



Stories of learning  
from The Rabbittown  
Learners Program  
Memory Lane

Memory

Lane

*Stories by participants from the  
Rabbittown Learners Program Inc.*

Published by  
The Learners and Staff  
Rabbittown Learner's Program Inc.

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## Foreword

This book is a collection of stories written by adult learners, past and present. Although some stories were dictated, a limited amount of corrections have been made to allow you, the reader, to enjoy the real stories as they were told by each learner.

## Acknowledgements

Writing for Our Lives is a special project of the Rabbittown Learners Program Inc. We give special thanks to the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada for their financial support to enable us to publish this book. We would also like to thank the learners for sharing their stories, and the staff for their understanding and dedication to make this project a success.

Doris Hapgood  
Administrator

# My Dream

*Theresa Fisher*

I started the Rabbittown Learners Evening Program on March 14, 2000. I really enjoyed it there, I wanted to improve my reading and writing skills. In May of 2000 I was accepted into the day program in which I would attend school five days a week. I was very excited about this and thought it would give me a better chance to educate myself.

Over the years, I found that I always had an interest in art. The staff found out that art was very important to me and encouraged me to draw. The Rabbittown Learners Program has given me the opportunity to work on my artistic skills. They had set up private lessons for me on Wednesday mornings, with a local artist.

I found these lessons very interesting. My teacher helped me in different ways. She tried to bring out my talent in my work by making comments on ways of improving my work. I like to draw and paint pictures of things I see, especially flowers. I am now getting started in ceramics, which is another form of art. Art is my dream and someday I hope to be a good artist.

# My Grandfather

*Barry Sullivan*

This is a story about my grandfather who I miss very much. He passed away on November 23, 1987 when he was only sixty-one years of age. My grandfather wasn't a big man, but he was a good man. He loved to watch hockey games on TV, while rolling his own cigarettes and drinking tea or coffee. He could roll three packs of cigarettes from one pack of tobacco.

My grandfather was like a father to me, more than my real father was. I loved him with all my heart, and I think I was his favorite grandson. We did a lot of things together like fishing, playing bingo, and playing cards. He taught me how to drive a car when I was only ten years old. I used to visit him all the time. Every time we played cards, he would cheat and win all the money. Sometimes we would go camping in the summer and spend a couple of days fishing.

My grandfather loved to play darts with the family. We were all in a dart league together and enjoyed it very much. He was a good dart player, but I know that if he was still alive today, I would beat him at the game.

Whenever I needed a ride to school, or to the store, my grandfather was always there to take me. He would even get me to warm up the car for him on cold days. Sometimes when he

went to bingo, my grandmother and I would go along. She is a very kind lady and I love her very much.

Today my grandfather would be so proud of me for marrying a beautiful woman from Fogo Island, and for going back to school to get my education, and hopefully get my automotive papers.

# Being Kids

*Terry Mercer*

When I was seven or eight years old, I played with many friends. We always made forts and slept out in tents. A friend had an army tent that slept about 20 fellows. Every summer his father would put it up for us. Another friend lived a couple of doors up and his father had a camper. We used to travel back and forth to sleep in them.

Early one morning we were sleeping in the tent and we heard rocks hitting it. One came right through and nearly got one of us in the head. Somebody sounded the alarm so we ran out and tried to catch them in the act. It was the Fardy boys. We knew something had to be done to stop them from doing it again, so we had a meeting. We were like a tribe sitting around inside the tent talking about what happened. Our decision was that there had to be a rock war. We put together armor suits that were made from cardboard with garbage can lids, which we used as shields. We broke off tree branches to make bows and arrows. We were prepared to fight.

After that the war began. We ran toward the Fardy's and rocks started flying at us. All you could hear was screaming and rocks hitting off the tops of the lids. I never saw so many rocks at one time. I was struck right in the forehead and almost knocked out.

Blood was running down my face. One of the guy's yelled, "Medic!". Next thing I knew, they were putting a bandage around my head to stop the bleeding. They couldn't stop it. I knew that I needed to go home but I stayed because we all agreed to fight. There would be a price to pay for anyone who took off. After a window was broken at the Fardy's, Mr. Fardy came running out and told his sons to get into the house. He came over and asked me if I was OK. He wanted to know what was going on and who started it. We told him that one of his sons threw a rock at our tent when we were asleep and that it nearly hit one of us. Mr. Fardy also wanted to know who broke the window. While standing there bleeding, I told him that I did it. I apologized but I said his sons started the fight. I was willing to pay or work off the cost of the window. At first he seemed upset, but he settled down and told me not to worry about it. He said that it wasn't our fault.

