald, 2002**



*Donna Lovell and Susan Macdonald in Chatelaine Magazine*

## **FLORA HOOD AND THE TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION CLASS**

In the mid 1990s, the Toronto Board of Education sponsored a class that was located at Frontier College and was part of the Independent Studies Program. The instructor was Flora Hood. Many of our students fondly remember “Flora’s class” as a significant and important part of their learning at Frontier College. Even though the Toronto Board class was discontinued, Flora returned to work for Independent Studies as a researcher for a period in 2001 and continues to visit our program and some of her former students at our events. Below, Flora reflects on her class experience. Flora’s class was important because it was a precursor to the current way in which we do programming. The class format was successful under Flora’s direction, so we knew classes could be successful again as a model of programming. Today, in 2002, Independent Studies has resumed running classes (our Self-Management/Literacy classes described below). Although our new classes are very different in approach to the Toronto Board class, the idea of bringing students together to learn in an inclusive way was very much a part of Flora’s work. We’d like to thank Flora Hood for her commitment to the work of Independent Studies and for the personable professionalism she brought to our program for many years. Thank you, Flora.

**Frontier College Class  
by Flora Hood, Instructor  
April 12 1993 – February 5 1999**

In 1993, Independent Studies and Toronto Board of Education co-operated to open an adult literacy class in Frontier College's national office at 35 Jackes Avenue, Toronto. Frontier College provided the space and Toronto Board of Education provided a literacy instructor. I was delighted to be chosen as the instructor for this new class, partly because I had been a volunteer tutor with Independent Studies before I was employed as an instructor with Toronto Board of Education.

For almost six years, the class met in the basement of the splendid Frontier College building on Jackes Avenue. The class was multi-level and operated on a continuous enrolment basis. Learners could be referred through I.S., the Toronto Board of Education, as well as social service agencies. The program offered individual instruction as well as small group instruction, and aimed to be as inclusive as possible. We were a diverse group of people but we wanted to create a sense of community for all who attended.

Here are some highlights from those six years:

- Several months after the class began, we were delighted to receive a visit from Miss Jessie Lucas. Jessie Lucas had been the secretary and Registrar of Frontier College for 43 years. To celebrate her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday in October 1993, and to recognize her long-term loyal service to Frontier College, our classroom was to be named the Jessie Lucas Learning Centre. A birthday tea was held in the Bradwin Room, after which Miss Lucas astonished us by making her

way downstairs to our classroom. After all, she was 99 years old! She spoke words of encouragement to all the learners and they were very pleased. This visit gave the learners a special connection to the history of Frontier College. We kept a framed photograph of Jessie Lucas in the classroom and it was always a pleasure to hear one of the established learners introduce a new learner to the story of Jessie Lucas.

- During a class visit to Deer Park branch of the Toronto Public Library, one of the learners was surprised to find out he could also borrow record albums. He immediately asked to fill out a registration form so that he could borrow some albums. Later, he began to visit the library branch in his neighbourhood. He saw himself in a different light after this. He felt a connection with the shared resources of the community.
- In 1994, when Jessie Lucas celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, one of our students was invited to make a presentation to her after the College's Annual General Meeting. The young man considered it an honour and he carefully prepared an eloquent tribute that he delivered in a most dignified and gracious manner. Many people attended the celebration, and greetings were delivered on behalf of several well-known personalities, but I believe the highlight that day was the learner's tribute.
- In January 1995, CBC Newsworld interviewed one of our learners. The Ontario Royal Commission on Learning had just released its Report and the media seemed interested in adult literacy. Part of the interview was shown on the evening news. I knew the learner had struggled for weeks with the decision to be interviewed. I videotaped the segment and, when he reviewed it, he felt reassured he had made a good decision. During the interview, he talked about

his feeling of accomplishment after he finished reading a book for the first time. One of the other learners in the class had acted as a peer tutor for him during this time and so when the class saw the tape of the interview everyone felt connected to the student's achievement.

- One of the students found a wallet in the snow outside a subway station. He brought the wallet to class. Carefully, we looked through all the soaked cards in the wallet. There was some ID but no address or phone number, but there was an appointment card with the name of a dentist on it. We called the dentist's office and they traced the wallet to one of their patients. They called the woman and she called us. She was surprised and very pleased to get her wallet back. She had lost it several weeks ago. When she asked if she could do anything for the student who found the wallet, I suggested she write a letter to him. She brought a gift and a letter for the student and he was thrilled to read it for himself. Not only that, the woman was so intrigued by the experience that she became a volunteer tutor with I.S.

Here are some of the challenges we faced:

- We had to change our schedule when another program – the Ambassador School – moved into the Jessie Lucas Learning Centre. We could no longer use the room in the mornings.
- We were isolated from other literacy classes. Learners had no access to any other groups of students or to the supports usually found in a school, e.g. a cafeteria or a common meeting area. The Ambassador students were involved in co-op work placements in the afternoon and they were not in the building when our class met.

- By the mid 1990's, Government cutbacks to funding resulted in classes being closed for longer periods during breaks (Christmas, March Break, and summer), and there was no longer any money for classroom supplies.

For a variety of reasons, few new learners were referred to the class. In an effort to attract additional learners, changes were made to the program in 1996. We tried to organize the class into two different level groups; one group would meet twice a week, and the other group would meet three times a week. In addition, we added an evening math class. Ultimately, these changes were unsuccessful. Enrolment did not improve sufficiently and the class once again became a single group. Sadly, but inevitably, the class was closed on February 5 1999.



*The I.S. class in 2002*



## **“RITA’S CLASS”: A SUMMER PROJECT THAT GREW INTO THE SELF-MANAGEMENT/LITERACY CLASS**

Rita Mancini worked in Independent Studies for many years and had a wonderful relationship with many students and volunteers in our program. In 2000, Rita pioneered a summer project that provided the germination of the direction our program moved in 2001. Rita ran a summer “life skills” class for students. It was a very successful project. A brief overview of the project written by Rita is presented below. Rita has left Independent Studies, but her legacy lives on. She is fondly remembered by students, volunteers and staff at Frontier College. Many thanks are owed to Rita for her commitment and dedication to Independent Studies over the years. Thank you, Rita.

We’d also like to thank Elaine Benton, who was Manager of Independent Studies from the late 1990s until 2000. Elaine attempted many modifications to the program in response to increasing demands from our primary funder, MTCU. Elaine also expanded our Monday night drop-in (which is still going strong today in May 2002 with over 15 students regularly attending). Thank you, Elaine.

### **Learning Together: Frontier College Pilot Project Rita Mancini June 2000- August 2000**

(This project will deliver) weekly “life skills” workshops for Independent Studies students.

Each 2-hour class will consist of discussion, reading, writing and numeracy. Objectives: To give our Independent Studies students the opportunity to work in group situations.

The students will:

- Work in small groups of 4 or 5 people to enhance their learning skills.
- Learn and practice interpersonal skills.
- Learn to job search.
- Learn and practice everyday courtesies.
- Learn about nutrition.
- Read a book of their choice and write a synopsis of the book.

There will be occasional special guests. There will also be occasional outings, eg. library, grocery store, ROM, Ontario Place, Science Centre, etc. The students' final group project will be to create a portfolio of their works and opinions from and about the project.



*Rita Mancini (on right) and some students in her class, summer 2000*

## WHAT EXACTLY IS SELF-MANAGEMENT?

In 2000, David Greig became the Manager of the Independent Studies Program. This time was a difficult one for our program. Our primary funder, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) had gone through a dramatic restructuring of the way in which provincially funded literacy programs in Ontario were allowed to operate. We will not taint this celebratory book with negative details or angry critiques of this governmental restructuring but will present only the relevant details that show how our program adapted to survive.

In a nutshell, in the late 1990s, MTCU began to require that literacy programs quantitatively demonstrate that students were progressing towards goals, primarily of further training and education. The literacy “system”, known as LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills) was funded so that students could develop the prerequisite skills to enable them to move on to colleges or employment. This was a very logical development for many literacy programs across the province. But it was equally problematic for just as many others, especially for programs like Independent Studies.

As the previous sections of this book demonstrate, the work of Independent Studies over the years has always been about more than reading and writing and definitely much more than college and employment preparation. We have been funded, almost since the beginning of our program, by our secondary funder, COMSOC (secondary meaning that we get less money from COMSOC and more from MTCU!) to provide “rehabilitation services to the disabled”. We

provided these rehabilitation services in the form of learning opportunities with “learning” defined in an extremely broad and holistic way. Our work has a very specific focus: the integration of all people, especially people with disabilities (physical, developmental, psychiatric, cognitive and other) and other marginalized people into a community of learning to work with people on needs and issues pertaining to their whole lives and not merely to “academic” or “training” needs that they may or may not have.

And so, the fit with our other funder, MTCU, became somewhat challenging. The challenge was to try to align our program so that it continued to meet the requirements of our funder yet retained its integrity and authenticity. Serendipitously, I had worked for the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) in 1999 writing a report that would develop an LBS “domain” that complemented the other LBS “domains” of Communication Skills and Numeracy. This third domain was called Self-Management/Self-Direction (SM/SD). It was conceived as a learning domain that encompassed all the elements that surround and support learning. The OLC document fleshed out the definition of SM/SD by providing examples of areas that could be worked on in a literacy program that were not reading and writing, but were all the other attitudes, skills and behaviours that make reading and writing possible for adult students, especially students with multiple challenges.

We concretized the idea of SM/SD into the I.S. program over the course of a year or so. It was difficult work because we needed to ensure that we made the fit work “the right way around”: meaning, that we were not intending to change the essence of our work to fit

into the SM/SD description, rather we were fitting the SM/SD description to fit our work. We developed our Self-Management/Literacy classes (predicated on the work of Flora Hood's class and Rita Mancini's class at I.S.). and this development is documented in subsequent sections of this book.

To make a long story short (if it's not too late!), we were successful in our efforts to reorganize our program and yet retain our integrity and authenticity. Our MTCU funding consultant visited our program in November 2001 and completely understood what we were doing and agreed that it certainly fit within the MTCU framework. We continue to receive funding and to carry on with what we've been doing for 20 years. All it took was a little conceptual readjustment.

Since it has been central to the reorganization of our program, a brief description of Self-Management is presented below. It is presented both for context as well as for other non-MTCU funded literacy workers (at Frontier College and elsewhere) who may not be familiar with this idea and who may find it useful in their own work.

