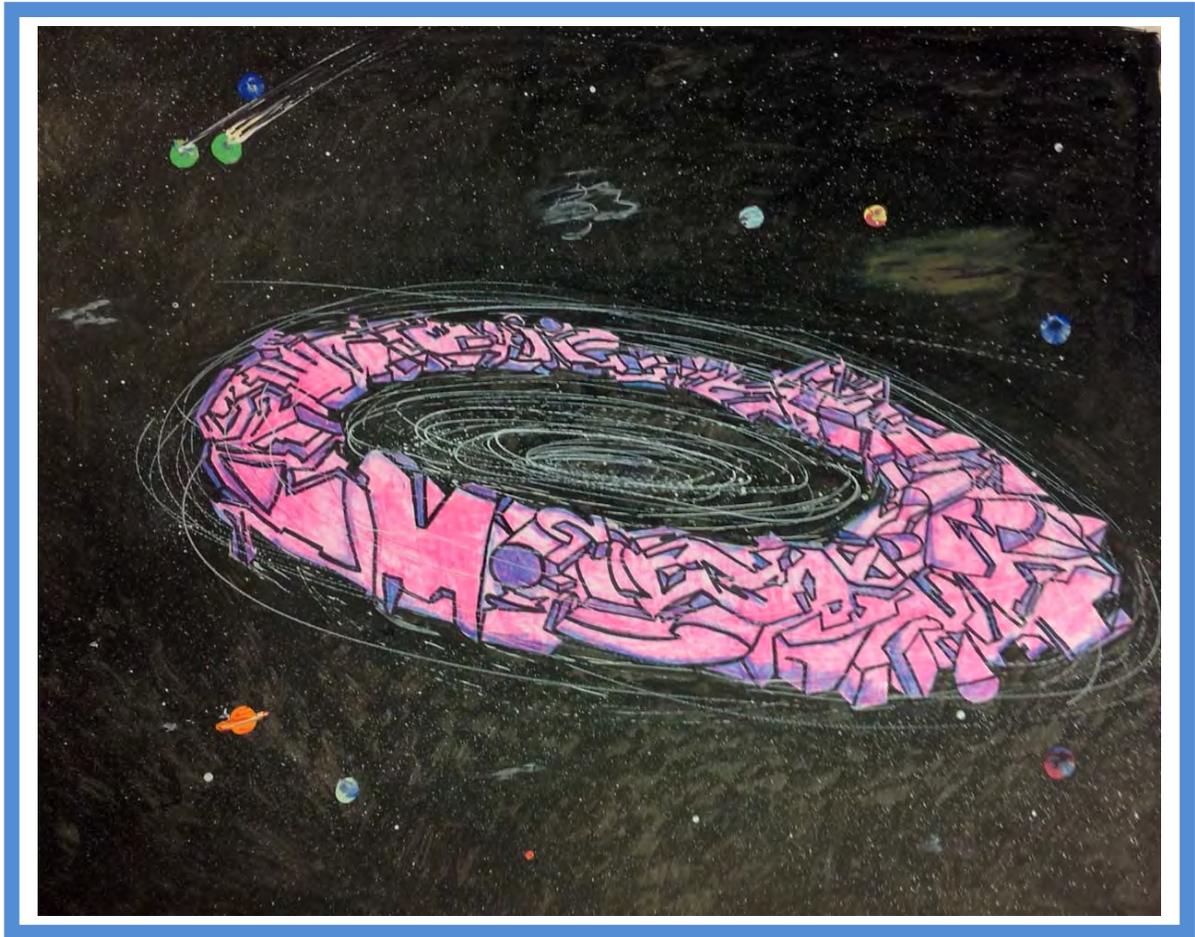


In Our Own Words

7th Edition



Art by Shawn Richards

In Celebration of
International Literacy Day, September 2012.

Our Learners' Stories

The Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Program

A partnership between

Literacy Central Vancouver Island & Vancouver Island University

We would like to dedicate this edition to David Payne, a well-respected, much loved tutor, mentor and friend, who passed away July, 2012.



Cover artist, Shawn Richards, was a former learner and friend of David Payne.

In Our Own Words

Welcome to our seventh edition!

We are celebrating **International Literacy Day 2012**, with this collection of learner writings. All of the writers are enrolled in the Volunteer Literacy Tutor Program, which is a joint project between **Literacy Central Vancouver Island** and **Vancouver Island University** (Nanaimo Campus).