The war was over and we never heard from them again.

# Read me this book, Sir, please

*Derrick Tizzard*

Illiteracy is a person who looks in the mirror in the morning and sees no face, Shame sets in, denial takes over, sends him into the down and out spin of depression. He hangs his head, makes up excuses.

Imagine thousands and thousands every day of the year who look in a book to see only thick black ink lines spaces, words, white pages that have no meaning thousands with no purpose to their being.

A child confronts him: "Read me this book, Sir, please." He is lost for words, he stumbles and mumbles. He grasps the child's hand, leads her to the toy box. He sits back in his chair, squeezes the book buckling the cover; can't handle it any more, decides to take a step in the right direction. He remembers the newscast of the night before

about this place, The Learners' Place. Unsure, nervous, afraid of failing, he walks in, butterflies in his stomach, speaks low, sees nothing around him,

and like a small boy on his first day of school, takes the application form. The name is okay, the street address is okay, and the social security number, But how to write the name of the city, the name of the province?

He is about to leave when he hears a whisper: "Read me this book, Sir, please." He doesn't waste his time' busy tutors buzz

around like bees, teach the sound and power of words. He reads wonderful stories and poems. Oh the Dictionary, a Book with many marvelous words to guide his learning; like desire, he finds its meaning in the book: something desired to achieve his or her hearts desire. To be a writer of words, you must have the true knowledge of words. People gaze in awe, find themselves intertwined as one in the stories of fiction. The wonder of the universe, words amaze, guide us in the world to freedom of illiteracy.

# The Forest

*Shannon Stone*

I like going camping in the forest on hot summer days. When I get everything together, I take my four wheeler toward Western Gully's camping ground. There I do some fishing, hunting, and listen to the sounds of nature. The forest provides lots of wood to keep a fire going all day and night. I especially love the smell of food cooking on the open fire, and hot summer days drinking water from a cool stream. I even like shouting out loud and hearing the echo of my voice in the distance. What bothers me the most about the forest is how people abuse and litter it as if it was a trash bin. So, when the forest is used properly, it's a place where I enjoy spending time. As the summer comes to an end, I realize that it is so nice to have such an exciting place to spend time. There is always something new to come by when in the forest, such as tree fall, rabbit paths, and moose trails. The forest is a beautiful place that I will enjoy for years to come. Later on I hope to have a cabin at Western Gully, and be able to spend cold winter days and nights there. But for now the summer months will have to do.

# My Trip Home

*Ronnie Janes*

I went home to the Port Au Port peninsula for a trip. The community where I once lived is called Boswarlos. I went home on December twenty first 2000. There was a lot of snow out home at that time. I spent a lot of the time in the woods skidooing. I can remember as a child growing up in Boswarlos, my dad, my brothers, and I would spend our summer fishing, camping, and just spending time together. These are summers I will never forget. It's different growing up in a small community. The scenery in Boswarlos is beautiful during the winter. When the bay turns to ice, and snow covers the land, it's like a place of peace to me, like your own little world.

Another thing I like about being back home is breathing in the fresh air and also being free from city life. When I was home I spent a lot of time with my family going back and forth to each others houses for suppers.

I also liked spending time with my parent's miniature horses. The horses are only four feet high fully grown. They are not work horses, they are just pets. People come from all over the country to see them. I had a great trip home, visiting my family and spending time with my dad.

# Life

*Mary Hobbs*

I was born in St. John's, NF, the second oldest child of fourteen. I have nine sisters and four brothers. While growing up we were a very close family, and to this day, we still are. I have no regrets from my childhood, but only fond memories. When some of my brothers and sisters moved away, I really believe that we became even closer, if that's possible. When I was about fourteen years old, we had an unfortunate mishap, our house burned to the ground. I was watching this happen from a neighbors home, where I would visit as a young girl. It was very upsetting watching your life disappear before your eyes. At the time of the fire my mom, dad, and brother were at my aunt's house for supper. My friend's mom called the Fire Department, but by the time they got there it was too late, the house was gone. I called my dad at my aunt's house to let him know what had happened. At first he thought I was joking, but I said, "it's no joke dad". He rushed home to find nothing but an empty lot. When dad saw me he wrapped his huge arms around me and said, thank God you are safe.

