

# In Our Own Words

Vancouver Island University / Literacy Nanaimo  
Adult Literacy Tutor Program



Number 3

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## Remembering Gordon

This edition of *In Our Own Words* is dedicated to the memory of **Gordon McIlwraith**, who died unexpectedly in June of this year, pictured here with his tutor Pat Wilson. Gordon had become passionate about expressing himself through his creative writing.

Welcome to the third edition of *In Our Own Words*. This collection of learner writings is being launched on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to celebrate **International Literacy Day**. Some of our writers are comfortable expressing their thoughts on paper. For others it is a new, courageous act. We thank and congratulate all of our adult learners for their contributions. We also thank the tutors who encouraged their learners, helped them edit their work and assisted them in finding their voice.

.....*Jacqueline Webster*

### Contributors

Crystal Carson	June Nguyen
Ron Greenhorn	Connie Robinson
Mijin Hwang	Crystal Thompson
Gordon McIlwraith	Mary Thompson
Anonymous (2)	

### Dear Kathy

by *Crystal Carson*

Thank you so much for being my math tutor. I think you are awesome, kind, patient, helpful, understanding toward me. The way you taught me you also explained and showed me do different math problems together. You always gave me good feedback to see how I was doing.

Crystal and her famous Carson Cat, Cuddles hope to have Kathy back in the fall as Crystal's tutor. We both had good times, and shared laughter working as a team.

### James Remembers

by *Gord McIlwraith*

James was born in 1988 at Grace Hospital. It's time – Hiro and I are headed down the hall to the delivery room joking and teasing as we head to the room. The doctor asks if we were always like this, Hiro says that this was how we got here. It was exciting and beautiful, then he was here. The Doctor asked me to cut the cord and I did and then held him. The sense of wholeness, of fatherhood was euphoric—there was a strong presence of love—

Move time ahead two years to the day. It is the morning of his birthday and he was opening presents. I start to tell him about his birth. I tell him, "You won't remember" but that is as far as I got because he jumped in saying he did remember. He had such conviction. I asked him what do you remember? He reflected on the room, then he talked about me holding him. He grabbed my chin with his thumb and finger, putting his first finger under my chin. At two, when he did this, I went right back to that heavenly place, the birth of my son. It was like being showered in love. When I tell him this, he grabs my chin the same way. I am experiencing the time of his birth again. He was conscious at two, but lost the memory by four. He was born conscious, so I wonder when it started?



## My Story

by *Connie Robinson*

This is my story. My name is Connie Robinson and I have been coming to Literacy Nanaimo for a few years of tutoring classes. I can now read at Level 4 Series 2 and I'm working with flash cards to help me with tough words. Phonics makes it hard for me to pronounce some words or spell them so I have to put hard words from my flash cards in my personal spelling book to keep. Soon I will be working on my writing skills. However, I still print sentences so that I can do this easily as I still print with all capitals. Sometimes my new tutor and I have read books from Level 1 to Level 4 so I am improving in my reading skills slowly.

I feel confident I will continue to have fun reading more nice stories and learning new things as my reading skills improve. Because it is a dog friendly place at Literacy Nanaimo my Tutor Debbie brings her new little puppy. Her name is Pearl. She is now three months old and she loves to play and visit with ever one at Literacy Nanaimo.

During the summer I got a new tutor. His name is Doug. We have been working on reading, writing and word forms. My mom came from Winnipeg. She helped me with my homework. We did other things. We had a lot of fun.

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## My Village (*Anonymous*)

My village is Aima Kizi. My state is Punjab. There are 500 people living there. My parents still live there. My father was a Police Inspector. Most people are farmers. They grow potatoes, corn, rice, sugar cane and vegetables.

Every one in the village has some animals. They have cows, buffalo, goats, chickens and horses. After work people like to watch the television or play soccer. My village has a school for grades 1,2,3,4 and 5. After grade 5 the children cycle to another village for grade 6 to 10.