Some of our learners have seen their words published before and for others this is a new, exciting experience. 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.

Tutor Coordinators
Margaret Ames, Jacqueline Webster & Judith Russell
September, 2012

Special thanks to **Wendy Chapplow** for her assistance with the publication.

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Wild Flowers

Grace Yang

Near the Nanaimo Airport beside the highway,
yellow wild flowers bloom.

But on cloudy days, they don't look happy.

When it is sunny, the wild flowers smile.

When I look, they seem to whisper to me.

I tell them, "I hope you stay a long time,
and make everybody happy."

I wait for a sunny day.

I want to see the wild flowers smile.

We want to whisper.



Special thanks to tutor Karen McLaughlin

A Day in the Cowichan Valley

Belinda Jack

We saw some totem poles.
John showed us totem poles and the water.
We saw fire, rocks and fish.
He showed us videos of natives knitting sweaters.
We went for coffee.
They made lunch for us.
There was a room with old stuff in it.
It was really good.



Special thanks to tutor Lisa Mactavish.

Guadalajara

Carlos Herrera

My name is Carlos. I was born on April 14th in Guadalajara, Mexico. My city, which is also called "La Perla de Occidente" (The Pearl of the West), is located in Jalisco in the Western Pacific area of Mexico. With more than one and a half million people, Guadalajara is listed as the second most populated city in Mexico. Guadalajara is admired for many things: among them is its architecture, the mariachis and the women. Visited from almost every part of the world, it is an attractive place to include in a discovery of Mexico.



My mother, Maria Carmen moved to Guadalajara when she was a little girl and considered it her hometown. When she was fourteen she married my father, Francisco Herrera, who was twenty at the time. My parents had 6 children; my sister Monica is the oldest, followed by Francisco and Daniel, then me followed by Diego and Aldo.

Thanks to my mother I had the opportunity to get to know many places in the city, like the zoo, a number of museums and several other important places.

Guadalajara is a perfect place for those who find history and culture interesting. The most recognizable building in the city is the Cathedral which dates from 1558 and is located in the downtown area called Plaza Tapatia. Music festivals, artistic expositions and other kinds of festivities are hosted every year. The major festivities in Guadalajara are hosted in October, which is the month when Guadalajara becomes a city of music and colours with classic parades.

Visiting Duncan

Lisa Yelton

Today I went with my school to the Duncan Cultural Centre and to the Museum. We had our lunch at the Cultural Centre by the Super Store. We then walked to the museum and went for a coffee at the Sunflower Café.



I really enjoyed it and I would be really grateful to go there again.

I would love to take Sean and my kids to see it and learn more about the culture.

Special thanks to tutor Irene Kidd

Letter Home

Peter Chen

Hi Cindy,

I came to Canada a little more than one year ago. Nanaimo is a small and beautiful city; it is quiet and not crowded. People are very kind and polite. There are a lot of events every week, like fishing or traveling, which lets me feel content. I have done several interesting jobs here, from dishwasher to farm worker. Can you imagine that?

Recently I have been studying ESL at VIU for about four months. Compared with my previous level of English, I feel that my language skill has improved a lot. However, it does not reach the level that I wish, especially in both listening and speaking. As you know, I have not learned English for more than twenty years since I left school. It seems that I have already forgotten everything, including vocabulary or grammar. In China, we always learn English silently. Teachers put emphasis on teaching students how to read and write, but do not pay too much attention to listening and speaking, unless you are a student whose major is English. When I listen to other people I always need the process of translating English to Chinese in my mind. That would make me miss the next word all the time. Also, when I say something to other people, even if I can make them understand me, I rarely use the exact sentence structure which native people usually do.

I think of myself as a positive learner, because I do not fear speaking English with native people. Sometimes, I made mistakes in words, but I would not feel shy. If they would like to correct me, I prefer to repeat the word again. I probably need more time, and should be more positive in listening and speaking.

Yours sincerely,

Peter

Special thanks to tutor Gaynor Rees

Plants

Malakai Coyle



I think it is hard to tell sometimes exactly what plants like. I do however know what plants need, the basics anyhow. Water and sunshine are a must. The water should have its pH regularly tested. Certain plants like and need

the right pH levels. Temperature is also a big one. Different plants have different temperature and humidity requirements. Sometimes people use perlite in the soil mix to increase the air flow. This helps the flow of air when water compacts the soil and helps keep the roots from damage.