As I grew older and had a family of my own, it was then that we had another tragedy. My father died at the age of sixty-three. My family found it very difficult to accept. Even today four years later, we miss him very much.

# A Newfoundland Winter

*Shannon Stone*

The weather in Newfoundland this year, 2001 has been a real Winter Wonderland for us. There are mountains of snow and ice everywhere. The snow banks are very high and the snow is thick, heavy, and very hard to shovel. The weather is so stormy and cold, that to go outside you have to dress with warm gloves, scarves, hats and boots. The winds can be so cold and freezing, that they can cause roads to get very icy and slippery. To keep vehicles on the road a sand truck uses salt and sand to give vehicles a better grip. Over the past four or five days my friends and I shoveled snow from my mothers roof top. There was about five feet of snow on it, and we were afraid that it would collapse. Winter, what is it to me? It is nothing but a worry and a bother, because the weather easily makes me sick at times. They say we are supposed to have a blizzard tomorrow, I'll be ready for it.

# Single Mother

*Dianne Chipman*

I am a single mother of four girls. I left school when I was fourteen years old. When I lived with my mother and father, I was one of eight children. My father was gone most of the time working, so my mother had to take care of us by herself. Back in those days education was not as important as it is today. So my mother did not take the time to teach us, not one of us graduated, but I would like to be the one who does. I used to do my homework after school when I was younger, but I never put much time into it. However, at the same time I didn't have anyone to teach me or sit with me, so how could I learn? I don't blame my parents. I think that back in those days things were a lot harder. Three of my four children are in school, my baby is in day care. My oldest is seventeen years old, and she will be graduating in April 2001. She is very excited. We went to the bridal shop where she had already picked out her graduation dress, now I had to see it. When she came out of the dressing room, with her dress on, I was lost for words. All I could do was stare at her, she looked like Cinderella to me, she was just so beautiful. I am so proud of April. I hope that her sisters follow in her footsteps.

When I quit school, I only had a grade six, therefore I found it very difficult to help my children when they came home from school with their homework. I could only help them with so much and

there were times that I would get upset with myself, and go into another room and cry. But now thanks to the Rabbittown Learners Program, I know I can do it. I hear people say all the time how hard it is for a single parent, it's true in some ways. But if I can take care of four children and go back to school, anyone can if they put their mind to it.

# The Want To Learn

*Elizabeth Martin*

I was four years old when I went into a foster home. I stayed there until I turned seventeen. In all those years, I could never understand why I didn't have a chance to learn how to read and write. When I left the foster home, my aunt took me in, she helped me get into junior highschool. I soon realized that it was too hard to keep up. So my aunt and I decided that maybe a tutor could help me with my reading and writing. A tutor worked with me for a little over three years. She spoke to me from time to time about how I would feel on going back to school. I said this would be great. My tutor then talked to a woman at a Literacy Program and my name was put on a wait list. The following year I was accepted to the Rabbittown Learners Program. I feel real proud of myself for coming back to school. I really like this place and I'm doing quite well.

# Summer with My Grandmother

*Eric Noseworthy*

Back in 1933 I spent the first summer with my grandmother in Heart's Delight, I was seven years old at the time, and it is one that I will never forget.

My grandmother was a very sweet woman who worked very hard. She washed her clothes by hand on a scrub board, brought water in buckets to the house from the well in the yard, and she also grew her own vegetables. It wasn't easy growing your own vegetables, you had to use manure and caplin as fertilizer. I can still see her now coming up from the beach with an old home wheel barrow filled to the top with caplin for her garden.

She also raised some animals such as: chickens, ducks, and goats for food to get her through the winter. There was always a good supply of goats milk. The goats would be milked by hand the milk then was put in a large pot and placed on an old wood stove to boil. Then the milk would be lowered down in the well for chilling and storage from the summer heat. After supper we all sat around the kitchen table, and had freshly baked buns and a glass of cold milk.

