

Taking Part:

Encouragement For and From
Saskatchewan Adult Learners



Notes from the Learners' Workshop series
at the Saskatchewan Literacy Network's
Fall Conference, November 21, 2007
Radisson Hotel, Saskatoon

On November 21, 2007, 21 adult learners from 12 regions across Saskatchewan met at the Radisson Hotel in Saskatoon as a part of the Saskatchewan Literacy Network Fall Conference. The adult learner workshops focused on the importance of setting goals and fine tuning communication skills for success in life.



In this booklet:

- **How to Speak Your Truths So Others Will Hear**
- **Effective Goal Setting**
- **A Learner's Story**



Workshop One

Success Story: How to Speak Your Truths So Others Will Hear

Presenter: Kevin MacKenzie

Be aware of your communication habits. Understand your personal strengths and develop effective strategies so others can really understand you.

We need to use good communication skills at work, at school and everywhere. Kevin shared about his life story and showed us that we all have communication skills and strengths. Yet, sometimes we feel nervous when we find ourselves in situations that we are not used to or that seem risky, such as public speaking.

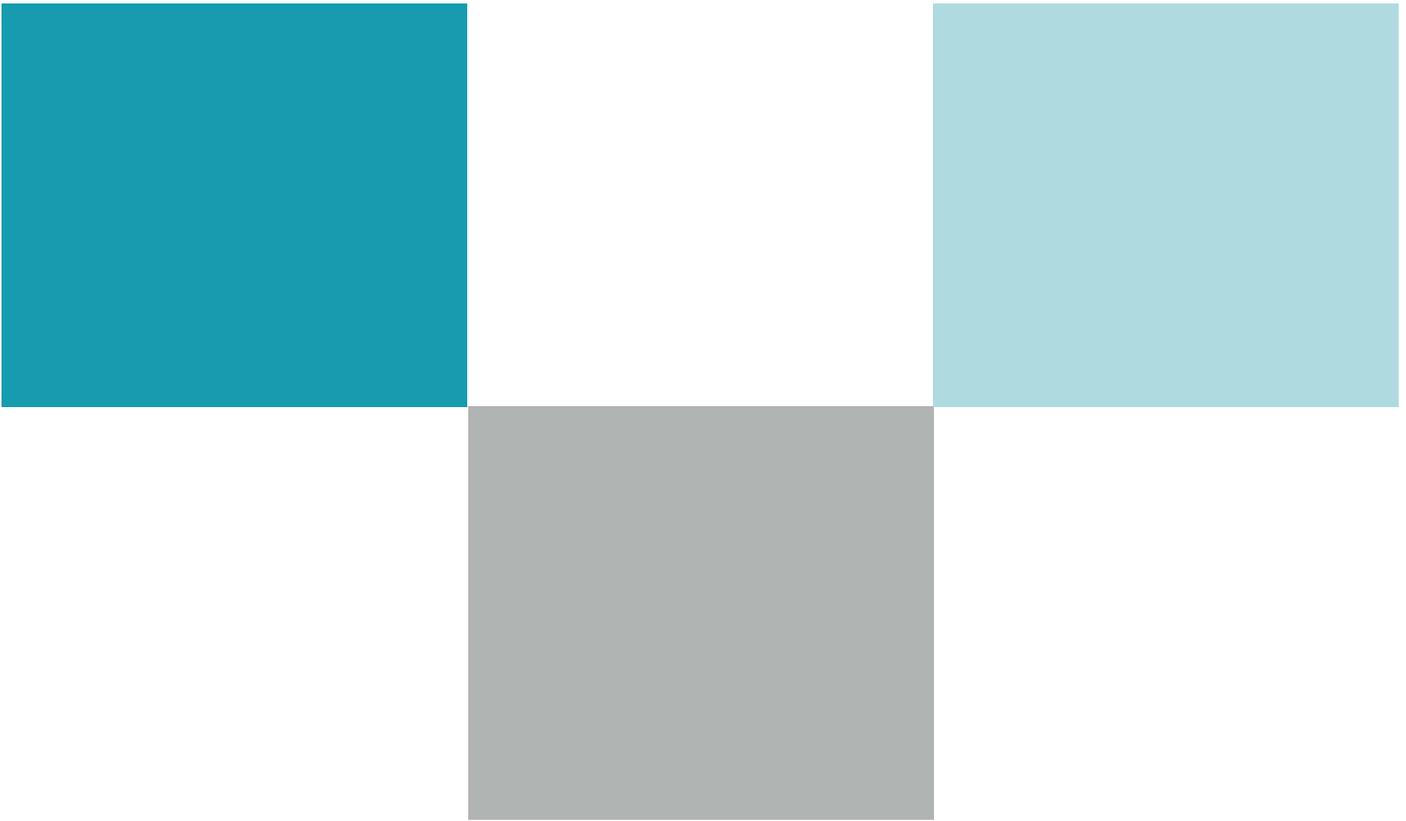




In this workshop, we talked about the feelings and beliefs we have about ourselves. Kevin gave us some exercises that helped us learn to put our storytelling skills to work. We began by sharing something about ourselves, such as our favourite movie or book. Then he asked us to share about how comfortable we are with speaking in public or to people we don't know very well.

This is what we sometimes feel:

- Shame
- Speechless
- Unprepared
- Shyness
- The need to belong
- Not good enough
- We look for others that are similar to us (same gender, same culture, etc.)
- Vulnerable – we are sharing a part of ourselves with someone else.