Special thanks to tutor David Payne

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Tseshah Nation

Wil Sam

When it comes to the reserve I am from, I am proud of who I am, and where I come from, the *Tseshah Nation*.

I was born October 6, 1970. My father William Sam Sr. was a politician in the community where I have been for 27 years. I am proud of my father for the hard work he did with our Chief and Council.



Special thanks to tutor Michelle Hillier

You Are Never Too Old to Learn

David Jemphrey

"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you." B.B. King

At the age of 26, I returned to school to upgrade my English as I would like to be a Health Care Assistant, but it is a requirement that I have grade 12 English to get into the program. I began by enrolling in the Vancouver Island University English Fundamentals Course. After successfully completing fundamentals, I advanced to grade ten English. When I returned to school as an adult, I was unprepared for what lay ahead.

When I started the course, I soon realized I have an advantage that I did not have ten years ago, that is maturity. Today I have a clear goal in mind that gives me the determination to do what I need to do to be successful. Ten years ago I **had** to go to school; today it is my choice to be at school. I can also see the importance of literacy skills in many aspects of everyday life and work. When I was a young student, I didn't have good study habits, but now I have better study skills. Although maturity is helpful, returning to school as an adult is a steep hill to climb.

As an adult student, I face many obstacles such as loss of income because it is difficult to keep a full-time job as well as to go to school. I miss the freedom to come and go as I want to since I am required to stick to the schedule. I had to learn to discipline myself to set time aside to complete my homework and assigned reading. It can be just as boring to be in a classroom for an adult as it is for a child or a young teenager if the subject is uninteresting. Finally, returning to school can be very stressful as you will have lots of tests; however, they are necessary to indicate how you are progressing.

What I have learned so far is that I have to be dedicated to return to school as an adult. As a result of being an adult student, I now have many new skills that will help me in many areas of life. I am more disciplined; I can work alone or in a group; I still feel anxious about tests, but then again most people do. Another thing I like about being an adult student is that I get to meet new people and I don't feel as awkward as I used to. I have enjoyed being an adult student and look forward to obtaining my goal of becoming a Health Care Assistant.

Quw'atsun Cultural Centre

Meeto Lari



This was my first trip with the learner group. We went to the Quw'atsun' Cultural Center in Duncan. A man there told us stories about fish, eagles, frogs and bears. In another area of the center, we went through a hole in a log and by going through it everyone had good luck. We learned more about people being married there and that they had to

put sand bags up against the buildings when the river rises. They also enjoy salmon BBQs there.

Next they showed a movie about the history of Aboriginal people, the land, water and mountains. After the movie they served lunch then we all went outside and had our photo taken outside the building.

Then we all walked to the Duncan Museum. It was raining a little so while we waited to go into the museum we had tea at the Sunflower Café. It warmed us up. We walked across the street and saw the railway tracks beside the museum. The museum is an old railway station. They showed us old things stoves, washer board, beds and old photos of farms. There was an old time general store. There was an old shoe that had a wooden sole. It must have been hard to walk! When the tour finished, Margaret and I walked back to the Quw'atsun' center to get our cars. The others left in the bus to go back to Nanaimo.

Thank you to Margaret and everyone who showed us these interesting things and stories. It was all new to me and great to meet people. It was a good trip.

My Family

Evelyn Joe



James and I have been together for 9 years. We met while playing floor hockey. My cousin Anitsa is with his brother Kyle. We were together for 2 years before we had our first daughter, Justina. She and her sister Bernadine are 3 years apart. My family means everything to me and I'm going to do anything I can to make their lives stable and happy. Next June James and I are getting married. I was nervous at first but my family is excited and helping plan the wedding as well.

Special thanks to tutor Carol Hemrich

My Helpful Tutor Program

Lisa Jang

In my story, I want to talk about my helpful ESL program. It is my second year of attending this ESL program. It is designed for adults. They can come to learn English, talk and share some thoughts.

Two years ago, I could not speak English. This program has really helped me develop my English skills! First of all, I learned how to speak English. Then I formed new partnerships with the teachers and I was excited about learning English. I attend the program two times a week. Sometimes we go for a walk and talk about the things we see, like flowers and trees.

This great ESL program should continue for those who need to learn English. It is run by very compassionate people. They all work as volunteers. I am very thankful to them. "Thank you very much!"