### **Self-Management/Self-Direction**

**Source:**

*The Level Descriptions Manual*, Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2000

Features and Examples of Self-Management and Self-Direction  
Learning Outcomes: Features that surround and support learning that may impact progress towards a goal:

- **concentration/memory skills**
- **goal setting skills**

- **learning styles**
- **personal advocacy skills**
- **problem-solving skills**
- **self-assessment/self-reflection skills**
- **self-confidence building skills**
- **thinking skills**
- **time management/organization skills**
- **working with others skills**

### **Concentration/memory skills**

- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates ability to focus on one task at a time
- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates ability to persevere with a task until completion
- ✓ learner develops and uses strategies to increase memory
- ✓ learner develops and uses techniques to improve retention of information

### **Goal setting skills**

- ✓ learner sets long-term goals based on self-assessment of own skills, interests and abilities
- ✓ learner understands and uses strategies for breaking long-term goals into short-term goals that build towards the long-term goal
- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates an ability to understand the skills and knowledge needed to work on to achieve the short-term goal
- ✓ learner demonstrates an ability to evaluate their own progress towards their short- and long-term goals

### **Learning styles**

- ✓ learner understands and can explain the basic idea of learning styles
- ✓ learner understands and can explain their own preferred learning style
- ✓ learner develops and uses strategies to deal with learning material that is not presented in their own learning style
- ✓ learner develops and uses strategies to deal with a different types of learning materials

### **Personal advocacy skills**

- ✓ learner understands and can explain what “learner centred” means to them

- ✓ learner demonstrates an ability to co-develop (with literacy staff/volunteers) an individualized training plan based on their own learning needs
- ✓ learner reports a family member, friend, co-worker, or supervisor noticing an improvement in his/her skill
- ✓ learner shows increased readiness to take responsibility for own work

### **Problem-solving skills**

- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates ability to identify problems and generate ideas about possible solutions/options
- ✓ learner uses a variety of approaches to deal with problems encountered in the learning environment
- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates techniques for breaking problems down into manageable parts
- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates ability to transfer problem-solving skills from one situation to another

### **Self-assessment/self-reflection skills**

- ✓ learner shows increased readiness to accept praise for own work
- ✓ learner shows increased readiness to take constructive criticism of own work
- ✓ learner shows increased readiness to offer constructive criticism of own work
- ✓ learner can demonstrate an accurate understanding of their own learning strengths and weaknesses

### **Self-confidence building skills**

- ✓ learner reports greater confidence in their own skills
- ✓ learner demonstrates increased readiness to attempt to work independently
- ✓ learner demonstrates increased readiness to try new learning challenges and assignments
- ✓ learner reports a successful application of newly-acquired skills in a real-life context

### **Thinking skills**

- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates reasoning and logic skills through practice
- ✓ learner demonstrates that they can transfer knowledge from previous learning to complete a new task
- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates ability to clearly explain and convey ideas

- ✓ learner develops and uses a variety of learning approaches/activities (e.g. outlining, reviewing, organizing, etc.) to deal with new information

### **Time management/organization skills**

- ✓ learner shows improved/steady attendance
- ✓ learner shows that assignments are completed on prescribed or agreed upon time
- ✓ learner completes sequential tasks in order, finishing one task before beginning subsequent tasks
- ✓ learner plans several activities in advance for a day/month/year

### **Working with others skills**

- ✓ learner develops and uses strategies for dealing with interpersonal conflict in the learning environment
- ✓ learner develops and demonstrates an ability to work as part of a team
- ✓ learner demonstrates increased participation in the program (e.g. in class, on committees, joining field trips, etc.)
- ✓ learner shows increased readiness to offer constructive criticism of other's work, if asked



*I.S. Manager, David Greig, and I.S. Co-ordinator, Susan Macdonald, reconceptualizing our program and planning strategy in 2000*

## **BRIDGING MAP: ORIGINAL IDEA FOR THE SELF-MANAGEMENT CLASS 2001**

Originally, we thought of the Self-Management class as being a separate precursor to the literacy program and represented this separation as a “bridging map”. We changed our idea and fully integrated the two components when we began to work with the students and saw that this separation was artificial and unnecessary.

### **I.S. COMSOC Pre-Literacy Support for Bridging/Integration of People with Disabilities/Challenges into I.S. Literacy Program Project 2001-2002**

- **Pre-Literacy Preparation Bridging Project**
- small group class (8 people)
- working on Self-Management/Self-Direction modules
- research undertaken to determine the elements necessary to function in a Level 1 adult literacy setting
- students build skills to prepare them to bridge to further training at Level 1
- curricula, theme and content modules, timelines, and outcomes are established based on research
- project is evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis
- Research identifies clearly defined and measurable outcomes that will demonstrate progress
- **EXIT TEST**
- **I.S. One-to-one Tutoring Program**
- **ASSESSMENT/INTAKE TEST**
- students bridge into the one-to-one MTCU-funded adult literacy program after preparation in the Bridging Project
- Self-Management/Self-Direction skills continue to be incorporated into the LBS program alongside reading and writing
- students are supported to make the transition from the Bridging Project into the regular I.S. program



# **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF INCLUSION THROUGH THE SELF-MANAGEMENT/LITERACY CLASS AT INDEPENDENT STUDIES BY DAVID GREIG**

The following are reports prepared for Independent Studies funders (Ministry of Community and Social Service, COMSOC; Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, MTCU; and other project funders). These reports explain why we utilized the idea of “Self-Management” as a way to “frame” our work. Even though some of the reports are very specific in relation to a Ministry, they are general enough that they present a very clear picture of how we explain our work to people who give us money to do it. These reports present the implementation of our philosophy of inclusion and how we attempt to “do what we say”. All the reports were written by Program Manager, David Greig, in 2001 or 2002.

## **INDEPENDENT STUDIES OVERVIEW**

Independent Studies (I.S.) has been operating for 20 years at Frontier College. Our program began to address a new “frontier”: the underserved learning needs of people with disabilities. Over the years, I.S. has maintained its commitment to providing a welcoming space for people with all kinds of disabilities, especially people with developmental disabilities. We have carved out a niche for ourselves in the Ontario Literacy community because of the unique work we do with our target population. We include both disabled and non-disabled

students to reflect our commitment to integrated learning environments where all students are welcomed together.

Currently our program is one of the few remaining in Toronto that explicitly recruits and integrates people with disabilities into our program. We are the only literacy program (to our knowledge) that still receives core funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services (COMSOC) to provide “rehabilitation services to the disabled” in the area of education and learning. We have also strengthened our other core funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) by developing our programming so that it more efficiently reflects our goal of integration. Our “Bridging Class” uses MTCU Learning Outcome domain language and ideas in Self-Management/Self-Direction to allow our students to bridge from pre-literacy skills (COMSOC funded) into MTCU funded literacy programming, all the while working on skills that better enable our students to function in their communities as active citizens.

## **HYBRID PROGRAMMING**

Independent Studies is a hybrid adult learning program that spans the (bureaucratic) divide between education/training and social services, each funded and overseen by entirely separate government Ministries (MTCU and COMSOC). We are one of the few programs that explicitly provides this kind of hybrid work, the need for which has been documented in a number of critical literacy studies (see: “Literacy and Homelessness Phase 3 Report”, St. Christopher House). We are proud of this work and see it truly as cutting edge and historical at the same time – which is surely reflective of Frontier College.

Independent Studies believes our work to be closely reflective of the core mission and values of Frontier College. We provide much needed services to people for whom such services are disappearing, if not disappeared. We continue to champion and work with disabled people as a continuing “frontier” population, in the realm of adult education and attempt to push our work forward to meet the requirements of funders while being proactive and advocating for our right to define our programming in a manner that best serves our clients. We believe that Independent Studies is a long-standing core element of Frontier College and that it reflects the values of the college every day by opening our doors to people who face increasingly restricted access to educational and other self-affirming activities.

**David Greig**  
**Program Manager, Independent Studies**  
**April 2001**

## **FINAL REPORT TO PROJECT FUNDER FOR THE SELF-MANAGEMENT CLASS PILOT PROJECT**

This project originated with some seed money from private donations and was called: *“Pre-Literacy Support for Bridging/Integration of People with Disabilities/Challenges into I.S. Literacy Program Project 2000-2001”*. It was formerly called *“Making Connections: Enabling People with Disabilities”*. Below is the final report of the project to funders.

## **Overview**

### Pre-Literacy Preparation Bridging Project

- small group class (8 people)
- working on Self-Management modules
- research undertaken to determine the elements necessary to function in a Level 1 adult literacy setting
- students build skills to prepare them to bridge to further training at Level 1
- curricula, theme and content modules, timelines, and outcomes are established based on research
- project is evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis
- research identifies clearly defined and measurable outcomes that will demonstrate progress
- exit test

### I.S. One-to-one Tutoring Program

- assessment/intake test
- students bridge into the one-to-one MTCU-funded adult literacy program after preparation in the Bridging Project
- Self-Management skills continue to be incorporated into the I.S. program alongside reading and writing
- students are supported to make the transition from the Bridging Project into the regular I.S. program

## **Narrative Report on Project**

- The Self-Management class that was incorporated into the Independent Studies Program at Frontier College encompassed many components that enabled participating students with a disability to successfully work on their learning needs and literacy goals. Over the three-month term of the pilot class, long- and short-term goals and learning needs of each student were assessed to determine achievable demonstrations.

- The class was designed to allow student with disabilities a greater sense of control over decision-making in their lives. The classroom curriculum included components that supported students to improve their self-esteem and, as a consequence, improved their ability to learn. With the individual attention and teaching, provided by volunteer tutors, students were able to improve their communication skills and steadily improve on their reading and writing skills or pre-skills. Goal setting exercises allowed students to work on their individual literacy goals and life-long learning goals, all of which increase a student's interest in the world around them.
- The Self-Management classes comprised 15 students (8 students in one class and 7 students for a second class). Support was incorporated in a variety of ways to provide both the extra time and attention needed to increase students' success. Nine volunteer tutors were organized to support the students to complete a variety of group exercises and individual assignments. The instructor facilitated both the students and the tutors to effectively mobilize individual attention that accommodated the particular needs of the students with disabilities.
- Both assistive devices and specialized computerized software were implemented so as to offer a variety of options for all students with disabilities, specifically students with auditory/visual/communication disabilities. We continue to seek out and experiment with many devices that can be used as learning tools.

- Many tutors who volunteer their time have had little opportunity to meet and get to know people with disabilities. An exciting component of the class consisted of students and tutors alike discussing many disability issues pertaining to the rights of people with disabilities, friendships, work options, and barriers that impede one's inclusion into the community. All of these discussions were enlightening to many tutors as their exposure to the world of disability was minimal.
- All tutors were given, as part of their tutor training, an interactive group discussion on disability issues. This is imperative, as many tutors were supporting students with disabilities at Frontier College.
- As a staff training session at Frontier College, a student with a significant disability, who was an assistant to the instructor in the class, addressed the staff and spoke of her disability and offered suggestions to break down barriers between people with disabilities and others at Frontier College. This exercise in awareness proved very effective.
- All 15 students participated in the class with great eagerness and consistency. The class was offered for three hours, twice a week, and most students completed all the time allotted. For some students who had an individual tutor aside from the class, it increased their one-to-one tutoring hours significantly.
- In the course of the class, many links were made to outside organizations to enable students with disabilities to meet some

of their goals in the community. Some of these agencies included: N.A.B.O.R.S., Metro Association for Community Living, Centennial College, Acting Companies for the disabled, and the Reena Foundation.

**Cathy Berry, I.S. Class Instructor and David Greig, Program Manager, 2000**

## **REPORT TO MTCU ON INDEPENDENT STUDIES FOR 2001-2002**

- Our program focuses on all the MTCU Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) goals with particular emphasis on improving the quality of training delivery. We target a specific client group, many of who have multiple needs and challenges and most of whom are at Level 1. Ensuring that learners' goals are clearly articulated and understood by our learners has been a primary goal over the last year and will continue in the next year. Since most of our learners have independence as their primary goal, we do not currently use limited staff resources to link with employers but of course will develop such links if and when our learners' goals become focused on employment. We also work closely with ODSP and other similar workers of which there is sometimes an overlap with OW.
- We are also strengthening our links to other social services in the community to continue to work with them to provide quality literacy services to their client groups as well. Many agencies provide services that do not include literacy and yet recognize that literacy is an important component that directly impacts

their work. We are working to develop programming models that will allow for the smooth transfer of clients from these agencies to ours. Our contact hours are similar to last year. We anticipate continuing with similar programming hours for the same number of learners (our capacity). We will be focusing on quality of service delivery within that quantitative framework.