Because of these feelings we might hold ourselves back when we are nervous. We need to have permission to share from the people we are speaking with, and we need to give ourselves permission to speak freely. For this we need to understand our feelings about sharing.

All of us struggle with ‘barriers’ to communication. We talked about ‘barrier’ messages – those negative messages that we sometimes tell ourselves when we are nervous - that can get in the way of good communication. Often we go to old patterns of communication when we are nervous, even if they don’t work.

We learned to replace those barrier messages using methods that help us speak clearly and with confidence. Kevin gave suggestions on how to speak so people will hear our stories, and how to carry ourselves well wherever we go.

As a group we discussed how to conquer those nerves when speaking in public. Here are some tips:

- **Slow it down**
- **Provide detail**
- **Be aware of your body language**
- **Be aware of emotion**
- **Be aware of your voice**
- **Be aware of your facial expressions**
- **Have confidence**
- **Be natural**



“Kevin used humour, and it was fun,” stated one participant. “We need to pay attention to people’s body language and respect when other people are sharing a part of themselves by telling a story.”

“I learned that when I give a speech,” stated another learner, “I need to make people feel like they are part of the story.”



About Kevin: Kevin MacKenzie is a freelance professional storyteller and trainer. He has ignited the fire of oral language in thousands of listeners and workshop participants around the world.



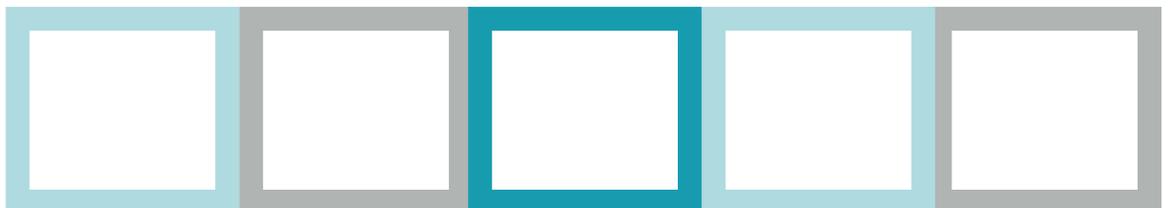
Workshop Two

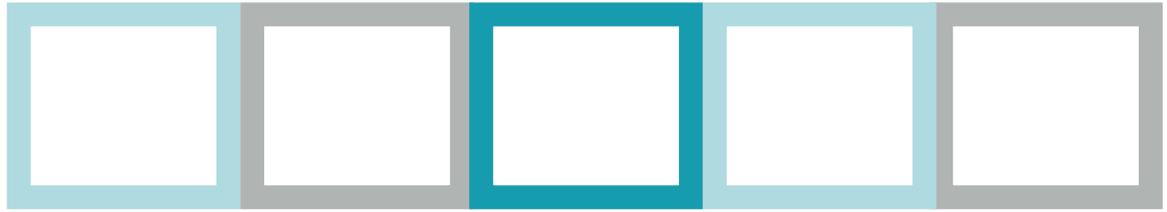
Effective Goal Setting

Presenter: Monica Coneys-Knight

To get from step #1 to step #10, sometimes we need to take steps out of order, or even backwards. Monica used games and music to show how to combine life goals with manageable steps, and how to see progress even if it sometimes looks different from what we imagined.