# Fishing

*Christopher Targatt*

When I was younger, I loved to be in the woods. Most of this time I spent by myself but there were times when my brother would come along. I would spend days trouting, cutting fire wood, and salmon fishing. I am from the small community of St. Steven's where there are a lot of great places to fish, but my favorite sport is salmon fishing.

There are no salmon rivers in St. Steven's but in the next community there is Peter's River which is the finest salmon river on the Southern Shore. The place I like best in this river is a spot called Flat Ryan's. Sometimes I catch two or three salmon and there are times, or trips I will get none. One trip would take anywhere from five to six hours.

After I finish fishing I have a cook up next to the river. I light a small fire to boil some water for a cup of tea and fry some salmon. That is only if I had been lucky enough to catch any. I usually pack a lunch from home just in case I am unlucky and don't catch anything. After I finish eating I put out the fire, gather my things and walk back down the road to home. When I get there I put my fishing gear away for another day. Perhaps tomorrow, I may return to the river to try my luck again.

# My Little Girl and I

*Lisa Marie*

I have a little girl whose name is Kristian Jade. She was born March 13, 1994. When my daughter was born she weighed 7lbs, 3 ozs. She was a very beautiful child. Right from that moment I fell in love with her. She had blond hair and blue eyes. Now she is seven years old, in grade three and a very smart cookie.

My daughter likes playing the piano and flute, singing, skating, cross country skiing, sliding, computers, game boy, and swimming. She is a joy to be around. She has a cute pet cat and her name is Sweetie. On Sundays I bring Kristian to church with me she enjoys it very much. We do a lot of activities and events together we have lots of fun and we love time spent with one another. I'm always there for her.

My daughter is a lot like me, she's a very energetic child. She loves me and hugs me a lot. She is a very lady like and mannerly child. I will always protect her, she is my life. She also knows how to cross the road, understands safety signs, and not to get into cars with strangers. She is a good child and she listens to me.

I read her stories and she will read me a story also. We often take little outings together, which we enjoy very much. We go on picnics, to the mall, boating, and other places as well. Kristian and I also like to visit her grandmother. She also likes to do things with her.

My daughter is the center of my life. We are one of a kind, a pair.

# Living With The Cold Weather

*Marcus Domeah*

My name is Mark, I was born in West Africa, where the temperature is ninety to one hundred degrees Fahrenheit. Anyone that is born into and grows up in this kind of weather or temperature is not used to cold weather.

I'm now living in St. John's, Newfoundland, where it's freezing cold. I always wear layer upon layer of clothes just to keep myself warm. I feel if I don't do this, I will freeze to death and I'm not yet ready to die. So I have to keep doing what I was told to do, which is to dress in layers. Just put yourself in my position, and put your heater on blast for about two hours while you're inside, that's the way I like it when its snowing or cold outside. Even people who are born in countries like this with cold temperatures complain about it. So, why can't I? I'm hoping to move to another place in the near future, where the temperature is warmer. In the meantime, I am back in school trying to get my education, which I hope will give me a better future, no matter where I go.

# My Pets

*Glenise Lahey*

Animals are innocent like babies. I know there is a huge difference between them but they are both very beautiful. Animals only know what you teach them and this is what makes them so innocent. I am writing about two very special treasures, my cats. I have two very beautiful male cats who are my two best friends. Their names are Friskie and Maggium. Friskie is only seven months old and Maggium will be two years old on St. Patrick's Day. They are very warm, loving, cuddly and precious. Sometimes I feel that they can understand me.

I have a close bond with my two cats. They sleep with me every night. They also sit by the sink in the washroom when I brush my teeth, or wash my hands, and they accompany me to my living room chair. They also have a close bond with each other. They clean each other, play together, and both eat together from the same plate. They love each other a lot just like I love them. I open some canned food and give them a big bowl of fresh, cold water and a bowl of dry food. They love that! I even have a big cat bed that they both can fit into and sometimes they sleep in it. they also use it for their daytime naps. They have lots of toys to play with and every time I go shopping I pick up another. I adore all kinds of animals. My cats are my babies and also my best friends forever.