- Our responsibilities in the literacy local planning and coordination process is to continue to work to ensure that learners at the entry (or pre-literacy) level who face multiple challenges are served throughout our community both by our agency and by other literacy providers who work with similar clients. We are intending to work through our LLC to exchange information with other literacy providers about quality programming models and methods to develop a greater expertise in meeting the learning goals of our niche clients.
- The challenges facing our agency over the next year all relate to improving and refining the implementation of a learning outcomes system. We are focusing on streamlining a seamless system of learning outcomes wherein we strengthen the alignment of our intake, assessment, goal setting, training plan development, learning activities and materials, demonstrations of learning and evaluation of learning into a cohesive and comprehensive model that is transparent to learners.
- We are working on special projects to fully flesh out the learning activity part of the learning outcomes approach. We are working to find/adapt/create core learning materials that will encompass

core demonstrations while being linked to learners' goals. We will use these materials to assist volunteer tutors with helping learners reach their goals. We intend to share these models and materials with other literacy providers in our LLC and elsewhere.

- One of our greatest challenges in the past was that our learner/tutor pairs do not meet at our location. We are addressing this challenge by opening our program one night a week for regular tutoring and encouraging new learner/tutor pairs to meet at our location. This has commenced and is already proving successful. We may open further nights after we evaluate opening one night. We have also set up a learner resource centre and computer room at our location. We will use this new model of on-site instruction to assist us with monitoring learning and offer better support to learner/tutor pairs. We are continuing to offer workshops and staff-lead instruction sessions at our location to learners and to learner/tutor pairs in specialized areas such as spelling, grammar, reading, etc.
- We are also strengthening our staff knowledge of reading theory and other andragogical concepts/paradigms to better enable staff to offer targeted learning interventions that are required to ensure that volunteers are capable of assisting learners with actual learning. We are intending to work with our local literacy network (MTML) and others to advocate for and develop workshops and professional development opportunities for literacy staff to expand and develop skills and expertise in this critical area.

- We are developing a new in-house project that will support our learners with developmental disabilities and/or other challenges by developing a unique model of practice that builds the knowledge base of the Self-Management/Self-Direction (SM/SD) domain to document which SM/SD skills help learners bridge from pre-literacy to Level 1. We are excited by the prospect of using MTCU domain concepts in a non-MTCU context to ensure the greatest crossover of learners from one government funding sector (Social Services) to another (Training/Education). We feel that this model if adequately supported and funded could add new and important knowledge to the literacy field and is in keeping with MTCU's commitment to applied literacy research that will be implemented over the next five years.

## **REPORT TO MTCU ON INDEPENDENT STUDIES FOR 2002-2003**

- Shifts in contact hours and number of learners: Our program has developed and piloted a successful and innovative new programming model during the 2001-2002 funding year. We developed a Self-Management class for students with multiple disabilities. We decided to focus on our niche clientele who have been the core of our program since its inception over 20 years ago. We work almost exclusively with people with disabilities: physical, developmental, cognitive and psychiatric.
- In the past few years, we have accepted higher level students into our program who did not have disabilities, but who were "ordinary literacy students" similar to many students going to other community-based programs in Toronto (all at Level 2 and

Level 3). We evaluated this aspect of our programming and concluded that we spent too much staff time monitoring the learning of these students in one-to-one matches with volunteer tutors (the turn over of these students was also higher thus required even more staff time for exit and follow up and recruiting new students to take their places to keep up with the contact hours promised on our Business Plan).

- We decided to reduce the numbers of these students both through attrition and more thorough progress review meetings. We have moved a number of them on to other programs/employment and are not “replacing” these students. Instead, we are focusing on our core niche clientele who are people who face numerous barriers and challenges, not merely to learning and potential employment or further training, but in terms of daily living and independence. Many of our students have been institutionalized or have lead extremely isolated, limited and sheltered lives. Our program wanted to assist these people with improving the quality of their lives and their ability to maintain this quality through practice and learning of Self-Management skills along with their literacy learning. To accomplish this task, we needed to provide more hours of contact for each of these individual students and reduce the total number of students in our program to allow for adequate staff time to effectively implement this new programming.
- We feel this programming has so far been very successful and would like to continue and expand this direction in 2002-2003. Consultation at the LLC and through the LSP reveal that our

program is unique and that we are filling a need in our Local Board area through this new program provision. Therefore, we have lowered the total number of students in our program (our capacity) to 55 (from 65). (This is documented in our LSP.) And we are lowering the number of contact hours by approximately 1,000 (which represents one year's contact hours for 10 students). We are requesting a similar amount of funding support because the time we spend on our programming is the same; however, we have deployed our staff time and energy into the more time-consuming but ultimately more successful Self-Management programming.

*(Note: MTCU agreed to our request in 2002.)*

## **REPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES (COMSOC) ON INDEPENDENT STUDIES FOR 2002-2003**

### **Service Objectives**

- To provide adults, especially those with physical and mental disabilities, with tutoring and learning support in areas such as reading, writing, numeracy and self-management/self-direction.
- To help integrate those adults into a holistic learning environment where they are supported to develop literacy and related skills and to develop meaningful relationships with tutors and peers and to function effectively in the community.

## **Service Description**

- Independent Studies is an integrated, inclusive and student-centred literacy program that assists adults with learning activities, such as reading, writing, numeracy and self-management/self-direction skills. The majority of our participants have physical and mental disabilities.
- We try to provide students with skills they can use to become more independent in the community. We support on average 60-65 students working either one-to-one with tutors and/or in small learning groups of approximately eight students lead by staff and assisted by tutors. Each student defines individual goals and sets target dates for achieving them. Each student has their own goal-directed, need-driven training plan.
- Three full-time staff equivalent (two full-time, two part-time) provide ongoing and continuous support to students as well as tutors and act as a resource to ensure that the learning experience benefits all people in the program. Students and tutors have access to our program in the day as well as some evenings, and can utilize our student computer and learning resource centre.
- Our co-ordinators also provide support to disabled people in the community by providing information, assessment, referral, advice and guidance on an individual basis. This ancillary support, which can take the form of phone calls or in-person consultations or visits to other programs, acts as an in-depth recruitment and screening process to ascertain whether or not

students are ready and able to commit to our program. We open a file on each potential student; conduct intake and/or assessment services that take at least an hour of staff time for each ancillary client. Some clients we refer elsewhere immediately and others are kept on file as potential students for our program. We keep their files open for three months during which time they either formally register for our program or if they do not, they are referred elsewhere. We provide our ancillary service to approximately 120 other individual clients a year. Along with our 60 regular core clients, we serve 180 clients in total per year.

- Independent Studies staff continue to work closely with many social service organizations in Toronto to ensure that our students have access to various supports and to ensure that other individuals find the services they need.

## **REFLECTIONS BY CATHY BERRY**

Another important event at Independent Studies in 2000 was the return of Cathy Berry. Cathy had worked briefly in I.S. a few years before doing general literacy program work. We asked Cathy to return this time solely to implement and instruct the Self-Management/Literacy class. Cathy teaches a DSW (Developmental Services Worker) course at Centennial College in Toronto and brings to Frontier College a wealth of understanding about how to work to integrate people with disabilities into a learning community. Along with Susan Macdonald, Cathy has acted as a direct link to the philosophy and approach of Marsha Forest and Marilyn Collins. Cathy's profound understanding and extraordinary practice of integration has helped revitalize Independent Studies. She has integrated all students into our classes. She has welcomed and encouraged the skills of all volunteers. Cathy brought a wonderful volunteer, Dani Harder, into our program. Dani is a woman whose physical challenges prevent her from speaking, but whose intelligence, wit and teaching ability are gifts to the class. Thank you to Cathy Berry for enriching the work of Independent Studies. (Don't even think about leaving any time soon!) Thank you, Cathy. Below are Cathy's reflections on her involvement with Independent Studies.

### **IMPORTANT – DEFINITELY BY CATHY BERRY**

The beauty that transpires within the Self-Management/Literacy classes offered through the Independent Studies program at Frontier College is all in the eye of the beholder. What one student elicits from the class is entirely different from that of the next.

The following commentary, written by students, paints a picture of the essence of what transpires in the class.

- Amy avidly writes, "... I think it's fun to learn new things to spread my horizons."
- In his insightful way, Alistair notes, "The one thing that I have learned about the class is friendship and understanding."
- Mark articulates, "I like the people and the fun we have. I also like the reading we do."
- Kerrie also shares her keenness for reading, "Frontier College gives me a chance to learn to read."
- Lynn remarks, "At Frontier College people listen... The women's group helps me."
- Similarly, Cheryl passionately writes, "I like to come to Frontier College because I like the women's group. It is a safe place where I can learn to fight for my rights."
- Ross contends, "that the group helps me."
- Three great minds think alike as Robert, Irene and David collectively write, "I look forward to coming to Frontier College for many reasons. I want to learn and the class opens my mind. It is inspirational. It gives me get up and go. It jump-starts my brain. In a word, it makes me happy."

Since its inception in January 2001, the weekly Self-Management/Literacy classes have grown immensely, both in size and vision. Over the course of the week, 27 students, all of whom are passionate to learn the tools of literacy, come weekly to share their insights and leave with a deeper sense of personal respect and an enhanced love of the written word.

Equally commendable are the efforts and commitment of the 20 tutors who attend weekly and offer encouragement, support and camaraderie to the students. The tutors attend the classes with an open mind and determination to support each student with their personal literacy goals. Central to this class are the tutors insightful ability to respect all people and celebrate each other's uniqueness.

Aside from the basics of reading and spelling, discussions and written work are representative of topics which range from autobiographies to disability rights to men's and women's issues to poetry and mystery writing to everyday current events; the list goes on.

To sum up, the weekday classes are many things: Whimsical – always. Inspirational – without a doubt. Comical – all too often. Enlightening – evidently. Important – definitely. Necessary – just ask any student.

**Cathy Berry, 2002**

Self-Management/Literacy Instructor  
Independent Studies Program, Frontier College



## **EXAMPLES OF SELF-MANAGEMENT/LITERACY CLASS EVALUATION REPORTS ON STUDENTS 2001, 2002**

Every term, the Self-Management/Literacy class instructor, Cathy Berry writes evaluations of the students in the class to assess what they have learned and highlight some of their accomplishments. A selection of these evaluations are presented below (from various "terms" during 2001 and 2002). They are included because they portray very clearly how our work actually works.

Independent Studies Program  
Self-Management/Literacy Class  
April 2001 to June 2001  
Self-Management/Self-Direction Skills

### **Evaluation Reports on Students by Cathy Berry**

#### ***Student: Matt***

Matt's involvement with Frontier College has proved to be both successful and challenging. Successful in that his determination to come weekly and participate with interest demonstrates his keenness to learn and to become more connected with others. The challenge for Matt involves communicating in a large group without the use of his verbal language. Both Matt and those who support him are working together to find creative alternatives to enable him to contribute his ideas and vast knowledge to both the students and tutors in the class.

With support, Matt has identified some goals that he would like to strive for with regards to literacy. Firstly his goal of communication continues to be one that Matt tries to achieve on a daily basis. Matt communicates through his actions, nonverbal cues and by answering questions asked of him by touching someone's hand in response to their question. Matt has demonstrated, in every class, his commitment to make choices for himself. He does so by responding to others questions using these alternative means of communication. As Matt meets new people he will gain the comfort and confidence to use these means of communication with all those around him.

A second goal for Matt is to increase his participation within the class so that he can demonstrate to others his ideas and thoughts on certain subjects. Ideas are being generated to enable Matt to teach ideas to others by using his love of music and other similar interests.