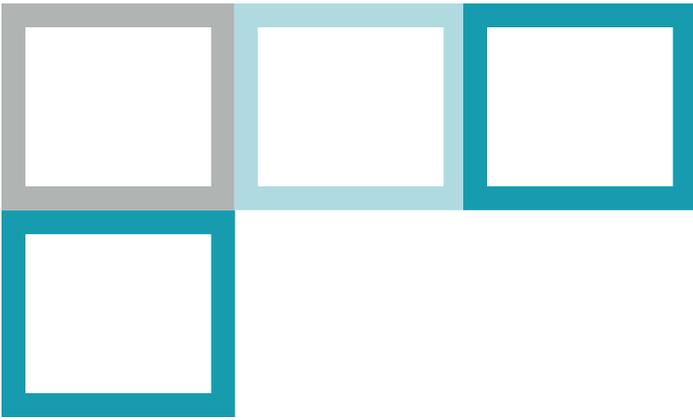
Monica showed us the importance of taking small, comfortable steps toward our personal goals. Through a series of games, Monica showed that if a person strives too high, too soon, any stumbling block can cause frustration and make us feel like giving up, even though our goals can be achieved if we just have a plan and a method.





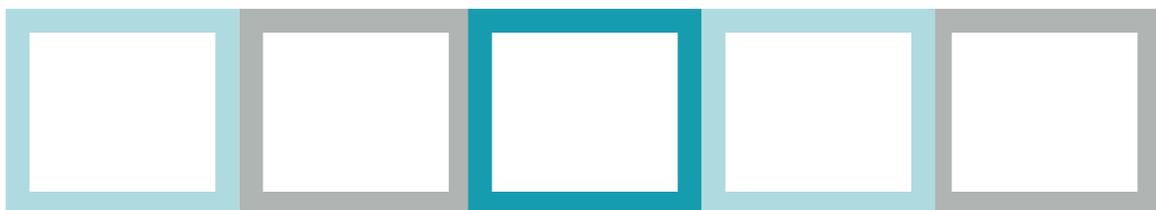
“You don’t go into a job and get everything right, right away,” said one participant. “So, start at Step 1 and then go to Step 2.” This was demonstrated with a garbage can, a ball and ten bowling pins. The group was divided into two groups. Each group had to choose a team name, coach, mascot, and cheering section, and then guess how many points they’d score into the can from different distances. With music and costumes, we quickly became engrossed in the details of the game and lost track of the process.

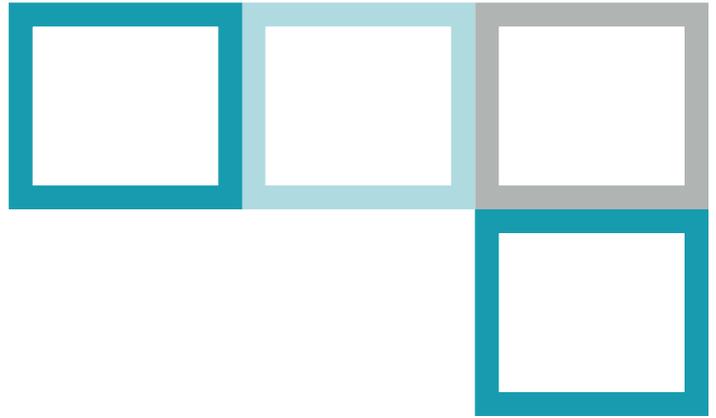




Neither of the teams tried to get points at the closest, easiest pin, but went for the harder, bigger points and kept missing. We had plenty of enthusiasm, passion and commitment, but weren't achieving our goals.