I was an unskilled student in English. After working with these teachers, I am becoming more skilled at my English. These teachers should feel proud of themselves for doing this for us. This program helps a lot of people who struggle with learning. This is why I am attending here. I am very glad this program was started. I am very thankful to all the teachers, especially Margaret, Judith and now my new teacher, Bernice.



Special thanks to tutor Bernice Ross

Camping with my Brothers

Richard Stewart

When I was about nine or ten years old my father used to drop off my two brothers, Calvin and Sid and me at a lake 30 miles outside Prince Rupert by an old bridge. We had a canoe, fishing gear, food and a tent pitched close by the woods. We carried the canoe and fishing gear down to the lake. We went fishing, went into the woods and had lots of fun. We had to learn how to cook fish and other food that we brought with us. One time we went to another lake by canoe even further away. Back then there were lots of fish there and we could catch the fish in our hands.

Most of the time we did our own things, but we took turns doing the cooking. I think it was a good way to learn how to live in the woods. One time when my dad came back to check on us he found us still sleeping, but he didn't say too much about that. After a few days he came back and picked us up to go back to town.



Tupac Amaru Shakur

Melo

Tupac Amaru Shakur was an American rapper who lived from 1971 to 1996. He was a good song writer who wrote lyrics that were sometimes sensitive and also violent. He was shot to death in 1996 when he was 25 years old. I have always really enjoyed his music because I believe he spoke the truth about social issues and made good music.

Tupac Amaru Shakur, also known as 2Pac and sometimes Makaveli , was born in East Harlem, New York City just one month after his mother was released from prison. He had a half-sister named Sekyiwa and a step-brother Mopreme "Komani" Shakur. Both his parents were active members of the Black Panther Party, as were other close relatives. As a result 2Pac grew up in a tough, challenging environment and one that was in conflict with the law.



As a teen 2Pac studied acting, poetry, jazz and ballet at the Baltimore School for the Arts where he won many of the rap competitions and was known as one of the best rappers at the school. Aside from being multi-talented he had a good sense of humour and was very popular.

2Pac's professional music career started when he was nineteen years old with the Digital Underground group. His first solo album "2Pacalypse Now" was released in 1991, two years later 2Pac released his second album "Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z." which did better than his first album, making it up to #4 on the R&B charts. One of my favourite albums was released in 1995 and was called "Me AgainstThe World". It was a commercial success selling over two million copies and was #1 on both US and US R&B charts. 2Pac was an amazing writer and after his death in 1996 a total of eight albums were produced of his songs.

2Pac is well respected for his song writing talent. In a 2005 Rolling Stone magazine, 2Pac was voted #6 of the immortal artists of all time, he is #2 on MTV's list of greatest MC's of all time, and his hit song "Dear Mama" was added to the National Recording Registry in 2010.

Various universities and professors have stated that 2Pac is an example of the "organic intellectual" and that he was a black folk hero who still has a lot of impact for young black males.

2Pac once said "I am not saying that I am going to change the world, but I will spark the brain that will change the world" which he has done since his brutal death in 1996. His mother funded a foundation named after him that provides "training and support for students who aspire to enhance their creative talents". 2Pac has had a big influence on many rappers and continues to be very popular today.

"Grass Roots" of my Indian Culture

Kevin Henry

As a person wanders through life many people use expressions to explain the short or hidden verse of existence. Expressions like the 'grass being greener on the other side'. For years I could not, nor was I willing to, understand this expression. Now as an adult I understand this statement, and have now begun to incorporate it into my life.



As a little child, I faced ignorance, intolerance and indifference. I faced these obstacles in various ways during a tough and confusing time as a Native boy without culture or history. In my grade school years (Elementary, Junior and High School) I lived with ridicule and fear. Most of the white kids called me a 'dirty chug' or 'drunken Indian' and even the Native kids in the hallways called me a 'fallen apple'. I was lost without my heritage and its language; a red skinned Indian with a white hearted soul.

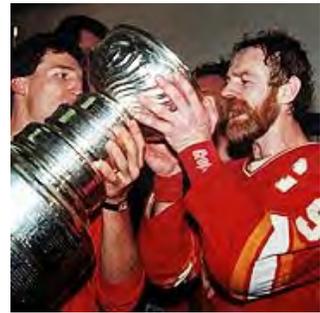
Allowing my soul to truly heal continues to be a perilous journey, a path filled with tragedy and travesty. I have 'paddled' home (a healing journey, where a Native comes home to his or her traditional lands and finds peace), and discovered my people are in pain too. I have learned that my ancestors were once lost; I now understood that I was never alone.