Matt is keen to learn to read. Using pictures as a way to support Matt to read continues to be explored. As well, he continues to enjoy listening to talking mystery books and being read to by a tutor. Matt participated in a reading exercise whereby he had to identify certain words to then pass to a partner. With confidence, Matt participated in this exercise with ease and success. He demonstrated his ability to pick the words that others asked him to read. Matt is keen to try a variety of techniques to explore the fundamentals of reading. Matt works hard at avoiding distractions caused by noise and environmental stresses. Should the distractions become to intense and hamper Matt's ability to concentrate, he may either physically leave the room or make a noise himself as a way to release the frustration and help him to refocus.



*Student, Matt, with fellow student, Vanna (on left), and Susan Macdonald, Program Co-ordinator and Matt's mom*

Matt continues to demonstrate his ability to advocate on his own behalf by confidently answering "yes" and "no" questions directed by someone else. Matt has the confidence to stand up for what he believes and not conform to those around him. This he demonstrated by touching someone's hand to indicate "no" if he disagrees with a statement and does not want to do what is asked of him. This skill is one that others in the class can learn from as many people do as they are told without questioning the reasons for doing so.

Matt presents himself with a sense of confidence. He takes pride in his appearance and chooses the clothes he wears as one way to express who he is. Through eye contact and attentive listening, Matt is demonstrating his interest to the subject at hand.

Matt understands all that is being asked of him at Frontier College and seems thrilled to respond well when he believes others respect

him for what he has to offer. Matt's presence at Frontier College helps those of us who work at the College to become better educators by being able to adapt our programs to include all people and to find creative teaching strategies to teach the necessary skills to both read and write.

***Student: Bob***

Bob wrote his autobiography to be published by Frontier College. This is a great accomplishment for Bob. The book was a tangible reason for Bob to persevere with writing his story. He proudly accepted the published book and read his story at a Frontier College book launch.

Bob's autobiography consisted of stories of close family members and reflections of the countries he visited in his youth. Bob's memory is acute and he wrote in detail about his thoughts and reflections of his past experiences. Bob had difficulty thinking and writing about the future. Bob's ability to read and write is minimal. He can identify most letters of the alphabet however not their sounds. Bob narrates his story to a tutor who then transcribes it. This approach to writing works very well.

Bob is selective about whom he converses with and works with. In a large group environment, Bob has difficulty concentrating on conversations that are unfamiliar to him. He is quick to interrupt the conversation to talk about his personal interests. He continues to be encouraged to be an active listener and to offer ideas about the topic at hand.

Bob is a personable man who enjoys lively discussions. He passionately engaged in the conversation about the rights of people with disabilities.

Bob is very strong willed and has both the confidence and ability to advocate on his own behalf. With the assistance of his tutor, Bob wrote the following letter to David, the Program Manager, after David facilitated a spelling activity with the class that Bob did not like. The letter reflects Bob's ability to advocate for himself in an assertive (and often amusing) manner:

*"Dear David, If you don't find something easy for me, I'm not doing it. Next time we have spelling, please find someone to help me or I'm not doing it. Signed, Bob."*

***Student: David***

David is great addition to the literacy classes at Frontier College. His insightful and thought provoking comments along with his determination to succeed, despite all odds, are both motivating and inspirational to other students in the class.

David is able to identify his literacy and self-management goals with confidence and has many ideas to achieving these goals. His most critical long-term goal is to improve his feelings of self-doubt and to work on improving his self-confidence. David continued to actively work towards this goal using hard work and positive self-talk. He is determined to surround himself with positive influences and chooses to attend the literacy classes at Frontier as a way to be included in a group that welcomes and respects him for his ideas and contributions.

David confidently articulates other goals that he would like to achieve. He identified that he would like to come to Frontier College in the hopes of learning to feel more comfortable speaking with others, both one on one and in a group setting. He would like to work on telling time, find alternatives to deal with rejection and practice reading so as to be able to read to his niece with confidence and ease.

David has very good concentration and memory skills. This is demonstrated by the information that he has both learned and remembered once completing his project on the Don River Park.

David is self-motivated and this he demonstrates by arriving early to take out all the necessary resources needed for the class. This, as well, identifies his willingness to be a contributing member of a group. His efforts are noticed by many of the other students. David works and lives independently outside Frontier College and chooses to be around confident people. He works hard at avoiding negative people.

David continues to improve on his problem solving skills. He is more aware that he needs to take a step back from the problem and both discuss it and think about it more carefully. This process has helped David deal with some problems that have arisen outside Frontier College. As David continues to make more friendships, he is able to turn to more people for guidance with some of his personal problems.

David knows what his interests and strengths are and knows that by learning more about different topics he is interested in, will only further his knowledge and understanding of such topics.

David likes to challenge himself by reading complicated stories and books. He is not deterred by the small print or difficult words; rather he finds them a challenge. He is learning to break down and sort out information to organize his readings and projects.

David recognizes that he learns faster with one to one support however understands that working with a variety of people, both in small and large groups, is good for his self-esteem. David is an excellent listener and thoughtfully adds his comments and feedback to the speaker with a deep sense of respect and genuine interest.

***Student: Ross***

Ross has improved greatly since the inception of the literacy classes at Frontier College. He has developed a more positive sense of self and actively involves himself in the larger group with greater ease and confidence.

Ross is able to identify his literacy and self-management goals with support. One of his main goals is to become a more active group participant. He wants to improve his concentration skills. As well, he wants to find alternative ways to understand what is being discussed in both the large group and one to one tutoring sessions.

In order to accomplish the goal of concentration, Ross understands that he needs to learn to listen more effectively and learn to focus on the speaker. Ross works incredibly hard at looking at the person who is speaking and focusing intently on what they are trying to say. This is difficult for Ross, as I don't think this has ever been asked of him.

He now can look at the speaker and pick up on non-verbal clues and respond accordingly. This communication with others has improved Ross's confidence greatly.

Ross has risen to the challenge of trying to use people's names when he speaks with them. He manages to identify many students and tutors by name and uses their names in his conversation with them.

Ross identified two other important goals that he would like to achieve while at Frontier College. He wants to improve on his computer skills. He wants to type all his stories on the computer as a way to practice typing. Ross is a keen reader and writer. He continues to demonstrate initiative by bringing in reading material from home to be used in the class. Ross is confident about his reading skills and should be, as it is a gift he brings to the class.

Although Ross feels that he has to work "a lot" on his concentration abilities he is confident in his memory skills and enjoys recounting many family stories for both students and tutors to enjoy. He would like to write more stories about his life experiences.

Ross enjoys the group atmosphere. His mannerisms suggest that he likes both the discussion and humour involved in a group conversation. His goal is to contribute his own ideas and thoughts to the group. The group facilitator will continue to ask Ross for his thoughts and make sure he is contributing, at least, by reading something to the class that's related to the topic.

Ross wants to improve his problem solving skills. Ross is starting to self-disclose more personal thoughts as he gets more comfortable with

the group around him. Ross sometimes has difficulty using words he needs to describe how he is feeling. One strategy that works well for him is to have him write his thoughts/emotions down and read it to the group later, if he chooses to do so.

Ross is becoming more confident in his ability to communicate to others. His head is held up higher and his handshake is stronger which suggests a better feeling of self-worth. Ross feels he is more confident in the literacy class as he is concentrating to the discussion and conversation taking place within the large group.

Ross has excellent time management skills and is proud of his ability to complete projects on time and arrive promptly to class with a positive attitude to learn.

Ross prefers to work independently or one on one yet realizes that he has to challenge himself to get more involved and actively participate in group discussions. He perseveres with this challenge weekly and is making small, successful steps to achieving his goals.

### **Evaluation of students' strengths in the Self-Management/Literacy class of the Independent Studies program, 2002**

**by Cathy Berry**

#### ***Rodney***

- ✓ Rodney brings a real sense of creativity to the class room with all his fresh ideas
- ✓ Rodney is an excellent motivator for the other students in the class. He is often verbally encouraging them to keep on trying,

or often adds on to their ideas to show the value of the idea and motivation to continue to think of more.

- ✓ Rodney often volunteers to participate during class. He is eager to read aloud and offer his ideas.
- ✓ Rodney brings such great ideas and energy to the classroom. Rodney at times gets antsy and leaves the class. Rodney needs to understand that when he leaves so does his wonderful participation he brings to class.

### ***David***

- ✓ David is a very motivated individual. He enjoys learning more and expanding his horizons.
- ✓ At times he will assist teachers with lesson plans.
- ✓ He is always at College on time. Often he comes early and assists with setting up the room.
- ✓ He is trying slowly to learn the basics of the computer because he knows the importance of using one to assist him getting a job. He understands that this will take time, so he stays patient and spends many hours learning.
- ✓ David is a great help to the other students in the class. He helps them with their work in class like a peer tutor.
- ✓ David's personal self-confidence had flourished since attending Frontier College. David now needs to see that he has the ability to help others, and work on his confidence in the area of teaching.

### ***Mary Anne***

- ✓ Mary Anne enters the classroom with great energy. She is always there to greet you with a great welcome.
- ✓ Mary Anne is an excellent speller and writer, but continues to work on these two areas to keep on challenging herself to move up a level.
- ✓ Mary Anne at times can speak quite loudly to get her message across. Mary Anne is working on developing the skill to use a more appropriate volume of voice while still being able to deliver her message clearly.

### ***Matt***

- ✓ Matt is a great teacher for all that attend class. Students and tutors alike. He has great patience to allow for others to learn all that he has to teach.
- ✓ Matt's love for music and humour through writing brings a lot of energy and laughs to the class.
- ✓ During times of self-reflection in class Matt has many personal stories to add to the discussion. Sharing his stories allow other students to feel comfortable to share their own, know that they aren't alone with some of their experiences, and learn from Matt's experiences.
- ✓ Matt has great focus during class when the activity is in his area of interest. When the class topic aren't in his area of interest he had trouble focusing. This is an area that Matt is working on and improving each week.

### ***Joey***

- ✓ Joey has shown incredible improvement in his writing ability and reading ability. This in turn has increased Joey's confidence in class. He is always willing to read his ideas and share his work.
- ✓ Joey has a great ability to focus. When working one on one with his tutor he is eager to learn and often wonders what is he going to learn today.

### ***Andreas***

- ✓ Andreas' spirit always lightens up the room. He walks in and makes everyone feel welcome. Andreas has a great ability to make new students feel at home when they first arrive at Frontier College.
- ✓ Andreas always has his two cents to add. He is excellent at expressing his opinion and thoughts in a constructive manner.
- ✓ Andreas also participates greatly in class. He is willing to read when called upon and often volunteers himself.
- ✓ Andreas loves to do his work. So much so that he often asks for tutors assistance frequently. Andreas need to understand that tutors are not always available for him at the time he asks and that he is able to do much of the work independently.

### ***Edward***

- ✓ Edward is doing wonderfully at taking his time to speak clearly and slowly. This has been an area for Edward to work on. He continues to do so with great progress.
- ✓ Edward has the great gift of keeping our class up to date with the current events. He often brings topics to the class' attention during discussion. He asks people what they think about the issue. This is a great motivator for students to use their critical thinking.
- ✓ Edward has many great ideas of what he would like to work on in his free time/one-to-one tutoring. Edward needs to work on focusing at times on the topic that is given to him in class.