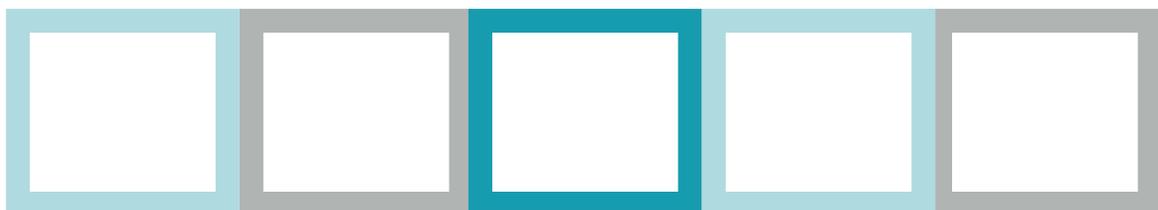
We realized our error as a group, and began again. Maybe we'd heard the message, "Aim high, but take manageable steps," many times before, but this time, we got why this is so important. We can often get carried away by the excitement or drama of everyday life, just as we got carried away by the excitement of the game.

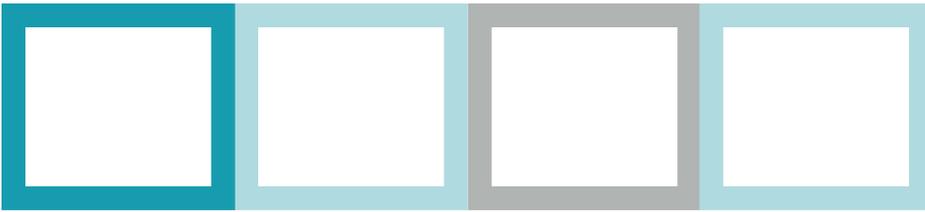




One learner chose to sit out and watch the game. Later, she shared that she was able to see what the groups were doing wrong because she was an outside observer. In the same way, we need the input of other people in our lives.

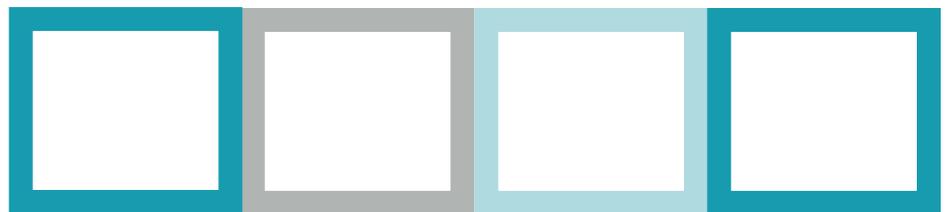
“Trust your inner voice,” said one adult learner. “Do things you enjoy and find rewarding, because life is too short.”





From Monica’s noon speech, the participants understood the need for passion, enthusiasm, and the ability to hang in through the tough times. In the afternoon workshop, we learned about the need for proper planning and for taking small steps.

“I think everybody got the message that sometimes you have to start at the beginning and get your courage up,” said one learner. “Also, don’t take too much of a risk because the whole team can be effected, not just you.”



About Monica: As a former teacher in India, manager in South Africa and economic development officer in Saskatchewan, Monica shares her struggles with literacy and her world experiences in a vibrant and memorable way and uses her skills to help revitalize rural Saskatchewan communities, businesses and individuals. She is currently completing her PhD in adult learning.