When people are sick they must go to the city to see the doctor. I left my village April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997. I flew to Vancouver then took the ferry to Nanaimo.

## My Garden

by *Mijin Hwang*

What is the most exciting thing for me in Canada? That I am learning to have a garden. I think most Canadians I know feel that this is not a very special thing, but for me it is. I lived in a big city before I came to Canada. I had never had a yard or garden before. So, I never had to use garden tools.



One day I told my husband, "Honey, I don't know how to use a lawnmower, I never used this before" Because he has had a garden all his life, he was very surprised about what I said.

However, I am now learning how to use the garden tools and taking care of my garden, and also I am learning about Canadian culture everyday. If I were still living in Korea, I would never have known about having a garden.

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## Writing

by *Mary Thompson*

I sometimes find things I want to do are hard for me because of my spelling when it comes to writing. I now how I feel but when it comes time to write things down, this is when I find it hard. Sometimes when I go to bed I think what it would be like to be normal but then that would not be me. I would like to right a story for a contest but this is not going to be a story or a letter or a poem. This was to be a story but it is missing lots of words and I do not know how to find them. If I get help then it is not really me. Be your self and do your best.



## Letter to a friend (*anonymous*)

I have wanted to say some things to you so this is just a little note. At Christmas, I told you that whenever I heard a strong female vocalist I am reminded of you. I want you to see your power within.

So, have patience with yourself, you are slowly opening like a flower and it cannot be rushed. No family relationships are perfect but they can change in time, you may have seen this yourself. Do not be impatient with them, they are with you for the rest of your life. So be kind and it comes back to you in love.

Not everybody sees or recognizes your uniqueness yet. There are times that I wonder if even you do, but it is there, you can't hide it, so be proud of it! I am. You are coming to a crossroad, be careful what you choose. Ask yourself if in the long run does this make me stronger and a more powerful woman?

You are setting the foundation for what comes next in your life, let that be composed of your love, kindness, strength, power and your heart of gold.

...With love from your friend

## Traditional Star Lantern

by *June Nguyen*

Year after year, on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, people in Viet Nam celebrate the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival. It is a wonderful traditional festival for children in Southeast Asia. Children parade on the streets, singing and carrying colourful lanterns of different sizes. The popular lanterns are shaped like fishes, butterflies or stars. You will see the beauty of the lanterns when the candle is lit. However, the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival is a good time for the parents to spend time with their children and do something special with them. For example: they help their child make the lantern and choose the shape of the lantern. Then the children can get ready for the festival. Today I would like to share with everyone how to make a simple star lantern.

First of all, to make a star lantern, we need to have ten pieces of pre-cut bamboo all the same size and another five small pieces of bamboo to make the star open up. One of the small pieces of bamboo needs to have a big stem, because it will hold the candle standing upright. Next, coloured paper is needed to make the lantern, so we need to find cellophane or shiny paper and any stickers you like to decorate the lantern. Equally important, we need a candle, steel wire to tie

two bamboo sticks together, glue to stick the paper on the bamboo and scissors to cut the paper.

Secondly, to have a star lantern, we need to put everything together. Let's start with ten pieces of bamboo. We need to cut semi-circles at the end of all the bamboo sticks. This notch allows to connect two pieces of bamboos together and to easily join the ends of the bamboo by steel wire. Now we have two separate star shapes. Both shapes have to be tied together by steel wire at the five points of the star. Then five small pieces of bamboo are stuck in five places to get the star wider.

Last, to have a beautiful star lantern, we need to wrap shiny coloured paper around the star shape, but one of the ten sides remains uncovered. This opening allows us to put a candle inside and the smoke to escape. Then we decorate all sides of the lantern with stickers. Next, we put a short, thin candle on the wire bamboo stick at the bottom of the star. It is attached by a wire coil that is tied to the bamboo. Most importantly, we need to find a long stick with a string attached to tie to the top bamboo piece of the lantern. Now we can carry the star lantern everywhere we go with the candle giving light.