### ***Colette***

- ✓ Colette is willing to share her ideas and thoughts during class. When she does, Colette has a very poetic way of getting her messages across. She often uses metaphor to help students understand what she is trying to say (eg., fast people and slow people).
- ✓ Colette works very well with others. She is able to welcome students with open arms and make sure that they are involved in the task at hand. She also adapts well when she is working with a new tutor.
- ✓ Colette needs to develop her understanding of the importance of being at an engagement on time. Colette often stumbles into class late. This distracts the class that is already in process. She is beginning to recognize the effects of her arriving late and is slowly narrowing the gap.

### ***Michel***

- ✓ Michel is always eager to assist with the class. He takes pride in being in the class and likes to help out when he can (eg., getting the binders, emptying the pencil sharpener, attendance, etc.).
- ✓ Michel is working very hard to improve his spelling. His ability to sound out words has greatly improved. This in turn has affected his self-confidence. He reads aloud with great confidence, while still not bothered to ask for assistance when needed.
- ✓ Michel will at times get frustrated by his work. He is working towards taking a deep breath and calming down. He understands that learning to read and write is a process that, at times, can be frustrating.

### ***Irene***

- ✓ Irene has the ability to assist other students in the class when she understands the lesson. She is very patient and an excellent peer tutor.
- ✓ Irene treats everyone in the class with a large amount of respect (eg., she makes sure that everyone has what she needs, greets everyone). She also assists students who need assistance with getting settled in (eg., supporting Dani to take off her coat).
- ✓ Irene needs to build her confidence in her spelling. She is excellent at spelling, but often doubts herself. It would be quite useful to Irene if she became familiar with the dictionary so that she can be independently check her own work.

### ***Bob***

- ✓ Bob is an individual who is very proud of his cultural background. He kindly shares with the class some aspects of his Jewish religion. He speaks with passion and writes detailed writings for all to share.
- ✓ Bob has a lot to say and is not afraid to say it. He strongly expresses his opinion in class. He gives new ideas and often asks for clarity if he needs it.
- ✓ Bob would flourish in group work. He would learn a lot from others and he has lots to teach the other students as well. Bob needs to take the risk to share his work and ideas with others.

### ***Mark***

- ✓ Mark's spelling is at a high level. He is able to sound out words very well and print them clearly.
- ✓ Mark is willing to try anything. He is always up for the task that is offered to him.
- ✓ Mark has good structure and creativity when expressing himself in his writing.
- ✓ Mark is a strong person who needs to speak out when he doesn't want to do something. Also, when Mark refines his ability to speak up he will be able to share some of the great experiences that he has encountered in the self-reflection group.

### ***Alistair***

- ✓ Alistair's ability to read and write is at a very high level. With his ability he is able to assist the other students to raise their level of reading and writing as well.
- ✓ Alistair needs to build the confidence to see himself in the role of a peer tutor. He has a lot to offer to the other students.
- ✓ Alistair is very willing to participate in class. He freely expresses his ideas and opinions with the rest of the class.

### ***Jennifer***

- ✓ Jennifer's reading and writing is at a high level. This ability allows her to express herself clearly in her daily journals.
- ✓ Jennifer is a fun-loving person who adds a lot of joy to the class. She is willing to work with others and enjoys their presence.
- ✓ Jennifer is a woman who is filled with many great thoughts and opinions. Jennifer needs to work on expressing these ideas openly with the class in groups like the women's group and the self-reflection group.

### ***Kerrie***

- ✓ Kerrie enjoys working with others. She has a wonderful ability to make people feel welcomed and make the activity fun.
- ✓ Kerrie's joyous personality adds fun and cheer into the class.
- ✓ Kerrie needs to develop her understanding of the importance of being at an engagement on time. Kerrie often stumbles into class late. This distracts the class that is already in process. She is beginning to recognize the effects of her arriving late and is slowly narrowing the gap.

### ***Ross***

- ✓ Ross is a very energetic and excited person. He often finds himself talking quickly and repeating what he has to say. Ross is working on his speech so that he can be better understood, as well as expressing his thoughts.

### ***Cheryl***

- ✓ Cheryl's ability to write is at a high level. She is able to communicate what she has to say very clearly in her journal.

- ✓ Cheryl has a lot to contribute to discussions in class. Cheryl is working towards speaking out more to share her life experiences with the others in the class.

### ***Robert***

- ✓ Robert has a great gift to verbalize his thoughts without offending anyone. He often mentions that these are his thoughts and feelings when speaking.
- ✓ Robert is a very kind person who works well with others. He often encourages and complements other students to continue with their work.
- ✓ Robert has the ability to support other students in a peer tutoring setting. He needs to raise his confidence in this area to make this happen.

### ***Dietmar***

- ✓ Dietmar's ability to write his thoughts in his journal is very extensive. Often his journal entry is about three pages long. He also has a great ability to read his writing to the class.
- ✓ Dietmar is a person who has a lot to say. At times Dietmar needs to work on focusing on the topic at hand.

### ***Lynn***

- ✓ Lynn feels strongly about many topics brought up in class. She speaks powerfully about these issues and makes her points well heard.
- ✓ Lynn has great confidence when writing in her journal. She always has something to write about, and enjoys writing about it.
- ✓ Lynn is able to read what she wrote in her journal well. At times Lynn needs to slow down and focus on her speech.
- ✓ Lynn needs some work on putting her sentences together. She knows what she wants to say.



## WORDS OF WISDOM FROM SOME INDEPENDENT STUDIES VOLUNTEERS

The volunteers in the Independent Studies program are amazing people. As staff, we are continuously astonished by the people who walk through our door and offer to volunteer part of their lives to get to know the people in our program. We could not do the work we do without volunteers. Without them, our program would simply stop happening. Their insight and wisdom help to shape our program. Their skills and experience help our students achieve their goals. And their respect and humility constantly remind us what an extraordinary gift it is to give. Below are some comments from some current volunteers in the I.S. program. Thank you to all of them and to all the people who have given so much to Independent Studies over the past 20 years.



*David Greig and Susan Macdonald at a tutor support night thanking volunteers for giving us so much.*

***Adrian Conway***

Since becoming a Tutor for Frontier College almost one year ago, the surprising thing I notice is that the roles of Student/Teacher are often reversed. It is very often that "I" am the one being "Tutored". The wonderful experiences and the challenging obstacles that some students must confront in their daily lives have put into perspective my own struggles and difficulties. It is "I" that can learn so much. Mother Teresa once said, "You can't do what I can do...and I can't do what you can do...and we both must do it." I think this is very appropriate for the way I feel with regards to Frontier College. It is, in the nicest way, a give and take.

The learner tutors,  
    The tutor learns,  
The speaker listens,  
    The listener speaks,  
The wounded healed,  
    The healed wounded,  
The weak, strengthened,  
    The strong...weakened,  
The giver taking,  
    The taker...giving  
And everyone growing,  
    Growing in a better way.

***Karen Fraczowski***

About five years ago, I talked to a co-worker who had done literacy tutoring. He mentioned Frontier College. I wanted to volunteer my time to a movement that would have meaning for me and that would draw on my skills.

My experience with Frontier College has taught me to appreciate the power of community and caring; people of all backgrounds and experience coming together. I am more understanding of the challenges that people face, particularly in learning. I do not take my own literacy for granted anymore, recognizing it as a powerful skill. It can be difficult to impart what you know to someone else but I've learned that a patient tutor and a determined learner can make progress and both will be enriched by the experience.

After spending 2 hours with my student one evening, I walked home wondering how much help I was being to her; we didn't seem to be making any progress. When I got home, the phone was ringing. It was my student, very excited to tell me that she could suddenly read all the words on her kitchen calendar.

Something clicked for her and for me too.

I used to be shy about joining things but now I know that the best way to pursue an interest is to jump right in. Volunteering is a good way to learn and to meet other people.

## ***Maebh Bidwell***

I started with the Monday night class in January of 2001 where tutors and students work together in a group format. I've continued working with the group since that time and really enjoy working with a number of students and other tutors.

I didn't really know what to expect, and was a bit nervous about how best to help students. Ironically, they showed me the best way to help them. Because many of the Monday night students have worked with tutors before, they have "routines" and exercises that they're comfortable with and understand how the tutor/student relationship works.

I have learned that we all learn differently. Helping a learner can take problem-solving skills that will help me in everything I do. Teaching someone something also makes you think about how things work, and I feel more confident in my ability to explain and teach reading and writing skills.

I think our best evening was a few weeks ago when we decided to have a "fun" class and make a Greek salad. The week before, we planned the meal by making a shopping list and assigning items to students and tutors, writing out a task and equipment list, and planning the process of preparing our meal. On the night, we all worked together to make the salad, and then enjoyed the fruits of our labours. It was a great success and combined literacy with a real-life activity and one that was really fun!

The Greek salad night was great fun but also an excellent learning opportunity. It made me realize the importance of connecting literacy with basic life skills, and showed me the different ways in which students are abled. One student took great pleasure in mixing the salad dressing, and mixed it for a good fifteen minutes. Everyone was eager to help and no one wanted to be left out of the action. I think the experience made me realize that I take some of the simpler tasks in life for granted. We can all get great pleasure out of working together to achieve goals and share in the success. It also reminded me that what I have to offer others doesn't take much effort and is greatly appreciated.

### **WHY ARE YOU INVOLVED?**

We asked some of our current volunteers to describe why they were involved with Independent Studies. This is what they said:

#### ***Margaret***

I am glad to feel connected again and to enjoy the participation of the other tutors. They all seem to be so enthused and intelligent. Very nice.

#### ***Ron***

I find it rewarding on a personal level. I enjoy the relations made with students. It's good to feel needed and appreciated.

#### ***Adrian***

I am here primarily to offer any help, skills and knowledge that I have acquired over my life and to share it with others, at the same time

taking their experiences to increase my knowledge and awareness. I am getting the above experiences and so much, much more. (The only help I need from the staff is) your presence and the very visible love and acceptance you show everyone in the program – tutors and students alike. Thank you.

***Samantha***

I am learning about different learning styles and different outlooks on life. I am learning about myself – such as my stereotypes. Finally, I'm learning to accommodate to different people, their learning styles and situations.

***Dee***

Frontier College program gave me a wonderful opportunity to learn, laugh, reflect, think and to experience the togetherness of all of us.

***Linda***

(I am getting out of the program) way more than I anticipated. Working and assisting people with disabilities is a brand new experience – and changes your whole view of the world.

***Bonnie***

The I.S. program holds particular interest for me because it is based on respect for the dignity of all people. There is always a sense that group members are valued for who they are. The program is very enriching for me as a tutor. I have been reminded that there are many ways for people to communicate with authenticity and at deep levels. I believe in the giftedness of all people and am grateful to be in a group

that works on that assumption as well. It is fun to be here and I always leave with a smile. (I also enjoy) the “merry” staff!

***Patricia***

To be able to watch Cathy and Susan communicate with the students – they are so positive and see what I am completely unaware of at times.

***Rob***

An excellent social experience which is broadly enriching for all of its members.

***Denise***

I like it. I feel like I am doing something both worthwhile and fun.

***Frances***

I enjoy helping folks and seeing their improvement. Feeling good by helping out.

***Heather***

New challenges – I’m currently coming on Monday nights and there’s such a variety of people and abilities that each week is a new experience.

***Claire***

I have met people at Frontier College whom I would never get to meet otherwise. I really enjoy the flexibility and variety of the drop-in class. I feel that I’ve received a lot of support since I started.

### **Wendy**

(I like) to help people to enjoy learning, reading, numbers and to be more independent thus more self-confident.

### **Cassandra**

A strong belief in the empowerment literacy provides to every aspect of one's life. Challenges (this program) enables me to try new things and keeps me challenged.

### **Hilary**

I have met so many incredible people, both students and tutors. My world has expanded. I hope I can return the favour.