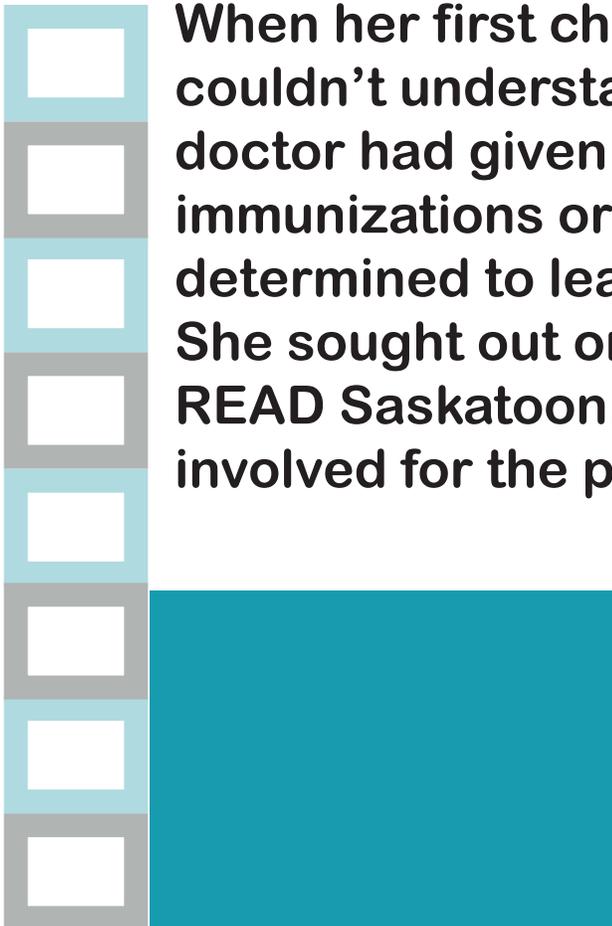
Workshop Three

A Learner's Story

Presenter: Carey Rigby-Wilcox

Carey's literacy challenges began at an early age. Yet somehow, she managed to pass from grade to grade. Eventually she graduated from high school, but was unable to read.

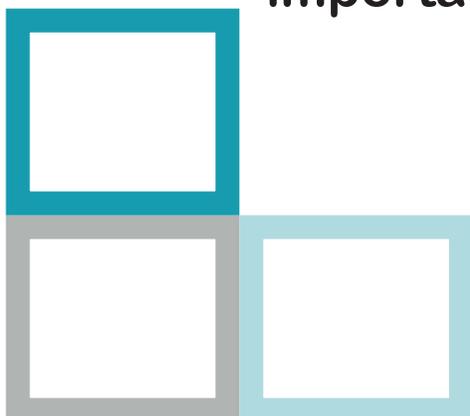
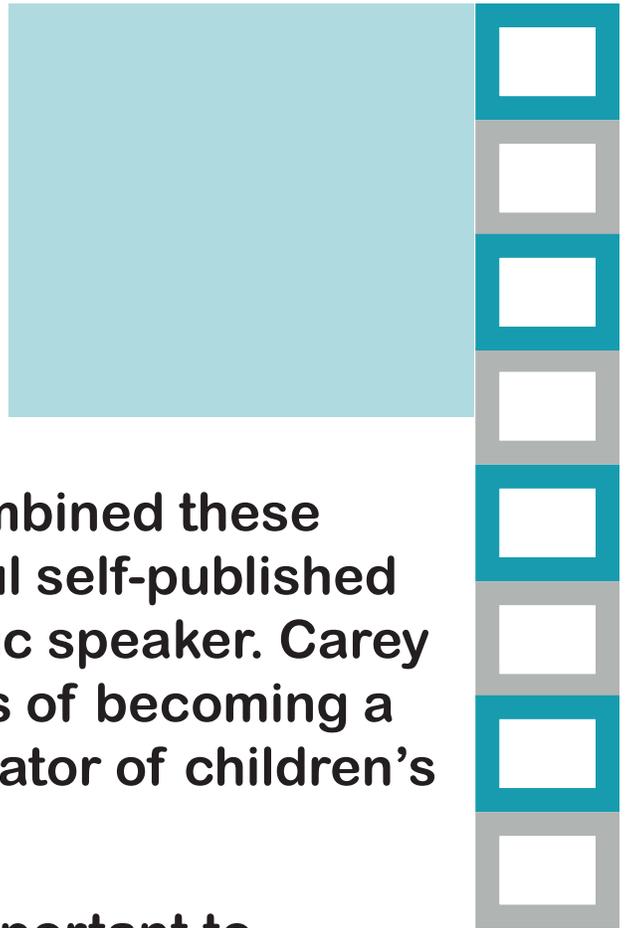
When her first child was born, Carey couldn't understand the papers that her doctor had given to her about the baby's immunizations or prescriptions. Carey was determined to learn to read to her child. She sought out one-on-one tutoring through READ Saskatoon, where she has been involved for the past 14 years.



This life journey has guided her toward her deepest passions: books and art. She has combined these two to become a successful self-published author, illustrator and public speaker. Carey reached her personal goals of becoming a published writer and illustrator of children's books.

“Encouragement is very important to improving your knowledge,” said one learner. “There are things that we don't think we can do, but if we encourage ourselves, we can do it.”

Carey repeated the messages from the other two speakers, that effective communication skills and setting reasonable goals are very important.





Prepared For: The Saskatchewan Literacy Network

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