# Christmas

*Amanda Peddle*

Christmas is my favorite time of year. It is a good time when all your family can get together. I love to decorate the house and tree with my mom. We have a lot of family and friends visit us over the holidays. It is nice to have snow for Christmas because you can go out and build a snowman, go skating, sliding or even go on the skidoo. There is always lots of food to eat and gifts to open. It is a very exciting time of year for me and I wish it would never end.

# My Pride and Joy

*Kevin Flood*

On September 27, 1999, God gave me a second chance at life. As a teenager I was headed for a life of disaster. My life was going nowhere because of problems I had with drugs and crime. I believe the biggest problem that faced me, was no education, which meant no future. One day something happened that changed my life forever. A beautiful girl came along and she changed my life completely. Before I knew it, we began spending more and more time together. As time went on we grew even closer. One day I got the surprise of my life, she told me she was pregnant with our child. We have since had a little boy and his name is Nathan. He means so much to me that I couldn't express my love for him in words. He is like a special gift that has helped to turn my life around completely. I have my drug and crime problems put behind me, and presently I am back in school, and I plan never to look back.

# My Dream

*Joan Pope*

All my life I wanted to be one thing...a cook. But reality would set in and with little education this would not come true. My first step in the right direction was when I started the Rabbittown Learners Program, there I received tutoring in Reading, Math, English, and Life Skills.

One of my favorite parts of the Life Skills pro-gram was the cooking sessions. We would cook a main meal for the group once a week. First we would plan the meal and then we would go to the supermarket to pick up the supplies. The following day we would have our cooking session. Everyone enjoyed their lunch that day and it helped the group to socialize with each other. Then we would clean up and return back to our class. Over the two years I spent in the Rabbittown Learners Program I had achieved enough that I was accepted to do a Short Order Cooking Course at the Long Side Club. This was a twenty-four week program where I had to write several tests. During this course I had to complete an on the job training placement for twelve weeks. Now that I have completed, I am a certified Short Order Cook with a certificate in First Aid and Sanitary Code. Presently I am employed full time. With a lot of hard work and support from my friends, my dream has come true. Anyone can make their dreams a reality if they want it bad enough.

# Alone in My Own World

*Leonard Wells*

I was brought up in a family of 7 brothers and 2 sisters. I went to school like every other kid. My parents couldn't help me because they couldn't read. They would send me to my sister-in-laws to do my homework, but they had too much to do and couldn't help me. I would get frustrated and walk home again with nothing done. I quit in grade 3.

At fifteen I started to get in trouble and drink. That year I met my wife and we got married. She quit school at the age of eighteen.

I felt there was no hope for me. I went out looking for work. Everywhere I went, they would give me application forms. I would get scared. I asked if I could take them home. There were times I got out by the door and just tore them up. When I was eighteen, a friend of mine said we could take a deep-sea training course at the Fishery College. At first I thought it was just fishing. But when we went to sign up all I could see was these books coming at me.

I said, "I'm going to quit". My friend said, "No don't quit, I'll do your work for you".

I stayed there for 8 months. He did my home-work. In class he would pass them in, then he would do his. Everything was going great until one day he said he was quitting, so I had to quit. I felt bad. I felt good in this program, it was going good for me. But

when he quit, I was back to square one. I became very depressed because everything was a lie.

I was lying to myself I'm forty-nine now. My girlfriend helped me see that I am a good person and I can go back to school. Eight months ago I called Rabbittown and now I can see a big difference. I can write my name, address and even read some books. I don't feel lonely anymore. My family is supportive and happy for me. Every day gets better. The teachers and learners take the time to help. I'm doing good. It goes to prove that age has nothing to do with it. I'm starting to come out of my shell. If I have a problem or if I go somewhere and don't know the words, I tell them and ask for help.

# My Journey

*Miguel Gonzalez*

On October 19, 1986, I boarded an airplane from Havana, Cuba. When I left I was planning to defect into Canada. I followed through with my idea to defect and I ended up in Gander, NF. I spoke to the Immigrations people there about staying in Canada. Everything worked out well. After a while they arranged for me to attend the Avalon Community College in St. John's, where I spent six months studying the English language.