I enjoy very much making a star lantern because it reminds me of my childhood, my traditional culture and the time I had spent with my family together on those days. How lovely to sit around the table on the Full Moon Day, eating moon cakes filled with lotus seeds, ground beans, and orange peels. The moon cakes have a bright egg yolk in the center to represent the moon. Those cakes are really rich in taste. Next to the cake are four cups of tea waiting for someone to sip it and to admire our lanterns.



That is everything. I would like to share my traditional festival with anyone who loves to spend time with their family.

## My Cruise to Alaska

by *Ron Greenhorn*

Itinerary: Cruise Inside Passage, Juneau, Skagway, Glacier Bay, and Ketchikan.

It's January 07, and we were sitting around Food Share and Cathy was showing us pictures of the Alaskan Cruise that she just came back from. She was telling us about the wonderful time she had and the interesting people and places she saw. She had us so excited that we all said we wanted to go on the same trip. Can we go on the cruise to Alaska? Can we afford it? These were some of the first questions we had for Cathy. Cathy said that it would take a lot of hard work, but we should be able to pull it off. We scheduled a meeting to decide when we wanted to go, and how we were going to get the money to pay for the trip. The first thing we did was contact Angela who works at BCAA, for schedule and fare information. When we decided on the date May 14, 08 we knew how much the trip was going to cost us.

We put together three fundraising events to help cover the cost of the trip. We did two beer and burgers events and dance bottle drive.

Tuesday May 13<sup>th</sup> we packed and we were ready to go. 8:30am Wednesday morning we were on the ferry to Vancouver, and by 5:00 pm that evening the Carnival Spirit was on its way to Alaska, full of cheering passengers.

That night we had our first meal on board ship. Exploring different parts of the ship we stopped at a karaoke bar and make fools of ourselves trying to sing. During the week we visited several night clubs offering all kinds of different shows including musicals, and magician.

Cruising the inside passage several cruise directors got every one involved in fun games. We stopped in Juneau, we did some shopping and took in a tour. Next stop was Skagway. We went to the saloon where I had my picture taken with two lovely show girls (that was my favourite part of my trip). We also went on a tour of Skagway.

Going through Glacier Bay we saw glaciers and sea lions.

Last stop Ketchikan, we went on a tour of the town. Then we went shopping. Next we were in Vancouver going home on the ferry. Our week was over.

Lots of shopping on the ship and all the towns. Lots of tours! Before you go, book online or the cruise will be full.

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## World Champion Figure Skaters I Have Met

by *Crystal Thompson*

In 1996 I qualified for the National Winter Games in Calgary. The one thing I was not expecting was to meet **Don Jackson**, the World & Olympic Men's Champion figure skater. He was the first person to land the triple Lutz. He was the honorary head coach for these games.

Two years later I met **Karen Magnuson** in Parksville. She was a former Olympic Champion. She had donated to the Special Olympic Fund for figure skating.

Three years later, in 2001, I got to meet **Elvis Stojko**, another world champion. He was here for two days and it was cool to watch him skate. I showed him all the medals that I had won since I started skating. I told him when he was in Calgary for Skate Canada that I was in Ottawa competing and that I had left a dance to go back to my room to watch him compete. He thought that was cool.

Also in 2001 I went to the World Figure Skating Championships that were in Vancouver. I met the competitive dance teams of **Shae-Lynn Bourne & Victor Kraatz** and also **Aaron Lowe & Megan Wing**.

In 2007 I went to Whitehorse for the Canada Winter Games where I met **Aaron Lowe** again. I also met **Lesley Hawker**, a Canadian bronze medalist.

At the training camp that I went to in Burnaby I got to meet **Brian Orser**, the '88 Olympics silver medalist. That was cool because he came over and helped me with one of my jumps.

In Kelowna at the Special Olympics' Winter Games I met **Emanuel Sandhu**, an Olympic competitor. He was handing the gold medals out to the winners and I got my picture taken with him.

It was cool meeting people who have been my heroes.