For now, I remain in University in hopes of obtaining my Bachelor of Arts Degree, which should lead me into First Nation's Studies. I hope my education can help my people one by one regain their history and culture.



My Favorite Flames All Time

Rodney Pickets



Here are several Calgary Flames hockey players and head coaches that I liked all time. My favourite Calgary Flames hockey player was Kent Nelson. He was the only Calgary Flames to score 131 points in one season. In that season he had 49 goals and 82 assists. He was almost the first Swede to score 50 goals in one season. Hakan Loop was the first Swede to score 50 goals in one year in 1989. He also won the Stanley Cup that same year. Besides that, Lanny McDonald was the first Flames to score 66 goals in one season. He was also the first to have his jersey retired. And he was the first Calgary Flame to get into the Hockey Hall of Fame. In addition, the two goalies I liked were Rejean Lemelin and Kiprusoff. Kiprusoff is the Flame goalie to have 44 shut outs all time for the team. Also, I liked Jarome Inginla because he is the all time point leader with 516 goals and 557 assists all time.

Equally important are the coaches. Bob Johnson was probably the greatest head coach all time for the Calgary Flames. Terry Crisp was the only head coach to win the Stanley Cup in 1989. Brian Sutter should have won the Stanley Cup in 2004 for the Calgary Flames, but an important goal was disallowed. At the time, there was no video replay, so the goal could not be confirmed. In conclusion, you can see that there are several Calgary Flames players and head coaches I liked all time. In fact they are still my favourite team all time.

Special thanks to tutor Gilaine Eagles

Help Protect the Beck Creek Wetlands in South Nanaimo

Justin Capson



Hi, my name is Justin. I am a concerned resident of south Nanaimo. I have been walking in the Beck Creek wetlands off of Frames Road in south Nanaimo for about 5 years. This property was once a coal mining area, where they even had an open pit operation in addition to underground entrances. The beavers came in and dammed it and the plant and wildlife made it what it is today. The Beck

Creek flows into the Nanaimo River estuary area near where the Chase River also empties into this estuary. There are lots of rare kinds of fish, birds, and frogs that come here to live because there are no humans around. It is kind of an isolated area beyond (east of) Elaine Hamilton Park (formerly Trofton Park.). I have recently seen pink property tape go up on a property off of Frames Road in the past month right in between two sensitive swamps. Houses have also been built around the swamps on the other side of Elaine Hamilton Park. When you go into the Cinnabar Valley (off of Extension Rd.) there are roads (gated, tracks, so far) but heading right into the wetlands. I don't believe a development application has been made yet. This means you have a chance of saving not only the wetlands, but the forests around the wetlands that have not been built on yet. This area needs to become a part of the park. So there is a buffer around the swamps. Then the wildlife can migrate in between the swamps in safety without being disturbed. The worst thing that could happen to the wetlands is going from being in the middle of the forest to being in the middle of the city; going from being private and quiet to having houses right at the edge over-looking all of the swamps. This place is worth saving so your children and their children can see this magnificent place. The habitat is sensitive to sounds and human activity. Please help take action to protect this amazing place. Thanks a lot for reading this letter.

Special thanks to tutor Brad Jones

Laura's Quest For A Better Life

Laura Nisson



I am writing this story about myself so you can get to know me better. I have already accomplished one year of University. I am so looking forward to another year at V.I.U. I have awesome teachers that understand me and they encourage me. When I get my high school diploma I am going to go back to V.I.U. so I can work helping disabled people. I have been told that I am a sweet caring woman who cares more about others than I care about myself. I enjoy catering with my dad at the legion because he shows me how to cook. I miss doing Karaoke with my mom because that was mom and daughter time. My mom and dad are really great.



There are two people in my life that I love a lot. They are giving me confidence and they believe in me. So now I am going to go back to school. I am going to succeed because I am bound and determined to get the graduation gown.



I have the most beautiful daughter in the world that I love and adore very much. My daughter's name is Mariya Rose and she's 10 years old. Mariya told me about a song by One Direction called "That's What Makes You Beautiful". Because I have low self esteem, Mariya keeps reminding me that I am beautiful.

My boyfriend is showing me how to open up more. He has also asked me what I want to do and he listens to me and nobody has ever done that.



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