Things were going quite well for me until October, 1994, when I was admitted to the Waterford Hospital, suffering from schizophrenia. I spent two months here. When my medication was regulated, I was lucky enough to land a job with Evergreen Recycling, which is a program offered by the Waterford Hospital. But I was still having difficulty with my English. Through friends of mine, I heard about The Rabbittown Learner's Program. I talked to a lady at the program, who helped me by putting my name on a wait list. On the first of March 2001 I was accepted into this program. I really enjoy this program, it is helping me a great deal with my education and English language.

# Back To School

*Barbara Stevenson*

On May 2, 2000, I started the day program at the Rabbittown Learners Program. It was the biggest step of my life. I am a 39 year old wife and a mother of two teenage boys aged 15 and 16. I decided that I wanted to come back to school over a year ago. Since coming back it has changed my life in so many ways. I now have the confidence in myself to do what I couldn't do when I was a young girl. It also has had an impact on my family's life. My boys are very supportive and proud that their mother has gone back to school.

Their support is so important to me. I'm no longer the sad little girl that left school because she couldn't read, and was made fun of. I read a book today called, "Faces of Literacy". I was so surprised that I could read all of it. It made me feel so many things, from excitement, interest and happiness. The book helped me to feel good about the fact that I'm not the only one that feels the way I did because I couldn't read and write.

I've learned so much since I came here. Some of the things that we've done are: Social Studies, Science, Math, Reading/Comprehension, Vocabulary Development, and so much more. I've learned more during my time here than I did going to school as a young girl. My goal is to get my grade 12, I have completed Level I and I am now studying for my G.E.D. I've

accomplished part of my goal and I'm looking forward to the future.

# Shark Fishing Adventure

*Herman*

I grew up in an outport community where fishing and boats were a way of life. As a young boy I loved to fish with my father. When I grew a bit older I had other interests but the love of boats and the water always stayed with me. I have always had a small boat for pleasure. But in 1993 I purchased a 30 ft. yacht. Then in 1995 I purchased an even bigger one, the one of my dreams which is 36 ft. This was a sport fishing boat. I had named this boat "Peace of Mind". I've done a lot of traveling over the years so I took to the road to go across Canada and to the United States. I also visited Florida that year and went deep sea fishing, and caught a lot of deep sea fish like: tuna, marlin, and dolphin. I then went to Vancouver where I also did some deep sea fishing. I finally ended up in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where I started to fish for sharks. One day while out on the bay I asked myself a question, why can't I do this back home in Newfoundland? So I decided to do some research and I found that in Newfoundland the government has given funding to different groups to purchase the necessary equipment to fish for sharks. So I decided to research the cost to purchase the equipment necessary to fish for shark. I didn't think I would have much success. But me being the dare devil that I am, I decided I would take on the challenge thinking to myself "what am I getting myself into." So I took my truck and headed out for Nova Scotia to

start my adventure and get some experience. I spent two weeks there and I boarded a shark fishing boat where I became good friends with the Captain who had 33 years experience. He was able to teach me a few things that I would need to know. I bought all the necessary equipment and headed for home to pursue my dream. When I arrived home I talked to some friends of mine at the Royal Newfoundland Youth Club in Long Pond, Manuels. I told them about my plans and they told me "I was crazy, there were no sharks around the bay". So I invited a few of those friends to accompany me on my first trip, although I had a weird feeling about it as we headed out the bay.

We went on the trip, hoping it would be a success, and what a success it was. On my first trip shark fishing we saw 7 sharks but only landed 4.

There were anywhere from 8 ft. to 20 ft. long. It was quite a successful and exciting day. When I caught my first shark I called my wife. She was really nervous about my interest in shark fishing. I told her of my success and she was really excited, so were as all the friends that were with me.

Everyone was on their cell phones talking about our exciting day. When I landed that evening at the Youth Club there were a few friends waiting for us who were very anxious to know of our success. In case they did not believe us, I told them I had pictures to prove it, because it was a catch and release licence only. Some friends remarked that they would not be taking their family out in

the bay swimming anymore. We made several trips after that and brought along different friends.

I was now trying to promote the business. It is now 2001, and I have an upcoming meeting with government officials to get the necessary licence to catch shark and to keep a few to cook on board to completely satisfy my customers. Hopefully this summer we will have a successful one, with tourists from all over the world, and our own local business taking clients out or wanting to lease the "Peace of Mind" to go shark fishing. I have to say shark fishing has to be the most exciting and enjoyable thing I've ever done.