## **A SPECIAL STUDENT VOLUNTEER**

Many of the students in our program also volunteer at other programs. One of our students, Lynn Symons, recently (April 2002) received an award for her volunteer work. This award was written up in an article in *The Toronto Star* newspaper and is presented below. Congratulations, Lynn, on your award and your work.

### **Source:**

*The Toronto Star*: Volunteers honoured for work in Toronto, 'city of neighbourhoods'; Lieutenant-Governor pays tribute to 25 for contributions by Michelle Warren

*Lynn Symons sums up what it means to be a volunteer in three words: "It's the best," she says throwing her arms in the air in delight. And*

*she's one of Toronto's best. Twenty-five outstanding volunteers were honoured yesterday by the Volunteer Centre of Toronto and Lieutenant-Governor James Bartleman for the extraordinary contribution they make to this city. Symons – who has Down's Syndrome – was recognized for her role as buddy advocate for Best Buddies Canada, a group dedicated to enhancing the community through friendships between students and people with intellectual disabilities. But her contributions don't stop there.*

*She also volunteers for the Down's Syndrome Association of Toronto, a senior's residence, a nursery school and Meals on Wheels. She also helps out with special events at her church. Symons is the true embodiment of the volunteer spirit, said Best Buddies co-ordinator Catherine Stankowski. "She acts as a role model, not only for people with intellectual disabilities, but for everyone."*

## **MORE THANKS**

### **Thank you to some placement students**

Emma Hardie, Alana Bazijanec and Karen McKenna were placement students from Cathy Berry's Centennial College DSW course who worked in I.S. in 2002. All of them were exemplary in their work with Independent Studies. Their dedication to the students in the program is reflected below in a reference letter that students wrote for Emma. They also wrote letters to Alana and Karen (but space permits the printing of only one letter). Thank you, Emma, Alana and Karen. If you ever need jobs in the future, just give us a call!

**A Reference for Emma Hardie  
by Andreas Prinz; Michel Brunet; David Booker**

Emma is always reliable and punctual. She is friendly and takes her work very seriously. She takes notice by listening to everyone. She runs the class by explaining everything clearly and makes the class fun. Emma presents the material to the class in an organized way. Emma is very eager and the vibes she sends to the students are motivating. She is a good role model.



*Emma*

Emma supports students right from the heart. She sheds the same light as the students. She notices each student and asks what supports are necessary. Her personality is excellent. We are lucky to have had Emma as a student on placement at Frontier College. Whatever job Emma goes onto, people will notice her glow and caring nature. Emma will help students in distress if need be. Emma is caring about society and is engaged about a variety of topics. We thank you Emma very

much for coming here and helping out. We appreciate your kindness, motivation and encouraging words.

### **THANKS TO NEW I.S. STAFF PERSON ANGELA OUTWATER**

We would also like to thank a new Independent Studies staff person, Angela Outwater, for her incredible contributions to our program. Angela had been a volunteer in our program for a number of years and is now working with us. Angela's contribution to the Monday night drop-in sessions help enliven and inform the students as well as the tutors. Angela has shown a deep understanding of the nature of our work and demonstrates a genuine respect and affection for the students in the program. Thanks, Angela. We hope you'll help carry our program into the future.



*I.S. staff Angela Outwater (on right) discussing issues with tutors at a tutor support night.*



## STUDENT WRITING 2002

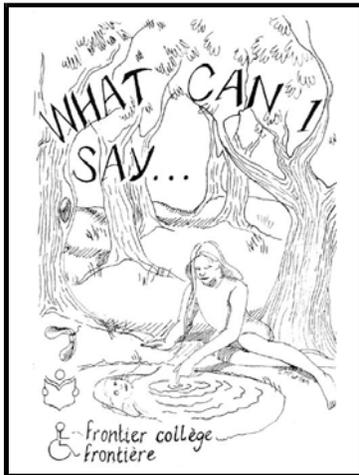
Independent Studies has a long tradition of publishing student writing. Student writing is a critical component of our program. It allows students to develop both their skills at writing but more so, it allows them to express their own voices. Many people in our program (and in other literacy programs) have never had an opportunity to write about who they are, to express their own ideas and opinions, to reflect on their lives. Student publishing provides a forum for students to let the world know who they are and what they have to say. Below is a selection of some student writing from 2002. Before the samples of student writing are a series of graphics that depict covers of most of the books of student writing published by Independent Studies from 1982 until 2002. These books are a rich legacy and a vital part of the history of Independent Studies.



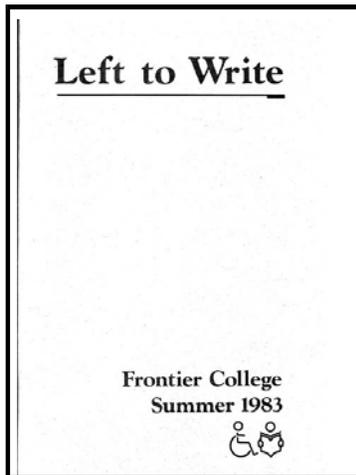
*Students writing*

# Independent Studies Student Writing

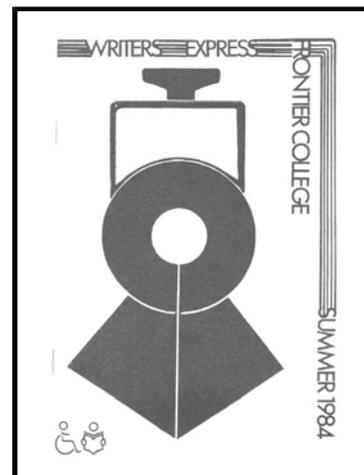
1982-2002



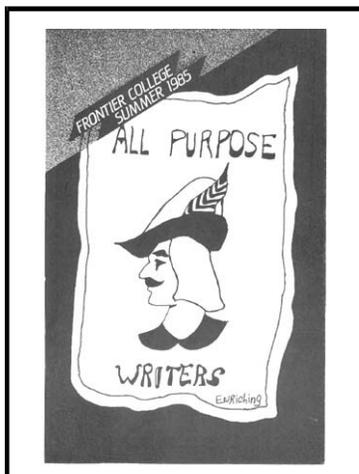
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1983



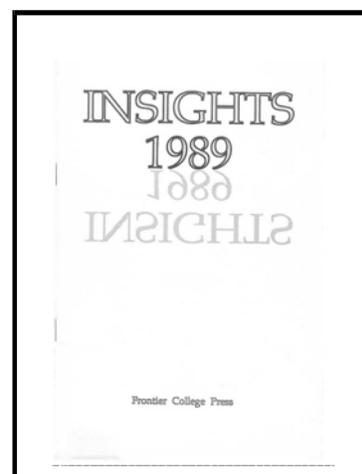
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1985

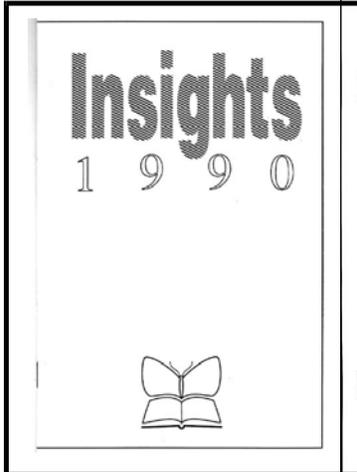


1986-87

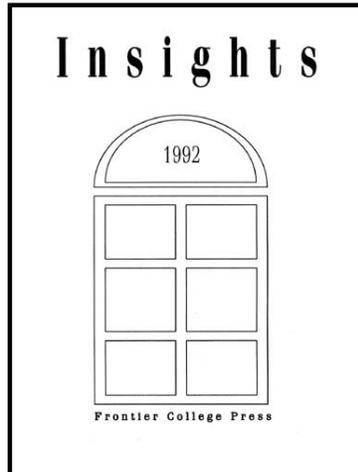


1989

# Independent Studies Student Writing 1982-2002



1990



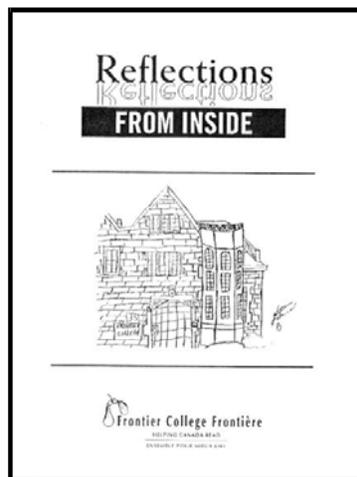
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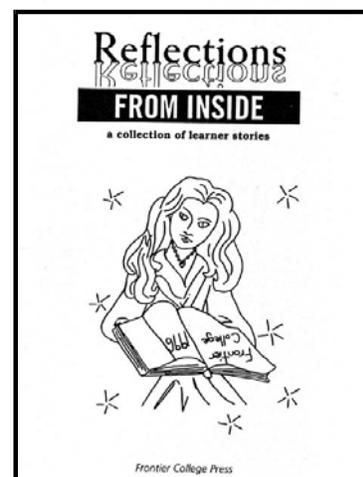
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1993



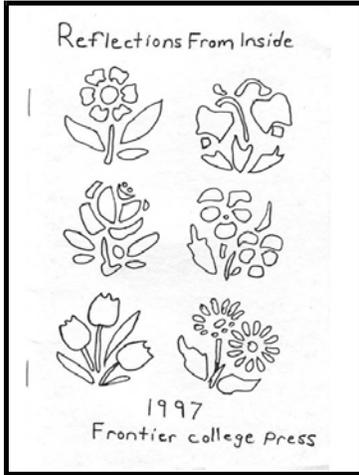
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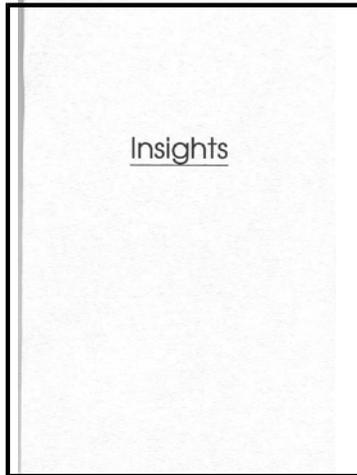
1996

# Independent Studies Student Writing

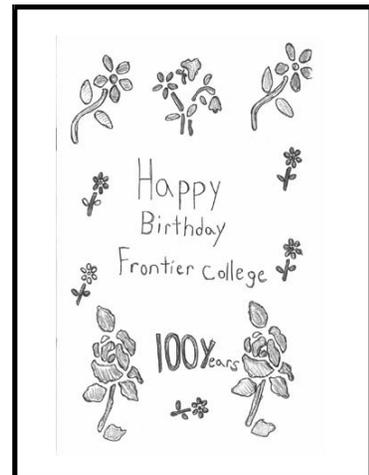
1982-2002



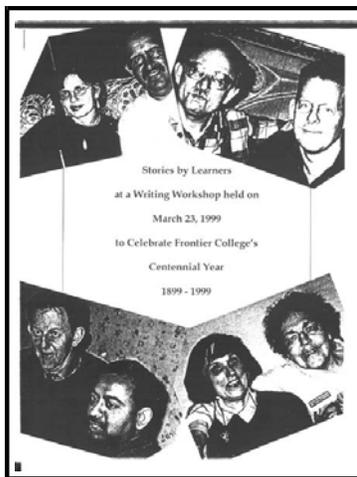
1997



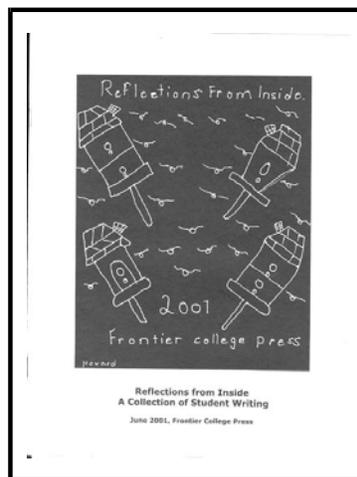
1998



1999



1999



2001



2002

## **Mystery Writing Group**

In 2002, a group of students planned and wrote a mystery story. The process is described below and the comical story follows. The group performed their story as a play for students and staff.

### **Mystery Writing Group Review of February 11, 2002**

**Group:** Andreas, Joan, David, Rodney, Matt, Cara, Bonnie, Cathy, and Emma

#### ***Setting Ideas***

- Toronto
- Paris
- Toronto to Paris
- Old Mansion – Frontier College
- Private Investigator's Office
- Old Church
- Nova Scotia

#### ***Characters***

##### ***Private Investigator***

- Woman
- Beautiful
- Young
- Red Dress
- Short Brown Hair

##### ***Killer***

- Tall
- Lots of Friends
- Fat
- Leaves Poison candies Everywhere
- Long Nail/ Bites Them
- Exits the Bus by the top Emergency Exit

### ***Ghost***

- Male
- Handsome
- Purple Scarf
- Trench coat
- Red Hat

### ***Storyline***

- Woman who wanted to be a Private Investigator
- First case about a murder that happened 30 years ago
- Helped by a ghost of a dead man to solve the murder
- The killer is a woman who knew the dead man very well
- The mystery was solved by the ghost
- Need to find a key to open the secret door
- The key is in Nova Scotia, in a closet
- To get to the key they need to pick locks
- The murder kills people with his scarf
- He uses his red hat as a shield
- The key is in a locked tomb

## **The Mystery Writing Group's Final Production!**

**By Joan, David, Matt, Rodney, Andreas, Sam, Bonnie, Cara and Emma**

Our story begins in the city of Toronto. There wasn't a sense of community in this overpopulated area of Canada. The smoke lifted from the sewers creating a smell that was overwhelming. Everyone in the town was dressed in their high-topped outfits, expensive shoes, and had snotty attitudes. The high building surrounded this city like gates. Was it to keep people out of the city or to keep them in?

Even with those high buildings this city was not able to keep Jean Luc from visiting. Jean Luc is a ghost that came to Toronto, after 30 years of his death, to help solve the mystery of who killed him. Jean Luc was filled with unrest because his case was never solved, but that unrest

has risen. Jean Luc saw something hopeful in a mirror in his home in Nova Scotia. Jean Luc has the ability to see what is going on anywhere in the world through mirrors, and he saw, through the mirror a rookie private investigator going through his old files in her office. The office smelled of musty books, dust and an old man's cigar. The only light that entered the office was from the bar across the street. The light came from a neon light sign and it did not give much comfort to the office. There was one chair that was placed behind the desk. The desk had many etchings carved into it by previous, bored, private investigators. This was not a place where you could spend your days dreaming about the happy things in life. It was place to be taken seriously. It was a place where you could spend only a couple of hours without getting depressed.

Jean Luc beams himself through the mirror and says, "I have come here with important information regarding the case your looking into."

"Who are you?" says the private investigator. Jean Luc replies, "I am Jean Luc, the person killed in that case. I am here to put my soul at rest and have my case solved."

The private investigator stumbled backwards asking, "What do you know about this murder?"

Jean Luc replies, "I was stabbed in the back therefore could not see who killed me."

This murder took place in an old abandoned mansion. There is a mysterious woman who now lives in the house and you must go and see her to uncover more clues to this mystery. I must go now."

The private investigator now has a motive to go to Nova Scotia to visit the mysterious woman in the mansion to solve this mystery. She thinks confidently to herself, "If I solve this mystery, I will be known as the greatest rookie private investigator of all times!"

Jean Luc reappears back to Nova Scotia, through his mirror; to inform Christine of how excited he is that the mystery might be solved. Nova Scotia smelled of fresh fish, salt water and good home cooking. The atmosphere was friendly. It was a community of family, friends and merry folk. The music was very traditional with their bag pipes, fiddles and lively voices. These sounds filled the air with good spirits and hospitality that echoed over the mountains and all the way down to the sea. This place was very welcoming. It was a place where you could raise your children and not have the fear that something might happen to them after dark. The people of Nova Scotia seemed to protect their own culture, people and history. Jean Luc's murder shocked the town.

Christine is a good friend that lives in the mansion. She is not afraid of the ghost and is the chosen one to receive the clues. The old mansion was a creepy place to live. The wind whistled through the broken windows, the stairs creaked under footsteps. Ghosts haunted the fireplace. There were trap doors, secret places to hide and an eerie feeling that you were being watched.

Jean Luc finds Christine with a candlestick in the conservatory and says to her, " I have come with exciting news. The private investigator from Toronto that I saw in the mirror is coming to meet you and find out more clues to my murder.

Christine is worried that if this mystery is solved that she may no longer see her good friend Jean Luc but is still willing to help him to find his resting-place. She says to Jean Luc, "I'll help you in any way but I will miss you when I'm gone."

Jean Luc winks at Christine. (Wink, wink, nudge, nudge.)

Outside the mansion, Raoul is hiding in a raspberry bush keeping a close eye on the house. Raoul is worried that the police will catch him even after all these years. Raoul is the one who stabbed Jean Luc in the back over thirty years ago.

Raoul looks through the window to discover that Christine has pulled out an album cover and looks inside! He notices that the purple scarf can be seen from the album! Christine has pulled out this album because she thinks that it may help her to discover who the murderer is. She got this hunch when she woke up to find the words to Abba written in blood all over the study's walls. Raoul says to himself, "This makes me very nervous seeing that album cover because this is a very important clue. She knows more than she should. I have to get into that house somehow. What should I do?"

Raoul, equipped with a toilet plunger and toilet seat, rings the doorbell to the old mansion. Christine is shocked, as the doorbell has not been

rung in years. The only guests she knows, arrive through mirrors. She opens the door and says, "My toilets are working just fine thank you. Did I call you?" Raoul pushes his way through the door and slams the door behind him.

Meanwhile in Toronto, the ghost has arrived back through the mirrors. He has arrived back to the private investigator's office so that he can bring her to Nova Scotia through the mirrors. The private investigator gathers all of her belonging to get ready to leave at once. The two of them turn around and face the mirror to get ready to go, but something is wrong. Jean Luc says, "I can see in the mirror that Christine is in trouble." He sees her being tied up by a man in the basement of the mansion.

He watches for a few seconds longer to see the man now disguising himself as Christine. Jean Luc turns to the private investigator and says, "Hurry, we must leave now!" The private investigator asks, "What's wrong?" Jean Luc replies, "There's no time to explain! Christine is in trouble!"

Back at the mansion, Christine is struggling with Raoul. She turns to him and says, "Why are you doing this to me?" Raoul laughs and says, "I'm the one that you and your little friend have been looking for throughout the past thirty years. I killed Jean Luc. I've been spying on this mansion for years making sure that I would never get caught, but you, my pretty, were getting too close to cracking the case. So, now I must keep you quiet so that you do not uncover the murderer. I will have to kill you." That wasn't Raoul's only plan. He also planned to dress up as Christine, so when the ghost and the private investigator

arrived he could pretend to be Christine and kill the private investigator. This way there would be no living person left who was close to figuring out that he was the murder.

Jean Luc and the private investigator arrived just in time. They could hear Christine yelling for help from the basement. The two of them ran downstairs to find Christine tied up and Raoul dressed in Christine's clothes. "Untie her!" yelled the private investigator. "Never!" responded Raoul. The two of them struggled as Raoul tried to kill the private investigator and the private investigator tried to arrest Raoul. Jean Luc then ran over to Christine and said, "I'm sorry for putting you through all this Christine."

"Ahhhh!" yelled Christine as she awoke in a cold sweat in her bed. "You have to be kidding me! This was all a dream." She shook off the dream and started to get ready for the day. Christine walked over to the bathroom and screamed. There sitting in front of her was a new toilet... The End



*Monday night students and tutors*

## STUDENT POETRY 2002

excerpts from:

*"Poetry: A Medley of Student's Poetry"*

By the Independent Studies

Self-Management/Literacy Class

March 2002

### FREEDOM

To speak out.

To show that you have rights.

To get your wishes heard.

To love-to be open and honest.

To know what the other person is thinking.

To associate.

To make friends who won't judge you.

To be different, gives us different likes.

*written by* **ANDREAS PRINZ**

### RHYME

There once was a nice cook

Who loved water and fishing with the hook

On a sunny day in a quiet nook

He was tired of fishing and went home to look at this book

*written by* **JOEY PAPPA**

### **IF I COULD GO...**

I went to Florida with my sister.  
We went 5 years ago for our vacation.  
We took a plane there.  
I saw Disney and Magic Kingdom.  
The next day we went to Universal Studios.

*written by* **EDWARD UYEYAMA**

### **IF I COULD GO ANYWHERE...**

If I could go anywhere in the world it would be Italy.  
I would go in the summer.  
I would go to restaurants, the beach, and the clubs.  
I would go by airplane.  
I want to go to Italy because it is fun there.

*written by* **JOEY PAPA**

### **IF I COULD GO ANYWHERE...**

I would like to go to Pakistan  
with my parents during my vacation  
because my relatives are there  
and I love them and Pakistan too.  
By plane.  
I would like to meet with my aunts, uncles and their kids.  
Would like to have parties.  
There are so many animals.

I like them too.  
Playing with my cousins  
and swimming in a lake.

*written by* **NADIA**

### **IF I COULD GO ANYWHERE...**

I would like to travel to London next year.  
I would visit my friends.  
I would get there by car and plane.

*written by* **MARY ANNE**

### **IF I COULD GO ANYWHERE...**

Ireland is the country that I would love to go to.  
The Irish land is beautiful with green meadows, forest, rocks, and mountains.  
I would go looking for a colourful rainbow and for four-leaf clovers to bring me good luck.  
And after my long walk, I would have a happy time in a good company of kind Irish people.

*written by* **DAVID**

## **UNTITLED**

There was a man who was old  
He was an artist, so he took some clay to make a mold.  
He worked and worked and then he stopped.  
As he realized he was getting cold.  
He told himself to fold the mold into a barrel made of gold.  
His wife then came and offered him a warm cup of tea to hold.  
He drank his tea and immediately went bold.

*written by **DANI HARDER***

## **DREAM POEM**

If I were to meet a genie I would let him out of tight bottle and invite him for a nice dinner.

He would be so thrilled that he would immediately grant my wishes.

First I would ask him, "Genie, please let my friend Dani walk and talk so she could enjoy my dream with me. Besides, I need a good co-pilot."

Before long, Dani and I would be standing in front of a gorgeous F-18 wearing those cool pilot hats and goggles.

Then we would just fly feeling free and light like butterflies. My plane would take us anywhere.

We would go upside down and sideways, and then we would chase the sun and the wind.

Of, what a feeling that would be!

*written by **MARK TENCH***

## **POETRY IS NOT ON MY MIND**

Poetry is not on my mind  
Because I'm disappointed about the 1 to 1 tie.  
A hockey game tie, that is  
Between the Montreal Canadians  
and the Toronto Maple Leafs.  
I need my team to win  
And I need it bad  
And when they will  
I won't be so sad.  
Then I will write a beautiful poem  
That we all can talk about.

*written by* **JOEY PAPPA**

## **I DREAM**

Castles and oceans, father cruising on the titanic.  
Healthy and happy.  
Walking towards us with his clothes in hand.  
A kiss on the cheek, run into his arms.  
Welcome to my castle.  
Bijou had lots of friends along, jumping and talking.  
New York was nice, the ocean bumpy, overall a spicy ride.

Roses are red, violets are blue  
The ocean is beautiful  
On my hair the wind blew  
Paris on a plane, my mom and I.

We walked to the park and made a picnic.  
Oranges, grapes, a baguette and salami.  
Off to the museum, all the beautiful paintings. Pictures outside only.  
Shopping next, onto the market. I bought a beautiful skirt to match  
my blue shirt, what a bargain!  
Grandmama, the greatest cook in the world. My uncle, what a  
comedian.  
What an exciting trip.

*written by* **COLETTE ALAMI**

### **I CAN'T WRITE A POEM**

I am too tired to write  
*I am uncomfortable*  
I want to go for a walk outside  
I like to go shopping in the mall  
I can't write poems in the mall  
I can't concentrate  
I can't write an application form and answer questions  
I had a new job working on the computers and didn't have time  
I went to school and wrote a poem.

*written by* **EDWARD UYHEYAMA**

## **TABLOIDS BY RODNEY**

Super boy dies from kryptonite

Eddie Murphy found to be an alien

Frontier College is built over a gold mine

Chinese food found to be the fountain of youth

Comic books replace text books in universities

A team of lawyers are sent to outer space to  
discover a better planet for their kind

And Tabloids are found to be filled with lies

*written by **RODNEY BEALS***



*Wednesday class*

## **OTHER NEW STUDENT WRITING 2002**

We encourage our students to write about their own lives and interests. Many students write passionately about topics of concern. Others write about their personal identities – who they are and the cultures in which they live. Some examples of these kinds of writing are presented below.

### **PASSOVER**

Passover is the next Jewish holiday. It's at the end of this month. We can't eat bread for eight days. We eat matzah. A long time ago, the Jewish people were escaping from Egypt and didn't have time for their bread to rise. We have to eat special food. At the beginning of Passover, we have a special meal called the Seder, where we read the story of the exodus from Egypt, where the Jewish people were slaves. We also drink wine or grape juice. We say prayers. The youngest at the table asks four questions about why this night is different. Passover is my favourite holiday.

*written by **BOB STARR** (with assistance from his tutor)*

### **BOB'S GOALS**

Make change (see below)

- Learn how to write. I can write my name very well. I want to learn the letters and how they look. I can use the computer to practice letters. I will start by typing my name at the end of this page,

instead of dictating. I would rather learn with paper and pen instead of the computer.

- Use "I" instead of "me". I don't like it when people correct me. It is OK if people remind me to use "I" by noticing when I say me, as in "Me went to the store", and instead of saying I am wrong, they can give a sentence that says the same thing, but uses "I". For example, "I went to the store". I don't to want to be interrupted, or for people to correct me all the time, just sometimes. I would like it if people do this in a person to person conversation, when I am talking to someone alone.
- Saying what I want. For example, shorter stories. I can notice when I am fidgeting and tell that I am bored. I can say what I want to feel better. For example, I wanted a short story, instead of a long one.
- Knowing when it is time to talk in a group without raising my hand. I can use "excuse me". If somebody is not talking, it is my turn to talk. If somebody is talking, I can wait my turn to talk.

*Written by **BOB STARR** (with assistance from his tutor)*

## **DON RIVER WATERSHED**

The Don River is a unique river system. The mouth of the Don River is at the Oak Ridges Moraine, in Richmond Hill. From there, the river flows south for 38 kilometres. It flows to Lake Ontario. The Don River provides drainage for 360 square kilometers. The Don River flows through many different area. It goes through business areas, city

areas, farmland, and neighbourhoods. 80% of the area that the river flows through is urban, or downtown city. It flows by the homes of 800,000 residents. It is forecast that in 19 years, 91% of the Don will be built up. There will be more houses, factories, and more pollution.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Don River flowed through countryside. It flowed through marshes, forests, meadows, and fields. As Toronto developed into a busy city, land around the Don River became scarce. Highways and fences have taken away a lot of the natural beauty of the Don River Valley. This has brought more chaos and pollution. At one time, Riverdale Park was very peaceful and was a haven for nature and animals. Now it seems like they kind of forgot about wildlife.

How far will it go before we stop building around the Don River? We need to stop adding to the chaos. There are people who are fighting for it. It is important to make people aware of the problem. Before you go and ruin a good thing, please go and look over the results.

*Written by **DAVID BOOKER***

## **TORONTO IS A BEAUTIFUL CITY**

In Canada there are many different people and nationalities. I will write about people who live in Toronto.

Toronto is a big city. When I walk down Yonge Street I see different groups of people, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Italians and Hungarians.

We all belong and work together. They dress differently and speak different languages. They need to learn English. We are able to go out to different restaurants and order curry, pizza, rice, seafood, and goulash soup.

*Written by* **IRENE HATOS**

## **DANI'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

My name is Dani Angela Harder, but that isn't fully true. I've been tricking people for many years. My first name is Angela, but I liked Dani much better so I switched them.

I remember one day when I was one year-old, "A big dog gave me a scare." It was the summer times and I will never forget it because I still don't trust dogs. "Upset."

A sad time in my life was when my grandmother died. I was really sad, but my brother made me feel better by giving me a hug.

I have many special people in my life. One who I would like to mention is Adrian. I met Adrian about two years ago at Frontier College. We are both tutors at the college and hit it off right away. I love his whole self, his hair, his eyes, his voice, and his humour.

I have many strengths, but I am too modest to talk about them.  
"You only have one life. Make it a good one!"

*Written by **DANI HARDER***

## **DAVID'S STORY**

I like to see all the trees and the flowers. Sometimes I think I am looking forward to the long days of summer so I take long walks.

On the weekend I experienced a weather bomb. Driving was very fearful. I was driving with my brother and sister-in-law and we saw cars swerving into ditches. Trees were blowing and the snow was whirling around. On Sunday it was very windy and cold.

Some people like to go see the river at the old pond. At all old and new places, I like to see all the forests in the city. I like to see all the parks in the Toronto area. Looks like a winding road to me and you.

Sometimes I like to look forward to going to see other natural places outside of the city. The day is like a river in the summer time. It is a long journey. It is like some of the days seem longer. The trees and the flowers along the forest zig-zag. A long tree looks down on the

mud. The flowers are sagging. A winding path is out of control. The forest is like a zig-zag.

I would like to see the government help the people get more jobs. To see people go forward. I go downtown and I see people sleeping on the street more and more it seems. It makes me feel like there is no hope.

I would like to work in a fruit stand. I would like to learn how to drive a car. I like to work on the computer sometimes. I would like to walk people's pets. Someday I would like to go down to the Don River. I would like to walk along the Don and see all the debris gone. See the river looking natural, tranquil, and peaceful once again.

In my apartment I live on the first floor. I have lived on the main floor. It is a new experience for me to live in the west end. I would like to build my own cottage in a place where there's lots of green. There are a large variety of apple blossoms. When I get old I would like to travel on a train so I can see all the beautiful colours that nature has to offer. I like when the spring comes. I like to put my winter clothes away to get ready for the summer.

*Written by **DAVID BOOKER***

## **MY FAMILY**

Christmas day brings my family together at my sister's house. My brother-in-law picks me up at 4 o'clock. We go to Ajax and everybody is there and everybody brings presents. I have Ukrainian dinner and

Japanese food like chow mein, cabbage rolls, potato dumplings, turkey and Christmas cake. After dinner we watch videos and play cards. I stay over night for 2 days at my sister's place. I will go shopping at the mall on Boxing Day and buy videos and DVD's and after we go downtown to the city we will come back to Ajax.

*Written by* **EDWARD UYEYAMA**

## **MY FRIENDS**

All my friends are important to me.  
My friends are there for me in good times and bad.  
I like to go out with friends.  
I love my dog. When my friends are away I miss them.  
I keep in touch with far away friends by writing them.

*Written by* **KERRIE CHERNETS**

## **GRIZZLY BEARS**

The grizzly bear varies in colour from black to blonde. Their fur is white-tipped, giving it a silver appearance. A grizzly bear's head is very large. Their ears are small and round. They are very aggressive. They often use their size and strength to protect themselves and their cubs. The grizzly's front legs are longer than their back legs. They walk flat-footed. Male grizzlies weigh between 215 to 715 pounds. Most female grizzlies weigh about 200 to 450 pounds. The claws of the grizzly are large and visible. Their claws curve sharply about two inches long and are good for digging roots and other food.

We can find grizzly bears in Canada's Central Rockies such as Alberta's Banff National Park. Historically, grizzly bears can be found in the western half of North America. Today there is a decline in the number of grizzly bears from 6,000 bears in the year 1850 to 900 bears estimated in the year 1995. The grizzly bears are classified as a threatened species.

*Written by **ROSS CROCKETT***

### **COMING OUT STORY**

All my life they have been labelling me as gay or faggot for being too sensitive and showing my feelings and being artistic. And even though they seemed sure about this, I wasn't. I know that I was struggling with this for a long time, and I was in denial about who I am.

I couldn't take it any more so one day I was really depressed about my life I really don't know what to do. I did the craziest thing a couple of days later, I "outed" myself and I left a message on an answering machine to Frontier College. I can't believe I did that. Two weeks later I got a phone call from this person who I left the message for at Frontier College. This person is the first person I told I was gay and her name is Susan. I went to Frontier College to talk to Susan about the message I left on her answering machine. Then she introduced me to David, the new manager who was just hired at Frontier College. The good thing about it is that he's gay too. David and I started talking about being gay so David became my tutor/mentor giving me great advice and guiding me.

My next step was to tell my friends. The first person I told was my best friend Sparkle. She came over to my house and we started talking and I told her I was gay. She was shocked at first but after she said, "you're my best friend Francis and nothing is going to change that." I told my other friends Tochil, Lindsay, Marta and my only guy friend at the time Oscar and they were fine with it.

Two months later David and I were talking about the 519 LGBYT support group. At first I was really scared about going but David said, "Francis you need to meet other young gay men and how are you going to meet them if you're not out there". A couple of days later David took me to the support group. I was really, REALLY scared but I went anyway. Shockingly I met my first boyfriend, my first LOVE and his name was Brian. God he took my breath away. I met my first gay friend, Tony. I was really happy about meeting Brian and Tony, but especially about meeting Brian.

My next step in coming out was to tell my mother and sister. I told my mother that I was gay and she said "your sister told me that you're gay". I said "What the hell". My mother said "don't worry Francis, it's your destiny". That was kind of weird when she said that about my destiny!!! Oh okay. I also told my sister that I was gay. She said "Francis I have known for a long time now". She also said "I am fine with it, OK" I said "cool". Well a year later I asked my mother if dad knows? She said "Francis I told your dad two months ago, why?" I just wanted to know if dad knew and why didn't you tell me. My mother said "he's fine with it too". I said "OK".

The next step in my life is going back to school. Last year my tutor, David, and I were talking about the Triangle Program but at the time I was not out yet so I couldn't go. Well a year after I came out we talked about the Triangle Program again and I said "I think I should go to this school. It would be a great experience". In September, David and I went to see if I could get in the Program and the shocking thing, I got in.

People were right at the beginning, I am GAY and PROUD of it. In the end I wasn't crazy but BRAVE. My life is great (of course a boyfriend would make it even better).

*Written by **FRANCIS LOPEZ***



*Susan Macdonald with Francis Lopez*